

## Pakistan solar energy

Countrywide, consumers, businesses and industries are rushing to tap into the cheap renewable power source as an alternative to the erratic and expensive state-provided, largely fossil-fuel-based energy.

Pakistan's unreliable power grid, compounded by under-supply and poor infrastructure, means that millions of people live in constant uncertainty. Many households around the country have also been crippled by soaring energy prices over the past three years, inflated by high oil and gas prices post Putin's invasion of Ukraine, an over-investment in thermal power plants and government subsidy cuts to meet International Monetary Fund loan conditions.

It is unclear exactly how much of the total imported solar capacity will be installed in 2024, as government records cannot keep pace with the speed of the consumer-led transition. But for homes across the country, the energy switch is already making a difference.

His mom's experience -- she spent two days in the hospital recovering from heatstroke after suffering inside on a scorching summer's day without electricity -- was the catalyst for him to install solar panels on his rooftop. His colleague recommended he buy from a local company that was importing the panels from China.

"When you don't have any electricity, forget about the air conditioning. Your fans are not working. You don't have refrigerators on. You don't even have any cold water to drink," said Hussain, who described the electricity blackouts as continuously disruptive but especially concerning during summer months.

"The way those power plants were planned and funded was to run a minimum amount of hours," said Jones. Because they're no longer meeting those minimum hours, the electricity they do provide is becoming significantly more expensive for the remaining consumers, Jones explained.

Pakistan's solar revolution is only possible because of the plummeting cost of solar PV modules, which have reduced in price by 90% in the last 15 years alone. Most cheap solar panels are sold by China, the world's number one manufacturer of solar PV modules.

Pakistan is not the only country tapping into the cost-saving clean alternative. Throughout 2024, Jones' team at Ember tracked high numbers of Chinese solar exports to Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, South Africa and Oman.

"It is transformative and it's affordable," said Azeem Azhar, author, tech entrepreneur and founder of research group Exponential View, who likens the exponential drop in the cost of solar technology to the PC revolution of the 1980s.



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Pakistan's rapid adoption of solar energy, driven primarily by market forces and with minimal political support, provides valuable lessons for other emerging markets. Declining solar panel prices, coupled with skyrocketing grid electricity tariffs that have increased by 155% over three years, are fuelling a rush in renewable energy adoption in Pakistan, with solar power leading the way. The country is now the world's sixth-largest solar market.

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