

INDIA, UK LAUNCH FIRST TRANSNATIONAL SOLAR GRID PLAN

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Energy incl. Renewable & Non-renewable

NEW DELHI : Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UK counterpart Boris Johnson on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious plan for the world's first transnational network of interconnected solar power grids—Green Grids Initiative: One Sun One World One Grid—at the UN Climate Conference, also known as the Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow.

The initiative aims to provide countries across the world with clean energy drawn from the sun through a series of interconnected grids. Australia, France, India, the US and UK are the main members of the initiative, which has the backing of 80 members of the 99 nation strong International Solar Alliance (ISA). India and France launched the ISA on the sidelines of the Paris COP21 summit in 2015.

In his speech at the event where Johnson was also present, Modi noted that fossil fuels had spurred the industrial revolution, but they had impoverished the environment. Moreover, fossil fuels have triggered geopolitical tensions, he said. "The challenge is that solar energy is available only in the day and is also dependent on weather. 'One Sun, One World, One Grid' is the answer to this challenge. With a worldwide grid, clean energy will be available everywhere, every time. This will lessen the need for storage and increase the viability of solar projects," Modi said.

"With this creative initiative, the carbon footprint will be reduced, and the cost of energy will also come down. It will also foster a spirit of cooperation among different countries and regions of the world," the prime minister said.

In his remarks, Johnson said that the UK was "working hand-in-hand with our friends in India to transform the future of the power sector and ensure clean and reliable electricity is accessible everywhere by the end of this decade."

"It's fantastic that more than 80 countries have backed our newly launched Green Grids Initiative, whose collaboration will not only see greater growth, jobs and investment in our global green future but also make sure no one is left without access to energy," he said.

According to Gagan Sidhu, director at the New Delhi-based Council for Energy Environment and Water think tank, "the Green Grids Initiative is important as we scale up global cooperation on climate action."

"Increased electrification from renewable energy is one of the key building blocks for any emissions reduction strategy, and a grid that connects different time zones represents an ambitious alternative to expensive storage on both ends. Not only would it help meet climate commitments, but it would also enhance energy security and meet development priorities," Sidhu said.

The launch of the initiative comes as countries are under pressure to develop concrete plans to reduce global warming. The conference comes against the backdrop of warnings that the world has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius. Current projections based on planned emissions cuts over the next decade are for it to hit 2.7C by 2100.

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