

Press release

Pakistan needs to have sustained and consistent energy policies to provide cheap and reliable electricity to its people, said Abu Bakar Ahmed, secretary of Sindh government's energy department at a panel discussion held in Karachi on Tuesday. "Since 1947, we have been lurching from one ad hoc measure to the next and never thought of doing long term planning in the energy sector," he said during his concluding remarks on the occasion.

This lack of long term planning means that a lot of energy in the country is being produced with very costly sources such as furnace oil and gas, he said. "The biggest problem in using renewable energy sources such as solar panels is their high capital cost. Unless, we are able to either import solar panels cheaply or we start producing them within Pakistan, we cannot use these renewable energy sources effectively and economically," he added.

The panel discussion was organised by Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (PRIED), a think tank based in Islamabad around its research report titled 'Fostering Solar PVs in High Loss Feeders: Mapping Solutions'. The study is based on a household survey conducted in several parts of Karachi last year, aimed at providing solutions against loadshedding in Karachi's high loss feeder areas.

Manzoor Ahmed Alizai, one of the lead authors of the study, told the participants of the panel discussion that we need tailor-made solutions and business model that can cater to the needs of those communities in Karachi that cannot afford the costly energy being provided to them and have not access to money required for installing solar panels on their own. "The government, therefore, needs to finance the capital costs required for the installation of these solar panels," he said. "This makes a compelling case for the solarization of high loss feeders as this can help the electricity demand locally, reduce transmission and distribution losses and help the authorities address the problem of electricity theft in Karachi's high loss feeders," he added.

The panel discussion put together participants from across Karachi's population and included senior government officers, civil society activists, community representatives, academicians and researchers, political leaders and K-Electric officials. They highlighted various aspects of the electricity crisis in Karachi and emphasized the need for finding innovative solutions to address that crisis. Most of them endorsed the study's finding that solarization was the most feasible and most sustainable option among those solutions and, therefore, needs to be prioritized at an urgent pace.