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BRIGHT FUTURE

Solar power hits new milestones in the US even as Trump boosts coal over clean energy



Cattle graze under solar panels April 28 at a farm in Christiana, Tenn. JOSHUA A. BICKEL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Jennifer McDermott
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

Even as President Donald Trump boosts coal over clean energy, solar power is hitting new milestones in the U.S. and remains the leading source of new power.

Data released Wednesday by global energy think tank Ember, along with a report by the Solar Energy Industries Association and analytics firm Wood Mackenzie, show the continued growth of solar and decline of coal in the United States despite federal policy. In May, for the first time, solar supplied more of the nation's electricity than coal, or 12.8%, Ember said. Coal supplied 12.2%, its fourth-lowest monthly share ever.

"For years solar power has risen in the U.S. electricity mix," said Nicolas Fulghum, senior energy and data analyst at Ember. "At the same time, coal power has lost its status, first as the largest source in the U.S. mix, and then gradually over the years has fallen even further."

Solar also became the third-largest source of electricity in the U.S. in May, behind natural gas and nuclear, Fulghum said. Coal generation hit an all-time monthly low in April and rebounded only modestly in May, allowing increasing solar generation to overtake coal, he added.

Electricity is produced by convert-



American Electric Power's John Amos coal-fired plant in Winfield, W.Va., is seen from Poca, W.Va., on March 22. ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

ing sources of energy — fossil fuels, renewable resources and nuclear — into electrical power. Burning coal, oil and natural gas for electricity emits carbon dioxide, trapping heat in the atmosphere and warming the planet. By contrast, solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower and nuclear are carbon-free.

After about two decades of essentially flat electricity consumption in the U.S., electricity demand is increasing to power artificial intelligence, grow domestic manufacturing and electrify

transportation and heating. Fulghum said he expects to see more months when solar exceeds coal generation, before overtaking it on an annual basis in a few years.

These milestones signify that solar "has staying power" at a time when there's less support for renewable energy at the federal level, he added.

Wind and solar combined have overtaken coal in the past, and wind power

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As Pa. cracks down on AI, chatbots continue to play doctor

Bots claimed to be licensed to practice medicine

By Jaxon White
 SPOTLIGHT PA

HARRISBURG — Chatbots on five different websites claimed to be licensed to practice medicine in the commonwealth when prompted — the same kind of output that led the Shapiro administration to file a lawsuit last month.

A task force under Pennsylvania's Department of State has been working since February to identify AI chatbots posing as licensed professionals and misleading users. Based on that work, the administration filed suit against the role-playing site Character.AI.

Mirroring the investigation detailed in the Department of State's lawsuit, Spotlight PA had conversations with AI characters on websites Talkie, Janitor, Kindroid, Replika and Nomi.AI. All provided a false Pennsylvania medical license number when prompted, a key part of the state's argument in its lawsuit against Character.AI.

Spotlight PA checked responses from these bots after reviewing online articles and digital message boards to find 10 popular companion and role-playing AI chatbots. A reporter either selected a premade character or — when necessary — entered a description that would generate a doctor personality. It then presented hypothetical lists of symptoms to

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How to make 'financial wellness' work for you

NERDWALLET

The term "financial wellness" has increased in popularity over the past five years. But what exactly does it mean and how can it help us with our money?

For many financial experts, it's synonymous with having a healthier relationship with our personal finances.

"People are talking about wellness and self-care in ways they haven't before, and that has expanded into the finance space," says Audrey Emerson, a certified financial planner and founder of Cents of Joy, a planning firm in Bellingham, Washington.

That's a good thing, she says, because it opens up conversations that include the emotional aspects of money, which can play a big role in how we handle our finances.

"You can't change your relationship with money if we don't talk about how you feel about it," Emerson says.

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A government-commissioned study found drinking risks

US guidelines didn't feature its findings

By Laura Ungar and Ali Swenson
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

A study commissioned by President Joe Biden's administration to investigate alcohol-related health harms was released independently on Tuesday, after President Donald Trump's administration decided not to feature the researchers' findings in new dietary guidelines as it faced

pushback from the alcohol industry and a congressional committee.

The findings of the study, in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, were in line with years of research, saying that health risks go up with just one drink a day and no level of alcohol has a protective effect on mortality. Even levels considered "moderate" raise the risk of premature death and more than 200 diseases,

including heart disease and cancer, researchers found.

The new study was one of two government reviews meant to help inform the new dietary guidelines. Released earlier this year, the guidelines advised consuming "less alcohol for better overall health." The authors of the independently released study say that didn't provide detailed practical advice about the risks of drinking.

One of the officials involved in the study commissioned by Biden's Democratic admin-

istration accused Trump's Republican administration of "sidelining" the research — an allegation the Trump administration denies.

Robert Vincent, a former Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration alcohol policy official who led the yearslong effort, made the accusations in an editorial published alongside the study. Vincent was laid off last year as part of a government reduction in force.



Various wines are displayed in Sonoma, Calif., July 10, 2017. ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

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