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IN FOCUS



65 Percent of MGNREGA Funds Earmarked for Water Conservation: Reorienting Rural Employment Programmes for Water Security - A Leap for the Global South

Dr. SS Reddy, Advisor (Agriculture), DAKSHIN

On 25 September 2025, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, and the Ministry of Jal Shakti (Water Resources) jointly launched the National Initiative on Water Security. A key policy decision under this initiative mandates that in over-exploited rural blocks, 65 percent of resources under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) will now be directed to water-related works. In semi-critical blocks, 40 percent of funds are reserved for this purpose, and even in blocks not classified as water scarce, at least 30 percent will be allocated to water conservation activities. This reorientation ensures that the programme directly addresses one of the most pressing sustainability challenges of the Global South, i.e. groundwater depletion and declining water availability.

Under MGNREGA, water-related interventions have historically formed a significant share of the assets created. To date, the programme has facilitated the construction of more than 12.5 million water conservation assets, including farm ponds, check dams, percolation tanks, and community reservoirs. These efforts have contributed to improving groundwater recharge, stabilising irrigation in rainfed areas, and reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods to water scarcity. Furthermore, the initiative converges with Mission Amrit Sarovar (Mission Reservoirs), under which more than 68,000 reservoirs have already been constructed or rejuvenated in its first phase. Together, these measures strengthen rural water security while generating employment and enhancing ecological sustainability.

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India Has Special Responsibility as Global South Looks to Us: External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar

External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar underlined the important role India plays in the global Artificial Intelligence landscape, noting that several countries, especially those from the Global South, look up to it for inspiration. He made the remarks while speaking at the Trust and Safety India Festival 2025. As a pre-summit for February 2026 AI Impact Summit it kicks off conversations of interest for India and the world. Highlighting the achievements of India in the last decade when one looks at the scale of delivery, improvement in governance, efficiencies with which public is served, the EAM noted that this is resonating across the world. "As a Foreign Minister, when I go abroad, this is often the topic of conversation, and I can see very much, this being extrapolated into the world of AI as well", he said.

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India Pioneers Solutions to Improve Lives Across Global South: Bill Gates On Gandhi Jayanti

Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of equality and dignity for everyone are foundational to the Gates Foundation's work, billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates said, as he underlined that India pioneered solutions that can save and improve millions of lives across the Global South. Gates was addressing a special celebration hosted by the Consulate General of India in Seattle in partnership with the Gates Foundation, showcasing Indian culture, arts and cuisine on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 156th birth anniversary. Apart from Gates, senior leadership of Washington State and Seattle City government attended the event. It also featured a special address on the 'Relevance of Gandhian Values in Contemporary World Order' by President of the Global Security Institute Jonathan Granoff.

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India Conferred with Prestigious ISSA Award 2025 for ‘Outstanding Achievement in Social Security’

Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, highlighted India’s historic expansion in social security coverage from 19 percent in 2015 to 64.3 percent in 2025, covering over 940 million citizens, as recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya was addressing the World Social Security Forum (WSSF) 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where India has been conferred with the prestigious International Social Security Association (ISSA) Award 2025 for ‘Outstanding Achievement in Social Security’. Further, after increase in social protection coverage, India’s share in the General Assembly of ISSA has reached thirty (30) which is highest vote share for any country.

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H.E. Hakainde Hichilema, Zambia’s President, Highlights Digital Transformation as Key to Africa’s Economic Advancement

Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema has urged African nations to place greater focus on the digital space as a driver of economic growth, improved performance measurement, and increased investment across the continent. Speaking during the 3rd Annual Digital Government Africa Summit, the President emphasized that digital transformation is essential for sustainable development and for addressing challenges that hinder the accurate assessment of African economies. He highlighted that a strong digital foundation would enhance transparency, efficiency, and innovation within both the government and the private sector, contributing to a more connected and competitive Africa.

