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# Automatic Solar Photovoltaic Cleaning Robot Using Arduino

***Govinda S. Kedar, Jayarajesh Vattam, Ms. Manasi Sanjay Bhavar, Mr. Atul Jagannath Vishe, Mr. Akshay Ashok Thakare, Mr. Chandrakant Martand Farde***

ARMIET, Shahapur, Thane Mumbai
Email id: bhavarmanasi20@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

The accumulation of dust, dirt, and other contaminants on photovoltaic (PV) panels in desert areas, four-season countries, and industrial regions can significantly reduce their efficiency and hinder the conversion of light into electricity. As a result, regular cleaning of PV panels is necessary to maintain optimal performance. However, traditional manual cleaning methods are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and can potentially damage the panels. To address these challenges, researchers worldwide are exploring self-cleaning methods for PV panels, including electrostatic, mechanical, and coating-based approaches. This article aims to provide a review of the progress and achievements in these self-cleaning methods, with a particular focus on super hydrophobic coating-based techniques. One of the self-cleaning methods involves using electrostatic forces to repel dust particles from the PV panel surface. By applying an electric charge to the panels, dust particles are effectively repelled, reducing their adhesion and allowing them to be easily removed. This method can be effective in preventing the buildup of dust and dirt on the panels. Mechanical methods utilize mechanical vibrations or movements to dislodge and remove contaminants from the PV panels. These techniques can involve the use of brushes, wipers, or other mechanical devices to physically remove the accumulated dust. However, caution must be exercised to avoid damaging the PV panel surface, as harsh brushing can lead to cracks and further deterioration of performance. Coating-based self-cleaning methods rely on applying a hydrophobic or super hydrophobic coating on the PV panel surface. These coatings possess unique properties that repel water and prevent the adhesion of dirt and dust particles. When rainwater or dew comes into contact with the coated surface, it forms droplets that roll off, carrying away the contaminants and leaving the panel clean. Super hydrophobic coatings are particularly effective in achieving self-cleaning properties.

Looking ahead, future research in self-cleaning methods for PV panels should focus on developing mini robots capable of autonomously cleaning large-scale PV installations. These robots could navigate the panel surfaces and remove contaminants without the need for manual intervention. Additionally, advancements in spray coating techniques can contribute to the development of more efficient and durable self-cleaning coatings. In conclusion, self-cleaning methods offer promising solutions to address the challenges of maintaining the efficiency and performance of PV panels in various environmental conditions. The use of electrostatic, mechanical, and coating-based techniques, with a special emphasis on super hydrophobic coatings, shows potential in minimizing the need for manual cleaning and improving the long-term performance of PV installation.

## 1. INTODUCTION

The proposed solar panel cleaning system is an example of an autonomous robot designed for industrial cleaning applications in large-scale solar power plants. It utilizes a unique approach to overcome the challenge of moving on slanted surfaces. The robot employs a pneumatic system with vacuum suction cups attached to its bottom. These suction cups, when activated by vacuum pumps, create a suction force that allows the robot to attach itself to the slanted surface of the solar panels. By using this method, the robot can move on the panels without slipping or falling. The cleaning process involves the use of a rotating cylindrical brush. The robot first moves a certain distance parallel to the base of the solar panel, and then the brush moves in a perpendicular direction from top to bottom, effectively cleaning the surface.

The autonomous nature of the robot enables it to operate independently for extended periods without the need for human intervention. It can gather information from its environment using sensors and make decisions based on pre-programmed instructions. The robot is also equipped with the capability to navigate within its designated workspace without human assistance.

Additionally, the robot is designed to prioritize its own well-being and the safety of humans. It can detect and avoid situations that may be detrimental, unless it is specifically programmed to override safety measures.

Overall, the proposed solar panel cleaning system combines the principles of an autonomous robot with the specific requirements of cleaning large-scale solar panels. It provides an efficient and effective solution for maintaining the cleanliness of solar power plants while minimizing the risks and difficulties associated with manual cleaning.

## 2. WORKING

The device name which has to be controlled is pre-programmed and registered in the ALEXA server. So every time, we call upon the device name to be turned on and off, ALEXA gets its information from its Server through the internet connection. When we give the Wake word “ALEXA”, the device (Echo dot) gets ready to accept the command which is indicated by the blue circular light. When we give the command such as “Alexa, turn on the light” or in some similar manner which is recognised by its advanced AI system, the command gets processed through the Server and the processed signal is transferred to the ESP8266.The ESP8266 is registered with the APP KEY to enable connecting to the phone and the Wi-Fi and to help in auto connection to the Wi-Fi, a SSID name and its password is registered in the ESP module. Each ESP is distinguished from one another by its APPKEY. The command gets received by the ESP8266 and the command gets interfaced with the programming of the ESP module. Based on this, the relay gets turned ON. The Command signal irrespective of the load device activates the load. They operate irrespective of the voice of the user and it is greatly useful in Automation system in offices. By simply connecting to a Wi-Fi network whose name can be configured in the ALEXA cloud server, automation of appliance becomes easier.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The automatic solar panel cleaning system mentioned in the paper aims to address the issue of dust accumulation on solar PV modules, particularly in dusty environments like tropical countries such as India. When dust accumulates on the front surface of solar panels, it hinders the incident sunlight from reaching the photovoltaic cells, leading to a reduction in power generation capacity. If solar panels are not cleaned regularly, their power output can decrease by as much as 50% in just one month. Therefore, to ensure optimal energy generation and maximize the utilization of solar energy, it is crucial to keep the solar panels clean and free from dust. The proposed solution in the paper is an automatic cleaning system for solar panels. This system incorporates sensors to detect the presence of dust on the surface of the panels. Once dust is detected, the system initiates a cleaning process to remove the accumulated dust automatically.

