

# China Plans 100 Panda-Shaped Solar Plants on New Silk Road

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BEIJING/HONG KONG (Reuters) - In a country where you can find everything from chopsticks to slippers designed to look like pandas, one Chinese energy company is going a step further by building 100 solar farms shaped like the bears along the route of the ambitious Belt and Road initiative.

Panda Green Energy Group ([0686.HK](http://0686.HK)) has already connected one such 50-megawatt (MW) plant to the grid in the northern province of Shanxi, the first step in a public relations stunt that emphasizes the cuddly side of the world's No.2 economy.

Built with darker crystalline silicon and lighter-colored thin film solar cells, the plant resembles a cartoon giant panda from the air.

“The plant required an investment of 350 million yuan (\$52 million), and it would require investment of \$3 billion for 100 such plants,” Panda Green Energy’s Chief Executive Li Yuan told Reuters.

Li did not say where the longer-term investment would come from.

The Hong Kong-based firm is currently in talks with Canada, Australia, Germany and Italy to launch more panda-shaped power stations.

An aerial view shows panda-shaped solar plants built by Panda Green Energy Group in Datong, Shanxi province, China in this still image taken from a video footage, courtesy of Panda Green Energy Group, shot July 21, 2017. Panda Green Energy Group/Handout via REUTERS

The Belt and Road initiative is a plan to emulate the ancient Silk Road by opening new trade corridors across the globe using roads, power lines, ports and energy pipelines.

A 100-MW panda power plant would be expected to generate 3.2 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy over 25 years, according to the company, capable of supplying power to over 10,000 households annually.

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Panda Green Energy is currently constructing its second panda power plant in Shanxi, which accounts for a quarter of China's coal reserves.

Utilization of one panda solar power plant will save the equivalent of a total 1.06 million tonnes of coal and cut emissions of greenhouse gases by 2.74 million tonnes in 25 years, the company said.

The firm has been investing in and running solar power plants in China's major solar hubs such as Xinjiang and Qinghai province, as well as some solar projects in Britain.

Shanxi aims to install 12 gigawatts of solar capacity by 2020 versus 1.13 GW installed in 2015.

(\$1 = 6.7642 Chinese yuan renminbi)

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