



Global South Matters

DAKSHIN

Global South Centre of Excellence



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In-Focus Article



VISTAAR - A Digital Public Infrastructure for Agriculture: Advancing Climate-Resilient Extension Systems for the Global South

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Digital transformation is rapidly reshaping agricultural systems across the Global South, where climate change, fragmented agro-advisory services, and market uncertainty continue to challenge smallholder farmers. Against this background, India's Virtual Integration of Science, Technology, Agriculture and Research (VISTAAR) platform represents a new generation of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) designed to strengthen agricultural decision-making in an era of climate uncertainty. Conceived as an open "network of networks," VISTAAR integrates scientific research, digital technologies, geospatial intelligence, and farmer-centric advisory services into a unified ecosystem. Rather than operating as a single application, the platform connects multiple national digital systems including AgriStack, Krishi (Agriculture) Decision Support Systems (Krishi DSS), and the National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) to deliver personalized, location-specific advisories to farmers. By combining real-time weather analytics, satellite-derived crop insights, and advanced agronomic recommendations, VISTAAR aims to bridge the long-standing gap between research institutions, extension services, and on farm decision making.

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UPI to debut in Japan: India's pioneering digital payment network expands global footprint

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is set to debut in Japan, marking another milestone in the global expansion of the country's flagship digital payments system. Japanese IT services firm NTT Data is partnering with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to enable UPI acceptance in Japan on a trial basis in fiscal 2026. In the initial phase, the service will be available to Indian tourists visiting the country. NTT Data and NPCI are also exploring ways to connect Japanese and Indian payment networks, a move that could deepen cross-border digital payment integration. Under the proposed arrangement, payments made by Indian users in Japan through UPI will be debited directly from their bank accounts in India, allowing travellers to use the familiar system overseas without the need for separate wallets or cards.

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Egypt-Uzbekistan Cooperation in Agriculture

Egyptian Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation Alaa Farouk met with Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Egypt Mansurbek Kilochev and his accompanying delegation to discuss ways to enhance prospects for joint cooperation and to follow up on technical files currently being implemented between the two countries in the agricultural sector. This comes within the framework of the political leadership's directives to strengthen relations between the two countries. The meeting was held in line with the directives of the political leaderships in both countries to deepen bilateral relations, as the Egyptian state places agricultural cooperation with Uzbekistan among the priorities of its economic diplomacy. The talks also focused on enhancing the exchange of technical expertise and achieving integration in agricultural supply and production chains between Cairo and Tashkent.

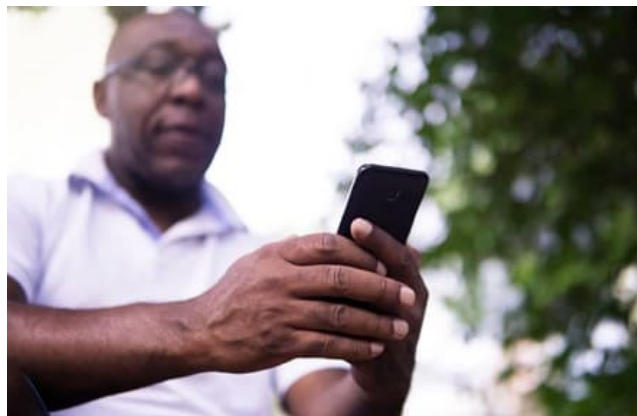
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Delhi Declaration of the Second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting

The second India Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting took place in New Delhi, India with the participation of External Affairs Minister of India, Foreign Ministers of Arab States and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by the meeting of India Arab Senior Officials. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to safeguard international peace and security. They discussed a wide range of regional and global issues of mutual concern including the question of Palestine, support for multilateralism and respect for the sovereignty of states, counterterrorism efforts, and reforms of United Nations Security Council. The two sides emphasized the importance of international relations being founded on respect for the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs. They expressed satisfaction on the progress made in the implementation of the Executive Program for 2016-17.

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DRC envisages a functional digital government platform by March

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) plans to launch its digital government platform within the first quarter of this year as part of its digital public services implementation ambitions. This envisaged platform is a key aspect outlined in the country's digital and infrastructure plan which the government started drafting last year, and intends to make it operational soon. The blueprint, which covers the period 2026-2030, seeks to make the Central African nation a regional digital transformation leader and boost digital economy growth. According to available details of the plan, as mentioned in a report by Tech In Africa, the country's digital government ecosystem is underpinned by a national digital ID system which is already being implemented by Singaporean firm Trident.

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India leading efforts to boost Global South cooperation: Caribbean grouping chief

Career diplomat and Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Noemi Espinoza Madrid, on Thursday praised India's efforts in building cooperation among Global South countries. The ACS grouping, which includes India as an official Observer State, views India's involvement as an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation. "India is one of the best known countries for South-South cooperation," Madrid told India Today at the World Governments Summit in Dubai. She further observed that there is more cohesion among Global South countries now than when the ACS was formed three decades back, reflecting a positive shift in international relations.