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India Has an AI Edge, Will Gain From Boom: Franziska Ohnsorge, Chief Economist (South Asia), World Bank

India is at a pivotal moment in its economic trajectory and its rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is set to open significant new investment opportunities, according to Franziska Ohnsorge, World Bank's chief economist for South Asia. "India is well placed to benefit from the global boom in AI," she said on the sidelines of the Kautilya Economic Conclave in New Delhi. India leads the South and Central Asia region in Oxford Insights' latest Government AI Readiness Index, placing it 46th globally. "India's readiness is much higher than other emerging markets and developing economies... it's almost at an advanced economy level," she added.

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Parliamentary20 Summit Hears Calls to Reform Global Lending Institutions for Fairer Access by Global South

The high cost of borrowing and mounting debt continue to hinder progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, told delegates during the 11th Parliamentary Speakers' Summit. The Summit brought together Speakers and legislators from the parliaments of G20 countries. Ms Mtshweni-Tsipane addressed a session focused on government debt. The Chairperson said that although there were irrefutable benefits when debt is channelled towards development, the high debt costs are draining vital public resources. She added that developing countries now spend more on debt servicing than on essential public services such as healthcare and education.

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World Green Economy Summit Highlights the Need for Renewables and Green Finance in the Global South

H.E. Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, Chairman of the World Green Economy Organization (WGEO), delivered the opening address at the high-level roundtable hosted by WGEO during the 11th World Green Economy Summit in Dubai. The session, held under the theme ‘Delivering Climate Ambition by 2030 and Beyond–United Action for Green Transition’, aimed to advance climate ambitions and promote dialogue on aligning policies, finance and innovation with sustainable development. He emphasised the need for focusing on co-operation and investment in breakthrough technologies, in addition to accelerating renewable deployment and enabling green finance to flow where it is most needed, particularly in the Global South.

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Association of Southeast Asian Nations Endorses Vision for Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2045

The 47th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) meeting held on October 1 in Pasay City, the Philippines, approved the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sector Plan of Action 2026-2030, which focuses on six priority areas. The meeting acknowledged the rapidly changing regional and global context, particularly in relation to the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030. The new ASEAN Vision for Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2045, along with its cooperation framework, is intended as a long-term orientation to strengthen regional food systems, ensure food security and nutrition, promote sustainable forest management, and improve climate resilience.

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Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2025 Emphasises Boosting South-South Partnerships

Agriculture Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, the Hon. Samal Duggins, is pushing for greater South-South cooperation to advance agriculture. “Agriculture today, demands regional solidarity and global partnerships, especially south-south cooperation. This is why St. Kitts and Nevis has been deepening our ties with our brothers and sisters in Africa. More recently, we have been establishing strong ties with Nigeria. Our partnership, though, is more than bilateral; it is a demonstration of what South-South collaboration means when you put it into practice. It reflects the understanding that our challenges are shared, and so too, must be our solutions,” the Minister said as the 19th Caribbean Week of Agriculture opened in St. Kitts and Nevis.

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African Development Bank Group and Niger sign \$144.7 million agreement

African Development Bank Group President Sidi Ould Tah and Niger’s Prime Minister, Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine, have signed a \$144.7 million financing agreement to improve energy access and private sector competitiveness. The agreement, signed at the institution’s headquarters in Abidjan, provides budgetary support from the African Development Fund, the Bank Group’s concessional financing window. It enables the Nigerien government to implement Phase 1 of the transformative Energy Sector Governance and Competitiveness Support Programme (PAGSEC). “It is with great pleasure that we have just formalised this agreement, which is very important for Niger,” said the Prime Minister. “The agreement is part of our strong cooperation with the African Development Bank Group.”

