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China: No Wind Or Solar If It Can't Beat Coal On Price



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Energy

I cover the international renewable energy sector, especially solar.

China has said it will not approve wind and solar power projects unless they can compete with coal power prices.

Beijing [pulled the plug](#) on support for large solar projects, which had been receiving a per kWh payment, in late May. That news came immediately after the country's [largest solar industry event](#) and caught everyone by surprise.

Officials are understood to have been frustrated at seeing Chinese suppliers and engineering firms building solar projects overseas that delivered electricity at prices far below what was available back home.



Photovoltaic panels stand at a solar power station operated by Huanghe Hydropower Development Co., a unit of State Power Investment Corp., at the Golmud Solar Park in this aerial photograph taken on the outskirts of Golmud, Qinghai province, China. Photographer: Qilai Shen/Bloomberg © 2018 BLOOMBERG FINANCE LP

The country also has its own issues with grid logjams. These have caused power from wind and solar projects to be wasted due to a lack of capacity on the network to transmit and distribute it. In 2017 [12% of wind generation and 6% of solar](#) was curtailed.

In the plans announced on Thursday, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the top strategic planning authority, and the National Energy Administration (NEA) set out a series of conditions under which new solar and wind projects would be approved from now till the end of 2020.

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Chief among these is that the price matches or undercuts the national coal

benchmark, something that happened for the [first time ever just last month](#).

Projects will also have to show that the grid can handle their output. Technical specifications will ensure that the highest standards are met on that front.

Local governments have been told they are free to offer their own subsidies to projects if they wish.

In the past, provincial authorities have spent heavily to bankroll uncompetitive solar manufacturers. Thursday's announcement warned that any attempt to use project subsidies to invest in "local factories" or to make the use of locally made components a condition of the subsidy.

Also included in the wide-ranging changes is the introduction of a green certificate scheme. A small trial of such a scheme was undertaken in 2017. It would work in a similar way to renewable energy certificates schemes in the U.S. and elsewhere. A certificate is created for each unit of electricity generated. These are then traded among utilities who may have targets to meet as determined by regulators or purchased by an end user to demonstrate their use of "clean" power. Details on the mechanics of the certificate scheme have not yet been released.

I am the head of content at Solar Media, a publishing and events company rooted in solar, energy storage and the technologies and business models driving us towards low carbon power. I oversee our flagship solar energy news site PV-Tech.org. I have spent the majority of my ... [MORE](#)

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Winter Solstice Celebrations From Around The World

By Natalie Burg

Humans have celebrated the winter solstice — the late-December day with the least daylight — for thousands of years. After all, in prehistoric times, the shortest day of the year meant more daylight was coming soon, which was a really big deal back then.

You can still celebrate the oldest holiday of the season all over the world — or incorporate elements of these global traditions into your family's calendar.



Whether you're looking for an excuse to travel the world or want to learn about another culture's traditions at home, the winter solstice is the perfect opportunity to celebrate in a new way. GETTY

Join The Eclectic Crowd At Stonehenge

The winter solstice is a special day of the year at [Stonehenge](#), one of the world's most recognizable and mysterious prehistoric monuments.

Researchers believe worshippers may have gathered at the iconic stone pillars for solstice feasts thousands of years ago. In fact, the giant slabs of rock seem to have been placed exactly to frame dawn on solstice day.

Stonehenge can still draw a crowd all these millennia later. Every year, thousands of people turn up at the site in Wiltshire, England, to witness the sunrise on the shortest day of the year.

The coming-together of modern-day pagans, neo-druids, Wiccans, history buffs and everyday tourists makes the event a fascinating experience even before the sun rises over the ancient structure.

Today, [tours are available](#), making getting to and from the once-in-a-lifetime event easy. And if the big sunrise gathering is too early for your family's taste, you can choose a more subdued [sunset walking tour](#) of Stonehenge.

Listen To Solstice Sounds At The Cathedral Of St. John The Divine

For almost 40 years now, jazz/new-age musician Paul Winter's annual [Winter Solstice Celebration](#) has been taking up annual residence in New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

This New York City holiday tradition, which involves four late-December concerts, began when the dean of the cathedral — looking for ways to blend the arts, spirituality and ecology — invited the Paul Winter Consort to serve as artists-in-residence. The result was a musical event marking one of Earth's oldest celebrations.

By now the event has grown beyond music to include dancers, drummers and other special guest performers. This contemporary interpretation of ancient

rituals adds up to a stunning extravaganza that will appeal to everyone from adult music and dance buffs to kids who thrill to colorful spectacle.

Just the experience of being in the gargantuan Cathedral of St. John the Divine is striking. The structure spans the length of two football fields and is capable of housing the Statue of Liberty in its interior.

Light Up The Night On St. Lucia's Day

The farther north you go, the shorter the winter days get — so Nordic countries have all the more reason to celebrate the increasing daylight after the winter solstice.

That's why [St. Lucia's Day](#) is such a big deal in Sweden. Though the event now lands on Dec. 13, it originated as a winter solstice celebration.

The magic and beauty of light is at the center of this holiday. Girls wearing crowns of (now battery-powered) candles and dressed as St. Lucia, in white robes with red sashes, proceed through cities and churches, singing along the way.

The celebrations extend into Swedish homes where families nosh on saffron buns, pepparkakor (thin gingerbread) and the mulled wine called glögg.

If you're visiting Sweden during this atmospheric event, you can expect to find processions in most cities and towns, and pageants in churches.

If you want to plan ahead, some larger Stockholm churches host ticketed St. Lucia events that are sure to showcase the best of the glowing holiday.

Be Dazzled By Dancing Light In Barcelona

At Barcelona's Hospital de Sant Pau, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the historic and modern come together for a winter solstice display like no other.

Starting on the year's longest night, [brightly colored projected-light displays](#) that celebrate the annual lengthening of days flicker across the facade of the historic former hospital building now known as the [Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site](#). Amplified music serves as the soundtrack for the beautiful projections.

This free event has become a must-see for both locals and holiday visitors.

If your trip's timing doesn't include the solstice itself, you'll have additional chances to see the light display through early January.

But if you do make it for opening night, you won't be disappointed. In addition to the light show, the venue hosts a 90-minute Christmas concert.

Eat Colorfully During China's Dongzhi Festival

If you want to enjoy the Chinese winter solstice tradition, the [Dongzhi Festival](#), you may need an invite. This venerable celebration tends to take place privately, inside family homes.

Dongzhi means "the extreme of winter," but it's a cozy affair. Families typically cook special foods together, to fortify themselves in preparation for the brighter days ahead. The celebration is a colorful one, with diverse customs that vary by region.

In some parts of southern China, families make and eat tangyuan, a dessert that consists of multicolored balls of rice flour in a sweet broth. In other regions, people eat dumplings, nourishing treats that add welcome warmth and calories in the harsh weather.

If your family won't be traveling to China this winter, your family can get a taste of this fascinating holiday by studying [Dongzhi traditions](#), and learning [how to make tangyuan](#).

Whether you're looking for an excuse to travel the world or want to learn about another culture's traditions at home, the winter solstice is the perfect opportunity to celebrate in a new way. Or, rather, to celebrate in a very old way that might be new to you.

A former downtown development professional, Natalie Burg is a freelancer who writes about growth, entrepreneurialism and innovation.

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