Improving Solar Forcasting using Deep Learning Model for efficient Hybrid System in Haldwani

*Abstract*— The integration of renewable energy sources, particularly solar power, into hybrid energy systems is gaining significant attention to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and improve energy efficiency. However, the inherent variability in solar irradiance poses challenges for accurate forecasting, which is crucial for efficient hybrid system operation. This study focuses on enhancing the forecast accuracy of solar irradiance in Haldwani using a deep learning approach. A hybrid model combining Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and Bidirectional Long Short-Term Memory (BiLSTM) layers is developed to capture both spatial and temporal features from historical and forecast data. The model is optimized using the Nadam optimizer for faster convergence and improved accuracy. Validation is performed for a recent week in 2025, and summer and winter days in 2016.

*Keywords: CNN-BiLSTM, solar irradiance, hybrid energy system, deep learning, forecasting, Nadam, Optuna*

# **I. Introduction**

## **I.I. Background**

As global energy demands rise and concerns over environmental sustainability intensify, hybrid energy systems—especially those integrating solar photovoltaic (PV) power—have become a key focus in energy planning. These systems combine renewable sources with conventional ones (like diesel generators) to ensure reliability and minimize fossil fuel usage. However, the efficiency of such systems heavily depends on the accurate prediction of solar irradiance, which influences energy production planning and load balancing.

## **I.II. Problem Statement**

In regions like Haldwani, Uttarakhand, solar power potential is promising, but the variability in irradiance due to changing weather patterns reduces the reliability of forecast-based hybrid systems. Traditional statistical and numerical methods often fall short in accurately capturing such complex, nonlinear patterns in time series data.

## **I.III. Objectives of the Study**

The primary goal of this study is to improve the accuracy of solar irradiance forecasting to optimize the energy management of a solar-diesel hybrid system in Haldwani. Specific objectives include:

* To collect and preprocess historical meteorological data for Haldwani.
* To build a CNN-BiLSTM-based deep learning model that captures both spatial and temporal dependencies in the data.
* To compare the model's predictions with forecasted values and evaluate the improvement in accuracy.
* To analyze model performance using standard error metrics and visualization techniques

## **I.IV. Scope of the Study**

This project focuses on next-day hourly solar irradiance prediction using deep learning. It does not include PV power output modelling or economic analysis. However, the accurate irradiance predictions produced by this work can significantly contribute to hybrid system optimization and renewable energy forecasting.

# **II. Literature Review**

Accurate forecasting of solar irradiance is crucial for the effective integration of solar energy into hybrid systems. Over the years, a variety of models have been proposed—ranging from traditional statistical techniques to more recent artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning approaches. This chapter summarizes existing methods, highlights their limitations, and presents the rationale for choosing a CNN-BiLSTM architecture.

## **II.I. Traditional Approaches**

Statistical models such as ARIMA (Auto-Regressive Integrated Moving Average), exponential smoothing, and regression analysis have been widely used for solar forecasting. While these models are interpretable and computationally efficient, they often fail to capture nonlinear patterns and dependencies in the data, especially under variable weather conditions

## **II.II. Machine Learning Models**

With the rise of machine learning, models like Support Vector Machines (SVM), Random Forests, and Gradient Boosting have shown improved performance over statistical methods. However, these models still struggle with long-term temporal dependencies and may require handcrafted feature engineering.

## **II.III. Deep Learning Techniques**

Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), especially Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, have become popular for time-series forecasting due to their ability to remember past data. However, unidirectional LSTMs may lose context from the future, which is critical in weather forecasting.

To overcome this, Bidirectional LSTM (BiLSTM) models have been introduced, which process data in both forward and backward directions. Recent works have also explored the use of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to extract short-term spatial patterns from time series before feeding them into LSTM layers. The combination, known as CNN-LSTM or CNN-BiLSTM, offers improved accuracy by capturing both local features and long-term dependencies.

## **II.IV. Optimization And Performance**

Several studies have experimented with optimizers like Adam, RMSprop, and Nadam. Nadam (Nesterov-accelerated Adaptive Moment Estimation) has been shown to improve convergence speed and stability in time series applications.

## **II.V. Gaps in Existing Research**

* Very few studies focus on solar irradiance prediction specifically in the Haldwani region.
* Most research does not compare model results with real forecasted data from APIs or weather services.
* CNN-BiLSTM models are underexplored in regional forecasting contexts with real-world implementation scenarios.

