

# The Statesman

## India grants \$15 million to Niger for organising African Union Summit

*The grant assistance was symbolically handed over to Niger Deputy Foreign Minister Lamido Ousseini Bala Goga Salamatou by Indian Ambassador Rajesh Agarwal at a ceremony in Niamey, the External Affairs Ministry said.*

Statesman News Service | New Delhi | June 19, 2019 9:04 pm



India and Niger enjoy close relations. (Representational Image: iStock)

India has for the first time extended \$15 million grant assistance to Niger in support of organising the African Union (AU) Summit scheduled to be held on 7-8 July in Niamey, the capital of Niger.

The grant assistance was symbolically handed over to Niger Deputy Foreign Minister Lamido Ousseini Bala Goga Salamatou by Indian Ambassador Rajesh Agarwal at a ceremony in Niamey, the External Affairs Ministry said.

The support of grant assistance was in response to a specific request made by the Government of Niger. Niger is hosting the AU summit for the first time. The summit in Niamey is also expected to launch the historic African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

India and Niger enjoy close relations. Bilateral relations have expanded significantly since the opening of the Indian Resident Diplomatic Mission in Niamey in 2009. India has provided Lines of Credit worth \$ 96.54 million to Niger for projects in transport, electrification, solar energy and potable drinking water.

India is also establishing the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre (MGICC) under grant assistance in Niamey. The centre honours the memory of Mahatma Gandhi whose 150th birth anniversary is being observed in 2019. The centre is likely to host some meetings associated with the forthcoming AU Summit.

Over the past few decades, India has been making every attempt to increase its presence in Africa where China has made deep inroads in infrastructure and connectivity projects. Several key African nations have joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which India has opposed on the ground that its flagship project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), runs through the Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir which is illegally occupied by Pakistan.

India and Japan, meanwhile, have launched their own joint initiative in the shape of Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) for undertaking development and cooperation projects in the African continent.

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