By implementing such an automatic cleaning system, solar panels can be maintained in a clean and efficient state without requiring manual intervention. This helps to ensure the consistent and optimal generation of solar energy, mitigating the loss of power output due to dust accumulation. Overall, the purpose of this paper is to design and install an automatic solar panel cleaning system to address the issue of dust accumulation on solar PV modules. This system aims to maximize the power generation capacity of solar panels and enhance the efficiency of utilizing solar energy.

## 4. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the project is to design and develop a solar panel cleaning machine that can effectively clean solar panels, automate the cleaning process using Arduino, eliminate the need for manual work, prevent dust-related problems on solar panels, and remove sticky dust by incorporating a water sprayer.

**Methodology:**

The proposed methodology for the solar panel cleaning machine involves the following steps:

1.Design of the cleaning unit: The cleaning unit is designed to move along a central spline in a back and forth motion. It is equipped with a cylindrical brush that rotates in a clockwise direction. The movement of the cleaning unit forces the dust to move in the direction of motion and blows it away at the edge of the panel.

2.Automation using Arduino: An Arduino microcontroller is utilized to automate the cleaning process. The Arduino controls the movement of the cleaning unit and coordinates with other components of the system.

3.Dust removal mechanism: The cleaning unit's motion and rotating brush effectively remove dust from the surface of the solar panel. The dust is forced in the direction of motion and blown away at the panel's edge.

4.Water sprayer for sticky dust: To tackle sticky dust, a water sprayer is incorporated into the cleaning unit. The water sprayer helps to loosen and remove stubborn dust particles.

5.Locomotion units: The system includes locomotion units that control the movement of the cleaning unit. They release suction cups to keep the system in rest, and the wheels move parallel to the panel's edge until an uncleaned part is reached.

6.Sequential cleaning: Once one array of solar panels is cleaned, the machine moves on to the next array, ensuring the entire array is cleaned systematically.

By following this methodology, the solar panel cleaning machine aims to achieve effective cleaning, automation, avoidance of manual work, prevention of dust-related problems, and removal of sticky dust using the water sprayer.

## 5. ANALYSIS OF AUTOMATIC SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC CLEANING ROBOT USING ARDUINO

The automatic solar photovoltaic cleaning robot using Arduino is an innovative solution to maintain the efficiency of solar panels by keeping them clean. In this analysis, we will explore the key components, working principle, advantages, and potential challenges associated with such a system.

- **Key Components:**

1.Arduino: It serves as the brain of the robot, controlling various operations and integrating sensors and actuators.

2.Cleaning Mechanism: This can include brushes, wipers, or other cleaning attachments to remove dirt, dust, and debris from solar panels.

3.Sensors: These can include light sensors to detect the ambient light intensity, obstacle sensors to avoid collisions, and possibly temperature sensors to monitor panel temperature.

4.Actuators: Motors and servos are used to drive the movement of the robot and operate the cleaning mechanism.

5.Power Supply: Solar panels or batteries can provide the necessary power to the robot.

- **Working Principle:**

1.The cleaning robot operates based on a pre-programmed set of instructions using Arduino. The basic steps involved in its operation are as follows:

2.The light sensors measure the intensity of light falling on the solar panels.

If the light intensity falls below a certain threshold, indicating a reduction in efficiency, the robot is activated.

3.The robot starts moving along the rows or columns of solar panels, guided by either predetermined paths or sensors detecting the edges of the panels.

4.When the robot detects an obstacle, it changes its path to avoid a collision.

The cleaning mechanism is activated when the robot reaches a panel, removing dirt and debris using brushes or wipers.

5.After cleaning one panel, the robot proceeds to the next until it covers the entire array of solar panels.

Once the cleaning operation is complete, the robot returns to its initial position or a designated docking station.

- **Advantages:**

1.Improved Efficiency: Regular cleaning ensures optimal sunlight absorption, maximizing the energy output of solar panels.

2.Cost Savings: Automated cleaning eliminates the need for manual labor, reducing maintenance costs over time.

3.Increased Lifespan: Proper cleaning helps prevent the accumulation of dirt and debris that can degrade panel performance and shorten their lifespan.

4.Environmental Benefits: By maintaining solar panel efficiency, the cleaning robot contributes to a greener and more sustainable energy generation.