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Guyana, Belize call for agricultural integration and removal of regional trade barriers

Belize and Guyana have committed to strengthening agricultural cooperation and dismantling long-standing regional trade barriers, as President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali of Guyana urged Caribbean nations to create a fairer, more integrated food system that protects farmers and secures regional food sovereignty. Addressing a Joint Sitting of Belize's National Assembly in Belmopan on Monday during an official state visit, President Ali said the Caribbean must no longer allow bureaucracy and artificial trade barriers to undermine regional agricultural production, especially as small states invest heavily in food security.

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India strengthens its partnership with UNDP in poverty reduction, climate resilience, SDG localization and LiFE

Representatives reaffirmed India's appreciation for UNDP's steadfast partnership over six decades. Highlighted the strong collaboration with UNDP in several areas, such as poverty reduction, climate resilience, SDG localization, LiFE, and the India UN Development Partnership Fund. Underscored that UN reforms should advance development. Stressed that South-South cooperation must be strengthened within the UN system. India was elected to the Human Rights Council for the term 2026-28 at the UN for the seventh time today. Thank all delegations for their overwhelming support. This election reflects India's unwavering commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. We look forward to serve this objective during our tenure.

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AfDB approves new programme to help African Countries turn energy promises into power for millions

THE Board of Directors of the African Development Bank, AfDB, has approved a new USD 3.9 million, two-year technical assistance project to support African countries in the implementation of their National Energy Compacts into action under Mission 300, the AfDB–World Bank initiative to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. Energy Compacts are national plans in which governments set out how they will expand electricity access, strengthen their power sectors, and attract investment. Over the past year, dozens of African countries have launched these compacts, backed by strong political commitments and pledges from development partners. The new project, known as AESTAP Mission 300 Phase II, will provide direct technical support to 13 Mission 300 countries over the next 24 months, enabling them to move from documented energy plans to actual electricity connections for homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses. The benefiting countries are Chad, Gabon, Tanzania, Mauritania, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Malawi, Lesotho, Namibia, and Uganda.

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Sudan-India Trade Relations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation met on Saturday with India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Piyush Goyal, at the ministry's headquarters in the Indian capital, New Delhi. The meeting reviewed prospects for cooperation between Sudan and India in the coming period. The Foreign Minister affirmed Sudan's aspiration to establish a genuine and effective partnership with India in priority sectors, particularly during the reconstruction phase, foremost among them health and pharmaceutical manufacturing, agriculture, small and medium industries, and mining. The Minister briefed the Indian side on the efforts of the Government of Hope and Sudan's reconstruction vision, which aims to enter into strategic partnerships with leading countries across various industrial fields, following the example of India.

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Samia advances Africa–Caribbean ties, tourism ambitions at WGS 2026

President Samia Suluhu Hassan has reinforced Tanzania's growing international profile through a series of high-level bilateral engagements at the 13th World Governments Summit (WGS) 2026. Using the global forum to advance the country's economic diplomacy agenda and deepen strategic partnerships, President Samia held talks with several African and international leaders, which underscored Tanzania's deliberate push to align foreign relations with national development priorities. The engagements, conducted on the sidelines of the summit, reflected a broader effort to attract investment, enhance cooperation, and position the country as a stable and credible partner on the global stage.

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East Africa Moves Toward Stronger Digital Cooperation on Connectivity and Innovation

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional bloc of eight East African countries—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda—convened a three-day regional validation workshop (January 19–21) with support from the World Bank through the Eastern Africa Regional Digital Integration Project (EARDIP). The workshop focused on advancing a Regional Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Framework to guide cooperation between governments and the private sector in expanding digital infrastructure and services across the region.

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Somalia, Russia Sign Health Cooperation Agreement

Somalia and Russia have signed a health cooperation agreement, aimed at strengthening medical ties, officials announced Monday. Somalia's Minister of Health and Human Services, Ali Haji Adam Abubakar, and Russia's State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Health, Oleg Salagay, signed the agreement following a bilateral meeting at Russia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva. According to statements from the two sides, the agreement seeks to expand cooperation in healthcare system development, regulation and circulation of medicines, training and professional development of Somali medical personnel, vaccinations, and collaboration between research institutions.

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Green finance: African Development Bank accords \$1 million grant to strengthen actions of Crédit Agricole du Maroc Group in climate transition

The African Development Bank Group, through the African Green Banks Initiative and the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance, launched on 28 January a \$1 million technical assistance program for Crédit Agricole du Maroc Group (GCAM). The financing will support strengthening GCAM's institutional, operational and financial capacities to enable it to tap concessional and private capital, identify, structure and finance green projects, and monitor climate impact. Under the technical assistance, target projects will include high-impact sectors, from sustainable agriculture to rural development, water management, clean energy, resilient infrastructure and connectivity. It will also align GCAM funding with international climate finance standards.

