

1-15 DECEMBER, 2025

# Down To Earth

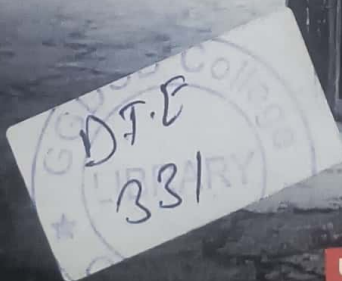
FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

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## DIGITAL THIRST

Data centre boom in India at a steep cost to local water reserves



### UN CLIMATE SUMMIT

New mechanism for just transition

Adaptation finance triples, deadline drifts

Unilateral trade measures in spotlight

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**Vol 34, No 14: Total No of Pages: 60**  
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Cover design: Ajil Bajaj

COVER STORY

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# Engage



## The urgent battle we can't ignore

This refers to the column "Let soil live" by Richard Mahapatra, published in the edition of 1-15 November 2025. The column reminds me of what Mahatma Gandhi had poignantly said in 1946: "To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves." Rightly so. If we forget to take care of soil of our land in our desperate search for food security, we will only harvest disaster. A study by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission published in *Nature Climate Change*, shows that soil acts as a major sink of greenhouse gasses through increased storage of organic carbon. Globally, soil is considered to contain the largest terrestrial carbon pool—estimated at approximately 2,344 Gt [one Gt or gigatonne equals one billion tonnes] of organic carbon in the top 3 metres, 1,500 Gt in the top one metre and 615 Gt within the top 20 cm of the soil profile.

It is often said that "we are only 15 cm away from annihilation". This 15 cm refers to our topsoil. Top soil, usually the upper layer of 13 cm to 15 cm, regenerates naturally and contains the highest concentration of essential organic matter and microorganisms. But it regenerates at the agonizingly slow rate of roughly

2.5 cm every 500 years. Over the last five decades, the overexploitation and erosion of topsoil has been severe. Soil security is undoubtedly essential for our existence. The title of the column, Let soil live, deserves to become a slogan to save ourselves.

JAYDEV JANA  
KOLKATA

## Who can help alleviate the fodder crisis

This is in response to the blog "India needs a Green Fodder Revolution", published on the website on October 21, 2025. First, the image of cows nibbling liny fodder scraps provides an incorrect representation. Fodder should not be cut (or chaffed) to below 6 cm, as proper size encourages regurgitation, mastication and excretion of saliva to begin the process of digestion.

Second, the proper place for all agricultural waste (seeds, leaves, flowers, fruits and other things) after human consumption belongs in the ruminant stomach. Diverting it elsewhere is wasteful, even criminal, and reduces the agricultural sector to a linear economy. India thrived for over 5,000 years because of the circular economy in rural areas. Cooperatives, which the author mentions, have done little over the past six decades to ease fodder shortages or ensure proper use of agricultural waste. Hence, I have little or no hope that they would be able to end this chronic problem.

The solution clearly lies with policymakers. Unfortunately, the government continues to favour water-guzzling crops and the diversion of agro-waste for industrial purposes, ignoring the chronic fodder problem.

SELVARAJAN RAJESHWARAN  
VIA EMAIL