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## Pakistan's Solar Surge Amid Energy Crisis

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Pakistan, grappling with chronic energy shortages, is witnessing a remarkable surge in solar power adoption, driven by skyrocketing electricity costs and unreliable grid supply. This article explores the rapid rise of rooftop solar installations, the challenges facing the national grid, and the implications for Pakistan's energy future as it balances economic pressures and renewable ambitions.

For years, Pakistan's energy sector has been plagued by rolling blackouts, costly fossil fuel imports, and a debt-laden power grid, leaving millions without reliable electricity. With tariffs soaring 155% since 2022, as reported by the World Economic Forum, households and businesses are turning to solar power in droves. In 2024, Pakistan imported 22 gigawatts (GW) of solar panels, mostly from China, making it the world's third-largest solar importer, according to Ember. This grassroots revolution, described by

Muhammad Mustafa Amjad of Renewables First as a “people-led” movement, has propelled solar to 25.3% of utility-supplied electricity in 2025, outpacing coal and gas. In Karachi, residents like Fareeda Saleem, who sold her jewelry to afford panels, now enjoy uninterrupted power, a stark contrast to 18-hour outages.

The solar boom, however, strains Pakistan's fragile grid. As affluent consumers and industries defect to solar, grid demand has plummeted 10% since 2023, exacerbating the sector's \$9 billion debt, per OilPrice.com. This “circular debt” cycle, as economist Kaiser Bengali noted, risks cascading defaults as utilities raise tariffs for remaining customers. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) proposed slashing net metering rates from PKR 27 to PKR 10 per kilowatt-hour, sparking backlash from solar advocates like Waqas Moosa, who warned it could deter installations and increase oil imports. The government paused these changes for public consultation, reflecting policy indecision.

Despite challenges, Pakistan's solar rush offers hope. The Punjab and Sindh governments are subsidizing panels for low-income households, aiming for 30% renewable energy by 2030. Yet, grid modernization lags, risking further instability. As Amjad told Yale Environment 360, Pakistan's model could inspire Global South nations, but only with robust reforms to balance solar growth with grid sustainability.