

China govt to help run coal power plants at full capacity

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Two-thirds of China's economy is fuelled by coal.

China will help its coal-fired power plants run at full capacity, the government has announced, raising further alarm about the fate of Beijing's climate pledges.

Swathes of the world's second-biggest economy were paralysed last year because of power shortages, partly caused by a drop in coal supply as global prices of the fossil fuel soared.

China is the world's biggest emitter of the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change, and has pledged to peak emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060.

But coal production has been ramped up since last year's [energy shortages](#), sparking uncertainty and concern about those targets.

The focus on energy security and [economic growth](#) was reiterated at a high-level meeting of China's State Council, chaired by Premier Li Keqiang, state news agency Xinhua reported Tuesday.

It was decided in the Monday meeting that "coal supply will be increased and coal-fired [power plants](#) will be supported in running at full capacity and generating more electricity" to meet industrial and residential demand, according to Xinhua.

The move comes weeks after President Xi Jinping told top policymakers to ensure that [emissions reductions](#) do not hurt economic growth and [energy security](#)—widely seen as a signal to limit restrictions on the coal sector.

Following the energy crunch last year, China reopened dozens of coal mines and scrapped production quotas, unravelling earlier steps to curb emissions.

The country's coal output hit a record of over four billion metric tons last year—the highest in a decade—after imports were disrupted by the pandemic.

Two-thirds of China's economy is fuelled by coal, and it generates an estimated 29 percent of the world's [greenhouse gas emissions](#), double the US share and three times that of the European Union.

The Chinese government's measures to curb emissions are considered crucial to keeping global temperature rises to under 1.5 degrees Celsius as agreed in the landmark Paris climate accord.

"We are pivoting back to the model of supporting the economy at all costs," said Li Shuo, a campaigner for Greenpeace China.

"China is losing time for crucial climate action."

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