# **III. Methodology**

## **III.I. Study Area: Haldwani, Uttarakhand**

Haldwani, located in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, experiences diverse weather conditions, making it a suitable testbed for solar forecasting research. The variability in cloud cover, humidity, and temperature provides a challenging yet realistic environment for model evaluation.

## **III.II. Data Collection**

Two main data sources were used:

* **NASA POWER Data**: Provides historical irradiance and meteorological parameters like temperature, relative humidity, dew point, cloud amount and solar zenith angle.
* **Forecasted and Actual Weather Data for Validation**: Includes hourly forecasted and actual values (e.g., temperature, relative humidity, cloud amount, dew point) from open-meteo.

## **III.III. Input Features and Target**

The following features were selected based on correlation analysis and prior research:

* MO (Month)
* DY (Day)
* HR (Hour)
* T2M (Air Temperature at 2m)
* RH2M (Relative Humidity at 2m)
* SZA (Solar Zenith Angle)
* Cld\_Amt (Cloud Amount)
* D2M (Dew Point Temperature)

**Target**:

* **SolarOutput** – the actual observed solar irradiance.

## **III.IV. Data Preprocessing**

* **Data Cleaning**: Removed null values and aligned time zones.
* **Feature Scaling**: Min-max normalization was applied to scale values between 0 and 1.
* **Temporal Windowing**: A sliding input window of 6 hours was used to predict the next 24 hours of irradiance.
* **Train-Test Split**: 80% training, 10% validating and 10% testing. 24 June was held out for final model evaluation.

## **III.V. Model Architecture: CNN-BiLSTM**

import pandas as pd

import numpy as np

import optuna

import joblib

from sklearn.model\_selection import train\_test\_split

from sklearn.preprocessing import MinMaxScaler

from sklearn.metrics import mean\_absolute\_error, mean\_squared\_error, r2\_score

import tensorflow as tf

from tensorflow.keras.models import Model

from tensorflow.keras.layers import (

    Input,

    Conv1D,

    Bidirectional,

    LSTM,

    Dense,

    Attention,

    LayerNormalization,

    Add,

    GlobalAveragePooling1D,

)

from tensorflow.keras.optimizers import Nadam

import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

# === Load and Preprocess Data ===

df = pd.read\_csv("final\_merged.csv")

df.rename(

    columns={

        "Temp2m": "T2M",

        "Humidity2m": "RH2M",

        "SolarZenith": "SZA",

        "Forecasted\_SW\_DWN": "Forecasted",

        "SolarIrradiance": "SolarOutput",

        "CloudCover": "Cld\_Amt",

        "DewPoint2m": "D2M",

    },

    inplace=True,

)

X = df[["MO", "DY", "HR", "T2M", "RH2M", "SZA", "Cld\_Amt", "D2M"]]

y = df["SolarOutput"]

scaler\_X = MinMaxScaler()

scaler\_y = MinMaxScaler()

X\_scaled = scaler\_X.fit\_transform(X)

y\_scaled = scaler\_y.fit\_transform(y.values.reshape(-1, 1))

joblib.dump(scaler\_X, "scaler\_X.save")

joblib.dump(scaler\_y, "scaler\_y.save")

# === Sequence Builder (24-hour blocks) ===

def create\_daily\_blocks(X, y, block\_size=24):

    X\_seq, y\_seq = [], []

    for i in range(0, len(X) - block\_size):

        X\_block = X[i : i + block\_size]

        y\_block = y[i : i + block\_size]

        if len(X\_block) == 24 and len(y\_block) == 24:

            X\_seq.append(X\_block)

            y\_seq.append(y\_block.flatten())

    return np.array(X\_seq), np.array(y\_seq)

# === Model Architecture ===

def build\_model(input\_shape):

    inp = Input(shape=input\_shape)  # shape = (24, 8)

    x = Conv1D(64, kernel\_size=3, activation="relu", padding="same")(inp)

    x = LayerNormalization()(x)

    x = Bidirectional(LSTM(64, return\_sequences=True))(x)

    x = LayerNormalization()(x)

    attn\_output = Attention()([x, x])

    x = Add()([x, attn\_output])

    x = GlobalAveragePooling1D()(x)

    out = Dense(24)(x)  # Predict 24 hours

    model = Model(inputs=inp, outputs=out)

    model.compile(optimizer=Nadam(), loss="mse")

    return model

# === Optuna Tuning ===

def objective(trial):

    batch\_size = trial.suggest\_categorical("batch\_size", [16, 32, 64])

