

# One million Bangladesh homes on solar power

June 15 2011

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A solar energy panel is seen on the roof of a house at a village near the Sunderbans in Bangladesh. The number of households in the electricity-starved South Asian nation using solar panels has crossed the one million mark -- the fastest expansion of solar use in the world, officials said.

The number of households in electricity-starved Bangladesh using solar panels has crossed the one million mark -- the fastest expansion of solar use in the world, officials said Wednesday.

In 2002, just 7,000 households were using solar panels but now more than a million households -- or some five million people -- gather solar energy, said Nazmul Haq of the Infrastructure Development Company (IDCOL).

"It's the fastest expansion of solar energy anywhere in the world," said

Haq, who heads the state-run IDCOL, which provides financing for clean [energy projects](#).

"We crossed the one million threshold more than 18 months ahead of schedule (and) we have set a new target to cross 2.5 million by 2014," he said.

Rural households in Bangladesh are frequently not on the state [electrical grid](#) and so have embraced solar power, helped by NGOs providing panels which can be paid for in small monthly instalments.

Some 60 percent of Bangladesh's 150 million people have no access to mains electricity, with many relying on costly kerosene lamps for lighting.

Years of under-investment in infrastructure means state-owned [power plants](#) generate only around 4,700 [megawatts](#) of electricity a day against demand of 6,000 megawatts -- which is growing by 500 megawatts a year.

A World Bank report last month said solar panels had "changed the face of the remote, rural areas of Bangladesh," by providing cheap, reliable electricity.

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