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Egypt, Rwanda discuss means of cooperation in the field of water

Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Hani Sweilem, met with Ms. Bernadette Arakoye, Rwandan Minister of Environment during his official visit to Rwanda, accompanied by official delegation and Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Rwanda Ambassador Hanan Shaheen. Ms. Arakoye expressed her sincere welcome to Dr. Sweilem and his accompanying delegation, emphasizing the strong relations between Egypt and Rwanda, particularly in the field of water resources. Dr. Sweilem affirmed the depth of the friendship and mutual respect between the two countries, and Egypt's keenness to continue cooperation in a spirit of partnership and understanding, building upon the strong and distinguished relationship between President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and President of the Republic of Rwanda Paul Kagame.

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Kenya–Brazil Pact Takes Shape as Global Trade Tariffs Drive New South-South Partnerships

Kenyan and Brazilian officials are advancing talks to deepen trade and investment ties as shifting global tariff regimes, including expanding tariffs by major economies, push emerging markets to diversify trade corridors and strengthen South-South cooperation. Delegations from both countries convened at the Kenya–Brazil Economic Cooperation Forum in Nairobi on February 3, 2026, aiming to translate entrepreneurial interest into concrete commercial engagement despite rising protectionism in traditional markets. The forum brought together senior government representatives, investment agencies and private sector players, including John Mwendwa, CEO of Invest Kenya, and Jorge Viana, President of Brazil’s Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil), for discussions focused on expanding two-way trade, investment, and institutional cooperation.

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Advancing cereal resilience through regional collaboration under the CLIMARES project

Researchers, breeders, and policymakers from across the Arab world, Central and West Asia and North Africa (CWANA), and Eurasia convened to exchange knowledge and strengthen collaboration under the CLIMARES project, implemented within the framework of the Bilateral Funding Scheme-5 (BFS-5) Treaty initiative. CLIMARES is one of 27 projects currently being implemented globally under this framework. Two key events held in Algeria and Türkiye highlighted progress in managing cereal pests, accelerating wheat breeding, and advancing the use of plant genetic resources to support climate-resilient food systems.

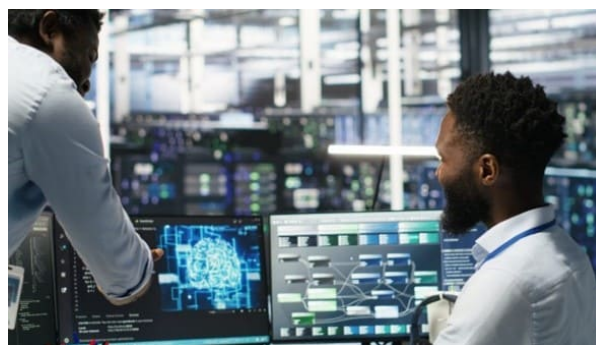
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Saudi Arabia and CGIAR Sign First Agreement to Advance Agricultural Innovation and Food Security

Saudi Arabia has signed its first agreement with CGIAR to support collaboration on agricultural innovation, food security, and environmental sustainability. The agreement establishes a framework for joint research, knowledge exchange, and project development, marking a new phase of cooperation between the Kingdom and the global agricultural research network. The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture is funding the agreement with a \$5 million investment. Under the partnership, CGIAR will support capacity building through training programs for local workers and the launch of joint initiatives across the agricultural sector.

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Africa CDC Establishes Central Data Repository to Strengthen Public Health Surveillance

A new Central Data Repository (CDR) launched by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) aims to strengthen how public health data is integrated, analysed and used across the continent at a time of growing and increasingly complex health risks. While improvements have been made in outbreak detection and reporting, public health data in Africa remains fragmented and dispersed across multiple systems that are often not interoperable. This limits the ability of countries and regional institutions to rapidly synthesise information, identify emerging risks and translate data into timely and coordinated public health action. The CDR addresses this challenge by providing a secure and interoperable platform that integrates surveillance, laboratory and programme data from national and regional systems. The platform enhances Africa CDC's ability to track health threats, support advanced analysis and forecasting as well as coordinate responses across borders, including through the One Health approach.

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Africa launches push to close agricultural mechanization gap as landmark conference begins

Africa's push to accelerate sustainable agricultural mechanization gained fresh momentum today as the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwigulu L. Nchemba, launched Tanzania's National Agricultural Mechanization Strategy 2026–2036 at the opening of the Africa Conference on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization. Organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and hosted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, the conference brings together governments, the private sector, researchers, development partners, youth and farmers to exchange experience, build partnerships and identify scalable solutions to advance sustainable agricultural mechanization across the continent.

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CIFOR-ICRAF and TERRAGR Launch Scalable Restoration Model as Climate Risks Escalate in Africa

A new international partnership has been launched to accelerate large-scale landscape restoration and strengthen climate resilience across Africa, as global efforts intensify to address land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) has formally partnered with restoration-focused company TERRAGR to expand a science-based model that integrates ecological restoration with economic development. The partnership was announced in late January 2026 and spans multiple regions, including Kenya, the United Kingdom, and South Africa, with an initial focus on scaling restoration outcomes in southern Africa. Through this collaboration, CIFOR-ICRAF and TERRAGR aim to replicate and expand proven restoration systems that combine regenerative land use, climate mitigation, and sustainable livelihoods.

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