    X\_seq, y\_seq = create\_daily\_blocks(X\_scaled, y\_scaled, 24)

    X\_train, X\_val, y\_train, y\_val = train\_test\_split(

        X\_seq, y\_seq, test\_size=0.2, random\_state=42

    )

    model = build\_model((24, X.shape[1]))

    history = model.fit(

        X\_train,

        y\_train,

        validation\_data=(X\_val, y\_val),

        epochs=10,

        batch\_size=batch\_size,

        verbose=0,

    )

    return history.history["val\_loss"][-1]

study = optuna.create\_study(direction="minimize")

study.optimize(objective, n\_trials=20)

# === Final Training ===

best\_batch = study.best\_params["batch\_size"]

print(f"\nBest Batch Size: {best\_batch}")

X\_seq, y\_seq = create\_daily\_blocks(X\_scaled, y\_scaled, 24)

X\_train, X\_test, y\_train, y\_test = train\_test\_split(

    X\_seq, y\_seq, test\_size=0.2, random\_state=42

)

final\_model = build\_model((24, X.shape[1]))

final\_model.fit(X\_train, y\_train, epochs=30, batch\_size=best\_batch, verbose=1)

# === Evaluation ===

y\_pred\_scaled = final\_model.predict(X\_test)

y\_pred = scaler\_y.inverse\_transform(y\_pred\_scaled)

y\_actual = scaler\_y.inverse\_transform(y\_test)

mae = mean\_absolute\_error(y\_actual, y\_pred)

rmse = np.sqrt(mean\_squared\_error(y\_actual, y\_pred))

r2 = r2\_score(y\_actual, y\_pred)

print(f"\nMAE: {mae:.2f} | RMSE: {rmse:.2f} | R²: {r2:.4f}")

# === Plot First Sample ===

plt.figure(figsize=(12, 5))

plt.plot(y\_actual[0], label="Actual(Historical)")

plt.plot(y\_pred[0], label="Predicted")

plt.title("24-Hour Solar Irradiance Prediction")

plt.xlabel("Hour")

plt.ylabel("Irradiance (Wh/m²)")

plt.legend()

plt.grid(True)

plt.tight\_layout()

plt.show()

# === Save Final Model ===

final\_model.save("cnn\_bilstm\_attention\_model\_final.keras")

print("\nModel and scalers saved successfully.")

## **III.VI. Model Training**

* **Optimizer**: Nadam (Nesterov-accelerated Adaptive Moment Estimation)
* **Loss Function**: Mean Squared Error (MSE)
* **Epochs**: 30
* **Batch Size**: Selected using Optuna[16, 32, 64](e.g., “Optuna selected batch size = 32”).

## **III.VII. Tools and Libraries Used**

* Python 3.10.11
* TensorFlow / Keras
* NumPy, Pandas, Matplotlib, Scikit-learn
* Optuna

# **IV. Results and Discussion**

## **IV.I. Training Performance**

The model was trained using historical weather and irradiance data structured into daily 24-hour blocks. A CNN-BiLSTM architecture was used with an attention mechanism to capture both local spatial patterns and long-range temporal dependencies. The Actual (Historical) vs Predicted graph is shown in the figure below:

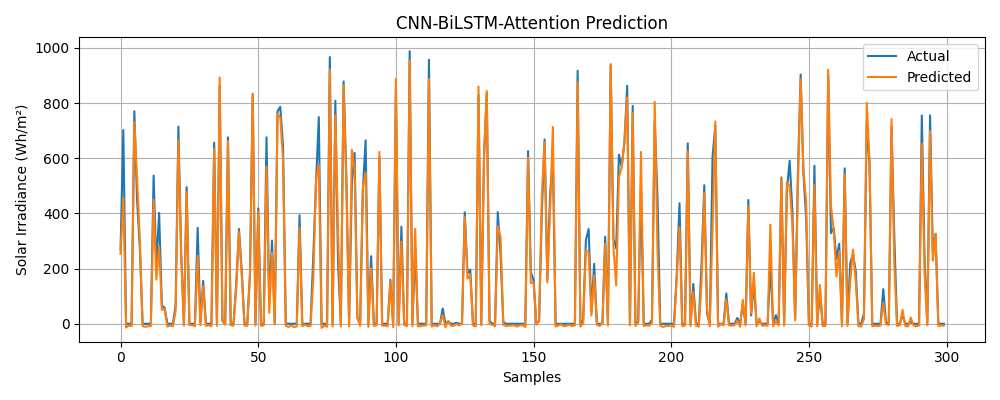


Fig. 1. Actual (Historic) v/s Predicted (By Model) Solar Irradiance Graph

The graph shows good convergence and no signs of overfitting, indicating that the model learned generalizable features from the data.