- **Potential Challenges:**

1.Design Limitations: The robot's size, weight, and cleaning mechanism should be suitable for the solar panel layout to navigate efficiently.

2.Environmental Factors: Adapting to various weather conditions and ensuring the robot's stability during strong winds or heavy rain may be challenging.

3.Sensor Accuracy: The accuracy of light sensors and obstacle detection sensors can impact the effectiveness of the cleaning operation.

4.Power Supply: Ensuring a reliable power source is essential for uninterrupted robot operation, especially during cloudy days or nighttime.

5.Maintenance: The robot itself may require periodic maintenance to ensure its proper functioning and longevity.

Overall, an automatic solar photovoltaic cleaning robot using Arduino offers a practical solution for maintaining the performance of solar panels. While there may be challenges to overcome, the potential benefits in terms of increased efficiency, cost savings, and environmental impact make it a promising technology for solar energy systems.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Automatic solar photovoltaic (PV) cleaning robots have gained attention in recent years due to their potential to improve the efficiency and output of solar panels. The accumulation of dirt, dust, and debris on solar panels can significantly reduce their power generation capacity. Regular cleaning of solar panels is essential to maintain their optimal performance. However, manual cleaning can be time-consuming, labor-intensive, and costly, especially for large-scale solar installations. Using an Arduino microcontroller to develop an automatic cleaning robot for solar panels offers a cost-effective and customizable solution. Arduino boards are widely available and can be programmed to control various robotic functions. By integrating sensors, motors, and cleaning mechanisms, an Arduino-based robot can autonomously navigate solar arrays, detect dirty areas, and perform cleaning operations efficiently.

The key components of an automatic solar PV cleaning robot may include:

1.Sensor System: The robot can be equipped with various sensors, such as light sensors, temperature sensors, or even cameras, to detect the level of dirt or obstructions on the solar panels. These sensors provide feedback to the Arduino controller, enabling it to make decisions based on the collected data.

2.Navigation and Positioning: The robot needs to navigate through the solar array accurately without causing any damage to the panels. It can utilize obstacle detection sensors or image processing techniques to ensure safe movement. GPS or other positioning systems can be integrated to facilitate precise positioning of the robot.

3.Cleaning Mechanism: Different cleaning methods can be employed, such as brushes, wipers, or sprayers, depending on the type and extent of dirt on the solar panels. The cleaning mechanism can be controlled by the Arduino board, ensuring optimal cleaning efficiency.

4.Power Source: The robot can be powered by rechargeable batteries or connected to the solar panel system itself. Careful consideration should be given to power management to ensure continuous operation and recharging capabilities.

Potential benefits of an automatic solar PV cleaning robot using Arduino include:

1.Improved Efficiency: Regular cleaning of solar panels enhances their efficiency by removing dirt and debris that obstruct sunlight. An automated robot can ensure timely and thorough cleaning, maximizing power generation.

2.Cost Savings: By automating the cleaning process, labor costs associated with manual cleaning are eliminated. Additionally, the enhanced performance of clean solar panels leads to increased energy production and reduced maintenance costs.

3.Reduced Water Consumption: Some cleaning methods, such as sprayers, can minimize water usage compared to traditional manual cleaning methods, promoting sustainable water management.

4.Scalability: The robot can be designed to handle large-scale solar installations efficiently. Multiple robots can work in synchronization to clean extensive arrays, reducing cleaning time and increasing overall productivity.

It's worth noting that the actual performance and efficiency of an automatic solar PV cleaning robot would depend on various factors, such as the design, cleaning method employed, environmental conditions, and maintenance protocols. Practical implementation and rigorous testing would be required to evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of such a system.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The robotic system you proposed to tackle the dust accumulation on PV panels in desert conditions sounds promising and can indeed help maintain the power generation potential of solar systems. By utilizing the latest technology and replacing conventional cleaning methods, you aim to set a new benchmark in the industry. The conventional methods of cleaning solar panels often require significant amounts of water, time, and money. However, your robot offers a more efficient solution by reducing the water usage and overall maintenance costs. This is crucial in regions where water scarcity is a concern. The robot's ability to clean the solar farm as and when required, without the need for manual labor, not only saves costs but also minimizes water waste. Additionally, you mentioned incorporating interesting features such as de-ionized water cleaning, cameras for inspection, and climate-based cleaning. These features enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the robotic system. One significant advantage of the robot is its ability to inspect the solar farm without physically visiting the site. This remote monitoring capability can save time and resources, allowing for proactive maintenance and identifying issues promptly.

As technology continues to advance, there is potential to reduce the weight and create a more compact design for the robotic system. This would further improve its usability and efficiency. With the increasing adoption of solar systems in various industries and homes, the future scope for this robotic system appears promising. The demand for efficient maintenance solutions will likely grow, providing opportunities for your system to make a significant impact in the solar energy sector.

Overall, your proposed robotic system offers an innovative approach to tackling dust accumulation on PV panels, saving water, time, and money while ensuring optimal power generation.

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