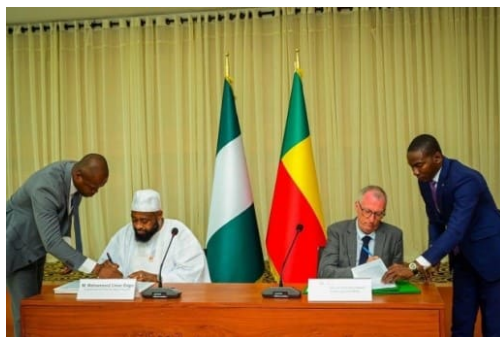
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African Development Bank Group Approves \$22.8 Million Grant to Mozambique

The African Development Bank Group has approved a \$22.8 million grant from its concessional African Development Fund to strengthen Mozambique's rice value chain and enhance climate resilience, targeting 30,000 smallholder farmers across four provinces. The grant will fund the Rice Value Chain and Climate Resilience Project, which seeks to increase Mozambique's rice self-sufficiency from 50 percent to 75 percent by 2030, addressing critical food security challenges in one of Africa's most food-insecure nations. Despite rice being a staple food, Mozambique produces only half of the 600,000 tons it consumes annually. The country relies on imports to bridge the 300,000-ton gap, a dependence that drains foreign reserves and deepens rural poverty.

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Niger Signs MultiBillion Dollar MoU with Republic of Benin

Niger State Government has signed a multibillion dollar Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Benin through its SPV, Sonama AG Mech Ltd. for the production of Cotton, Maize and Soya. The memorandum was signed in Cotonou, Benin Republic with farmer Governor signing on behalf of the State Government while the CEO, Sonama AG Mech Ltd signed on behalf of the Beninese Government. The memorandum tagged, "Cotton common platform project" will see to the production of 450,000 tons of Cotton in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State in collaboration with Republic of Benin which will provide all the needed expertise in cotton production, Since its introduction in the 1960s, cotton has become a cornerstone of Benin's national economy.

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Senegal Launches Interoperable Instant Payment Platform (PI-SPI) to Boost Digital Public Infrastructure

The Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy has announced the official launch of the Interoperable Instant Payment Platform (PI-SPI), a system developed by OCEAO to enable instant money transfers between all financial institutions within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) region. The PI-SPI platform allows seamless 24/7 transfers across banks and financial institutions, making it a cornerstone of the government's #NewDealTechnology strategy. According to the Ministry, the platform will serve as the technical backbone of e-payment systems, supporting the creation of a modern, transparent, and efficient administration. The Ministry also reaffirmed its commitment to collaborate with the Treasury in integrating PI-SPI with Sen Trésor, with the goal of establishing a unified digital payment infrastructure for the public sector.

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Sierra Leone Launches National AI Readiness Assessment with World Bank Support

The Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation, in partnership with the World Bank, has begun one of the world's first national artificial intelligence readiness assessments as part of the Sierra Leone Digital Transformation Project. The initiative is designed to ensure AI is applied responsibly to address the country's most urgent development challenges. Initial findings were presented in Freetown during sector-wide stakeholder engagements that brought together government officials, academia, civil society, and the private sector. The assessment examines Sierra Leone's preparedness across three pillars: Compute (infrastructure), Capacity (skills and talent), and Context (policy and regulation). Insights from the study will guide the development of Sierra Leone's forthcoming National AI Strategy.

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Côte d'Ivoire Inaugurates Landmark Data Center to Anchor Digital Sovereignty

Pan-African IT services company ST Digital inaugurated a Tier 3 data center at the VITIB technology free zone in Grand-Bassam. The facility, the first of its kind in Côte d'Ivoire, is designed to provide a foundation for more secure and autonomous management of national data. "This tool takes our digital dynamic to a new level. In a context where digitalization is accelerating and cyberattacks are multiplying, having local infrastructure is essential to protect our data," said Anthony Same, CEO of ST Digital Group. The data center is structured around three modules and can accommodate approximately 160 racks of 42 servers each, totaling more than 6,000 physical servers and over 50,000 virtual servers.