## **IV.II. Model Evaluation Metrics**

Performance was evaluated on the test set using standard error metrics:

* **Mean Absolute Error (MAE)**: 26.39 Wh/m²
* **Root Mean Square Error (RMSE)**: 41.44 Wh/m²
* **R² Score**: 0.9778

These values confirm the model’s strong predictive performance and low error margin.

## **IV.III. Prediction vs. Forecasted for recent week from 29 June to 04 July 2025**

This section show how model performed in recent week in comparison to forecasted model available.

**1. Mean Absolute Error (MAE) Comparison**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **MAE (Predicted vs Actual)** | **MAE (Forecasted vs Actual)** |
| 29 June | 57.14 Wh/m2 | 42.14 Wh/m2 |
| 30 June | 37.74 Wh/m2 | 29.38 Wh/m2 |
| 1 July | 45.30 Wh/m2 | 51.28 Wh/m2 |
| 2 July | 36.21 Wh/m2 | 31.25 Wh/m2 |
| 3 July | 43.08 Wh/m2 | 49.28 Wh/m2 |
| 4 July | 27.61 Wh/m2 | 37.83 Wh/m2 |

**2. Graphical Comparison**

Following are the graph comparison of each day from 29 June to 04 July 2025

**29 June :**

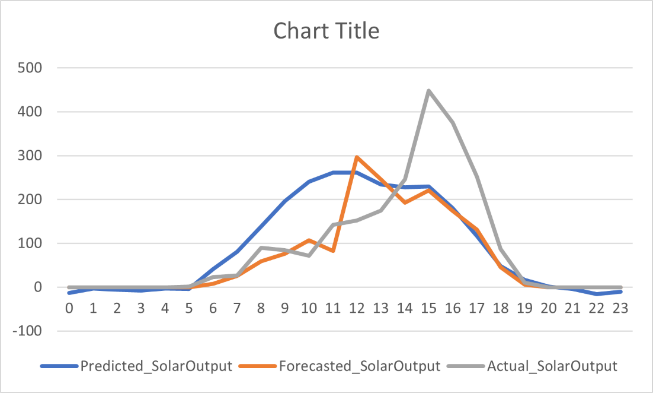


Fig. 2. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (29 June 2025)

**30 June :**

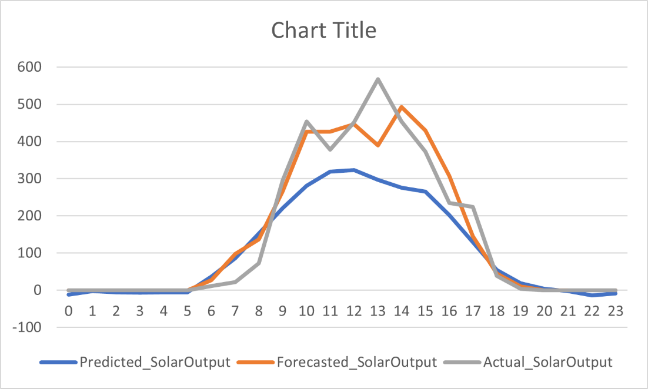
****

Fig. 3. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (30 June 2025)

**01 July :**

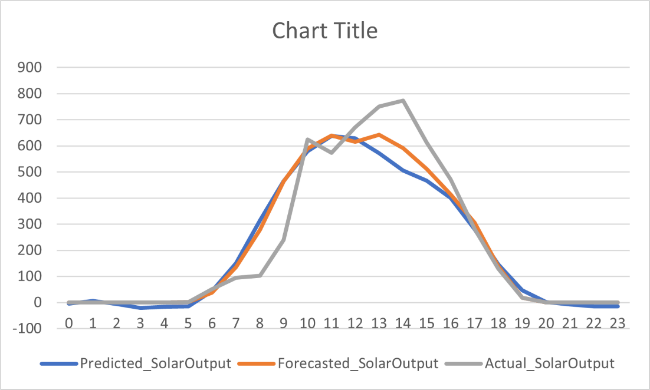
****

Fig. 4. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (01 July 2025)

