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New Delhi bats for integrated energy grid in South Asia



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South Asian regional power cooperation could also attract higher investments and result in complementary infrastructure creation for transmission and transit, (File Photo: AP)

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Elizabeth Roche

NEW DELHI: Examples of regional cooperation from many parts of the world such as south-east Asia and the Gulf region show how challenges in the creation of an integrated energy grid could be overcome, Indian foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Wednesday.

An integrated grid would attract investment, result in infrastructure creation, and strengthen sub-regional cooperation, he said at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute.

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“Inadequate transmission infrastructure or unnecessary duplication, lack of guarantee of power availability or offtake, insufficient coordination among national authorities, technical differences, and regulatory mismatch, are among the numerous challenges,” Shringla said.

“Nevertheless, across the globe, a number of initiatives have led to regional cooperation in the electricity sector. These include the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, the southern African Power Pool, south-east Europe, Gulf Coast Countries, and the Nile Basin Initiative. There is no reason that our region should be left behind,” he said.

The push for a south Asia grid by India comes against the backdrop of Chinese entities financing power projects in countries along India’s periphery, in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, according to analysts. The effort is seen as aimed to keep south Asian countries within India’s sphere of influence. Efforts to form such in a grid in the past at the level of members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have failed because of Pakistan being unwilling to come on board.