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The Pan American Health Organization and Haiti Sign First Country Cooperation Strategy to Strengthen Health System

The PAHO/WHO and the Government of Haiti signed the 2026–2028 Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS), the first cooperation framework of its kind between the two, reaffirming their shared commitment to strengthening Haiti's health system and improving health outcomes for all. The agreement was signed by PAHO Director, Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, and Haiti's Minister of Public Health and Population (MSPP), Dr. Bertrand Sinal, during a bilateral meeting at PAHO Headquarters in Washington, D.C., held on the sidelines of the 62nd Directing Council of PAHO. The Country Cooperation Strategy is a shared, medium-term framework that outlines areas where PAHO/WHO will work with Haiti to improve public health. It guides PAHO's work in the country and is aligned with Haiti's national health goals and global commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda Top East African Community (EAC) Performance in Health Insurance

Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda have emerged as leading nations in the East African Community (EAC) in terms of the number of citizens enrolled in health insurance schemes. This development is seen as a significant step towards improving the overall health of the populations in these countries. During the fourth sitting of the fifth East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), the Assembly passed a resolution urging the EAC Council of Ministers to expedite the process of establishing a universal health insurance system across the region. The goal is to ensure that every citizen has access to quality healthcare, free from financial barriers.

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Nigeria Launches Large-Scale Vaccination Campaign to Protect 106 Million Children

Nigeria is rolling out one of the largest integrated vaccination campaigns in its history, aiming to protect around 106 million children against measles, rubella and poliomyelitis. The nationwide initiative will combine multiple vaccines and child health services in a single drive, ensuring efficient delivery to children across the country. The campaign targets children 0–14 years for measles and rubella and 0–59 months for polio. It will be implemented in two phases: phase one, launching today, covers 20 high-risk northern states and Oyo state in the southwest; phase 2 begins in January 2026, and will be expanded to the remaining southern states. In preparation for this nationwide rollout, Nigeria has also strengthened systems to ensure smooth implementation.

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The World Bank and Libya to Enhance Cooperation on Health Projects

The Director General of Health and Acting Minister of Health in the Tripoli based government, Mohamed Al-Ghoj, and Henriette von Kaltenborn, World Bank Group Representative – Libya Office, met to discuss a number of joint health issues. The Health Ministry reported that after the third meeting, the topics discussed included: the comprehensive primary health care project, telemedicine services, and modern human resources. The unique challenges facing their completion were also reviewed, particularly in terms of knowledge, information, and the provision of medical equipment. The two sides also discussed prospects for future cooperation, leveraging a range of international expertise in the health insurance, financial, and sectoral reform sectors.

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Gabon and Cuba Sign Agreements to Boost Agriculture and Trade Ties

Gabonese President Brice Oligui Nguema signed three agreements with his Cuban counterpart Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez on September 28, 2025, during an official visit to Havana, according to Le Nouveau Gabon. The first is a framework agreement on bilateral cooperation. The second covers the enforcement of legal judgments, aimed at strengthening investor confidence and legal security. The third agreement focuses on agriculture and livestock. For Cuba, it offers a chance to share its expertise, while Gabon gains support in its drive for food self-sufficiency. Cuban company Labiofam, which produces veterinary medicines and agricultural inputs, has already pledged to back Gabon, including through a poultry farming project set for 2027.

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Mohamed Seddik Ait Messaoudan, Algeria's Health Minister and Regional Director, Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Discuss Strengthening Cooperation

Algeria's Health Minister Mohamed Seddik Ait Messaoudan received at the ministry's headquarters the Regional Director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for North Africa, Wessam Mankoula, and his delegation at the ministry. The two sides explored ways to expand and strengthen their cooperation. During the meeting, which was attended by senior officials from the central administration, the Regional Director gave "a detailed overview of the Africa CDC's mandate and its strategic role in supporting health systems across Africa," the ministry said. He focused particularly on "epidemic surveillance, emergency preparedness, expanding vaccination programs and building human capacity in the health sector," the same source continued. He stressed the importance of "strengthening international partnerships and coordinating efforts among North African countries," while highlighting the need to "share successful experiences, particularly Algeria's pioneering work in epidemic control and health crisis management."

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