**02 July :**

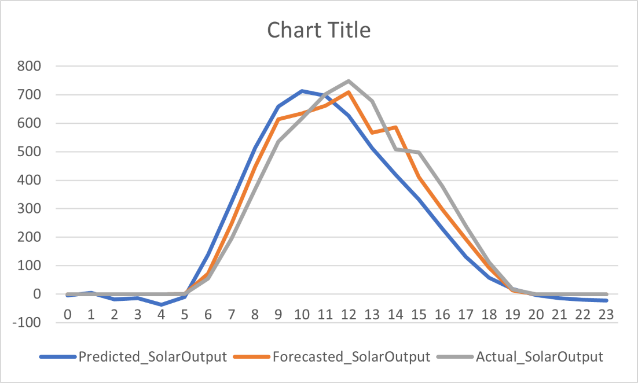
****

Fig. 5. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (02 July 2025)

**03 July :**

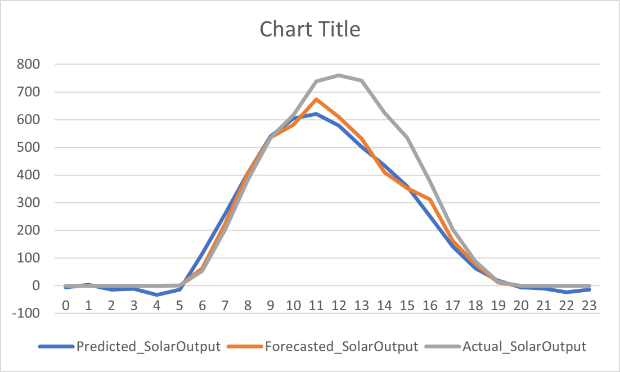
****

Fig. 6. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (03 July 2025)

**04 July :**

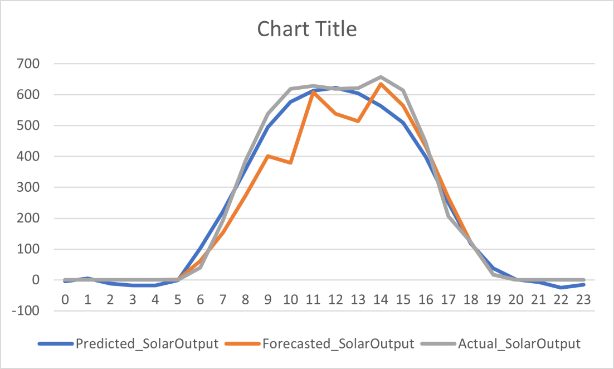
****

Fig. 7. Predicted vs. Forecasted vs. Actual Solar Irradiance Graph (04 July 2025)

**3. Analysis & Observations**

The MAE values across the six days reveal distinct patterns in prediction and forecasting accuracy:

* The forecasted solar output generally showed better accuracy than the predicted output on most days, particularly on 29 June, 30 June, and 2 July.
* On 1 July and 3 July, the predicted solar output outperformed the forecasted one, though the margin was relatively small.
* Notably, 4 July saw the lowest MAE for the predicted output (27.61 Wh/m²), indicating a strong model performance.
* The largest error for the predicted output occurred on 29 June (57.14 Wh/m²), while for the forecasted output it was on 1 July (51.28 Wh/m²).

Overall, both prediction and forecast models show day-to-day variability, but the predicted model tends to produce slightly more consistent results.

## **IV.IV. Model Validation for Other Seasons (Summer and Winter)**

The model has predicted the solar irradiance for the Summer and Winter season for year 2016. For summer the study was performed for 2 months (May and June 2016) and for winter it is also performed for 2 months (October and November 2016).

The model was evaluated using Mean Absolute Error (MAE) as the metric.

* **Summer MAE (2016):** 22.63 Wh/m2
* **Winter MAE (2016):** 15.22 Wh/m2

This indicates the model performs slightly better during winter conditions.

