

Is solar energy making inroads in North Korea's Power Sector?

Solar energy is making inroads into North Korea's power sector as residents are looking to install panels to have the lights on, at least partially, as the regime is failing to supply its citizens with electricity while prioritizing power to factories.

Does North Korea still use solar power?

In this installment of our series on North Korea's energy sector, we move away from official and commercial uses of solar and seek to understand the growing use of solar power for personal energy consumption in a country where its people still suffer from an unreliable power supply nationwide.

Can solar power solve North Korea's energy problems?

Jeong-hyeon, a North Korean escapee, told the Financial Times that many residents in Hamhung, the second-most populous city, "relied on a solar panel, a battery and a power generator to light their houses and power their television". But solar power is still only a partial solution to the country's energy woes.

How many solar panels are there in North Korea?

The Korea Energy Economics Institute in Seoul estimates that 2.88 million solar panels, mostly small units used to power electronic devices and LED lamps, are now in use across North Korea, accounting for an estimated 7 per cent of household power demand.

Does North Korea have energy security challenges?

Access to solar panels has created capacity where the state falls short, but the overall energy security challenges facing the nation are daunting. This report, "North Korea's Energy Sector," is a compilation of articles published on 38 North in 2023 that surveyed North Korea's energy production facilities and infrastructure.

Why does North Korea need a solar power supply?

An insufficient and unstable power supply is one of the critical challenges North Korea struggles to address. While solar energy has provided one way for citizens to better cope with this reality, it is incapable of supplying enough power to satisfy everyday operations and needs.

North Korea is 148th out of 211 countries and territories in terms of its solar potential, according to World Bank data that ranks the practical potential for solar power generation in countries around the world.

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As expected, North Korea, with its highly mountainous terrain, was found to have greater potential wind energy resources, compared to South Korea. North Korea's solar potential was slightly lower than South Korea's because of its higher latitude and somewhat cloudier conditions during certain times of the year.

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As mentioned, North Korea exhibited lower solar energy potential than South Korea over the period from 2013 to 2015, largely owing to its higher latitudes and more mountainous regions.

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