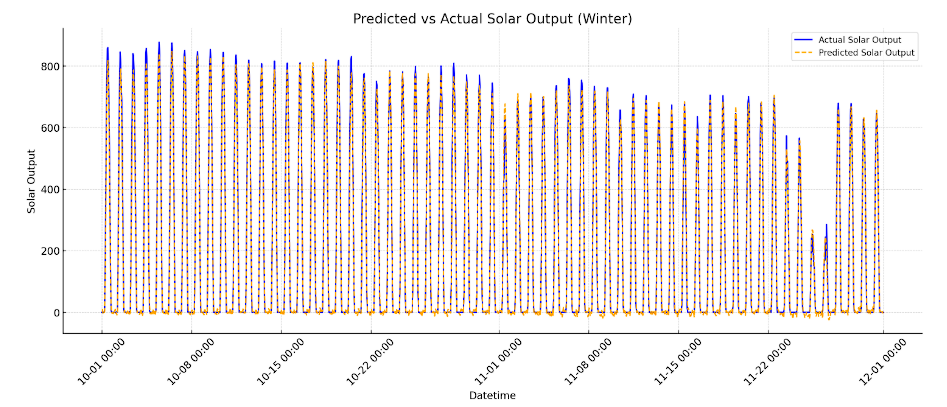


Fig. 8. Validation Graph for Winter

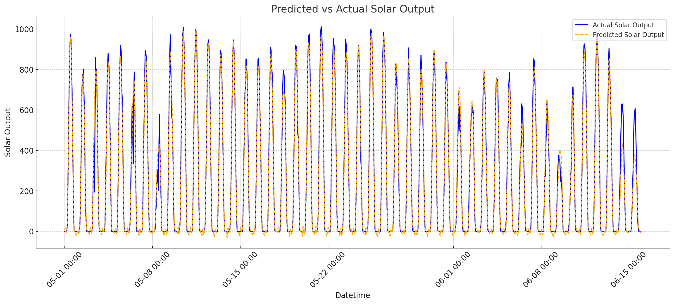


Fig. 9. Validation Graph for Summer

# **V. Summary and Conclusion**

## **V.I. Summary of the Study**

This project explored the use of a deep learning model—**CNN-BiLSTM with Nadam optimizer**—to improve the **forecast accuracy of solar irradiance** in **Haldwani**, a region with significant renewable energy potential. The model was trained using historical meteorological data and weather forecasts, aiming to deliver more precise irradiance predictions that support efficient hybrid solar-generator system operations.

Key steps taken:

* Collected and preprocessed both clear-sky and forecasted data from NASA POWER .
* Selected key features affecting irradiance, including T2M, D2M, RH2M, SZA, and cloud amount.
* Built a CNN-BiLSTM model to capture short-term patterns and long-range dependencies.
* Used a 24-hour input window to forecast the next 24 hours of irradiance in a single pass.
* Evaluated the model for validation for summer and winter season of 2016.
* Evaluated the model for predicting recent week solar irradiance (from 29 June 2025 to 04 July 2025)

## **V.II. Key Findings**

* The model achieved strong performance with **MAE = 26.39 W/m²** and **R² = 0.9778**.
* It significantly reduced prediction error compared to the baseline weather forecast data.
* The Nadam optimizer contributed to stable training and fast convergence.

## **V.III. Conclusion**

* Deep learning methods—especially hybrid architectures like CNN-BiLSTM—are highly effective for solar irradiance prediction.
* Integrating such models into hybrid systems can improve planning, reduce fuel consumption, and increase solar energy utilization.
* This work provides a framework for applying advanced AI techniques to real-world renewable energy problems in semi-urban Indian regions like Haldwani.

## **V.IV. Future Work**

* Incorporate real-time sensor and satellite data for enhanced model inputs.
* Extend the model to predict solar **PV output** directly, including temperature effects on panels.
* Deploy the system on a cloud server using FastAPI and Docker for real-time usage.
* Experiment with attention mechanisms to further boost prediction accuracy.

# **VI. References**

* Madderla Chiranjeevi, et al. (2023). “*Solar Irradiation Prediction Framework using Regularized Convolutional BiLSTM based Autoencoder Approach”*
* Yue Zhang et al. (2019). “*Validation GFS day-ahead solar irradiance forecasts in China”*
* Salwan Tajjour et al. (2024). “*Daily power generation forecasting for a grid‐connected solar power plant using transfer learning technique”*
* Rajasekaran Meenal et al. (2022). “*Weather Forecasting for Renewable Energy System: A Review”*
* Diaa Salman et al. (2024). “*Hybrid deep learning models for time series forecasting of solar power”*
* Fei Wang et al. (2018). “*Wavelet Decomposition and Convolutional LSTM Networks Based Improved Deep Learning Model for Solar Irradiance Forecasting”*