

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS - 21.08.2026

Highlights of the Day

TamilNadu Highlights	1
Tamil Nadu Archaeology & Heritage Initiatives, 2026.....	1
National Highlights	2
India's Makhana Sector.....	2
Topic: Polity	3
PM CARES Fund.....	3
Punjab's Sacrilege Law.....	5
Supreme Court to Quash FIRs Against Peaceful Student Protesters Using Article 142.....	6
Topic: Economy	7
Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS).....	7
Topic: Science and Technology	8
Rotating Detonation Engines (RDE).....	8
Draft SHANTI Rules, 2026.....	8
Topic: Defence	10
Indian Navy to Lease MQ-9B Sea Guardian.....	10
Positive Indigenisation List (PIL).....	11
Topic: Sports	12
Magnus Carlsen Wins Esports World Cup Chess 2026.....	12
International Highlights	13
BRICS New Development Bank (NDB).....	13
The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).....	14

© Copyright

The Department of Employment and Training has prepared the Competitive Exams study material in the form of e-content for the benefit of Competitive Exam aspirants and it is being uploaded in this Virtual Learning Portal. This e-content study material is the sole property of the Department of Employment and Training. No one (either an individual or an institution) is allowed to copy or reproduce the matter in any form. The trespassers will be prosecuted under the Indian Copyright Act. It is a cost-free service provided to the job seekers who are preparing for the Competitive Exams.

Director,
Department of Employment and Training.

TamilNadu Highlights

Tamil Nadu Archaeology & Heritage Initiatives, 2026

Context

- The **Tamil Nadu Government** has increased the annual allocation for archaeological field surveys, excavations and underwater explorations from **₹7 crore** to **₹10 crore**.
- A modern archaeological laboratory will be established at a cost of **₹2 crore** for scientific analysis of artefacts and samples from excavations.

Archaeological Research & Conservation

- Under the **Tamil Heritage Conservation Mission**, 76 protected monuments and archaeological sites will be renovated in the first phase over the next **5 years**.
- 15 historically significant sites will be identified and notified as protected archaeological sites.
- Annual allocation for conservation and maintenance of protected monuments and archaeological sites will increase from **₹3 crore** to **₹4 crore**.
- Annual allocation for infrastructure and modernisation of excavation museums will increase from **₹30 lakh** to **₹1 crore**.

Scientific & Digital Initiatives

- A modern archaeological laboratory will support scientific analysis of excavation materials.
- An **Artificial Intelligence**-based digital database will be created to make ancient Tamil inscriptions easier to understand.

Tamil Maritime History

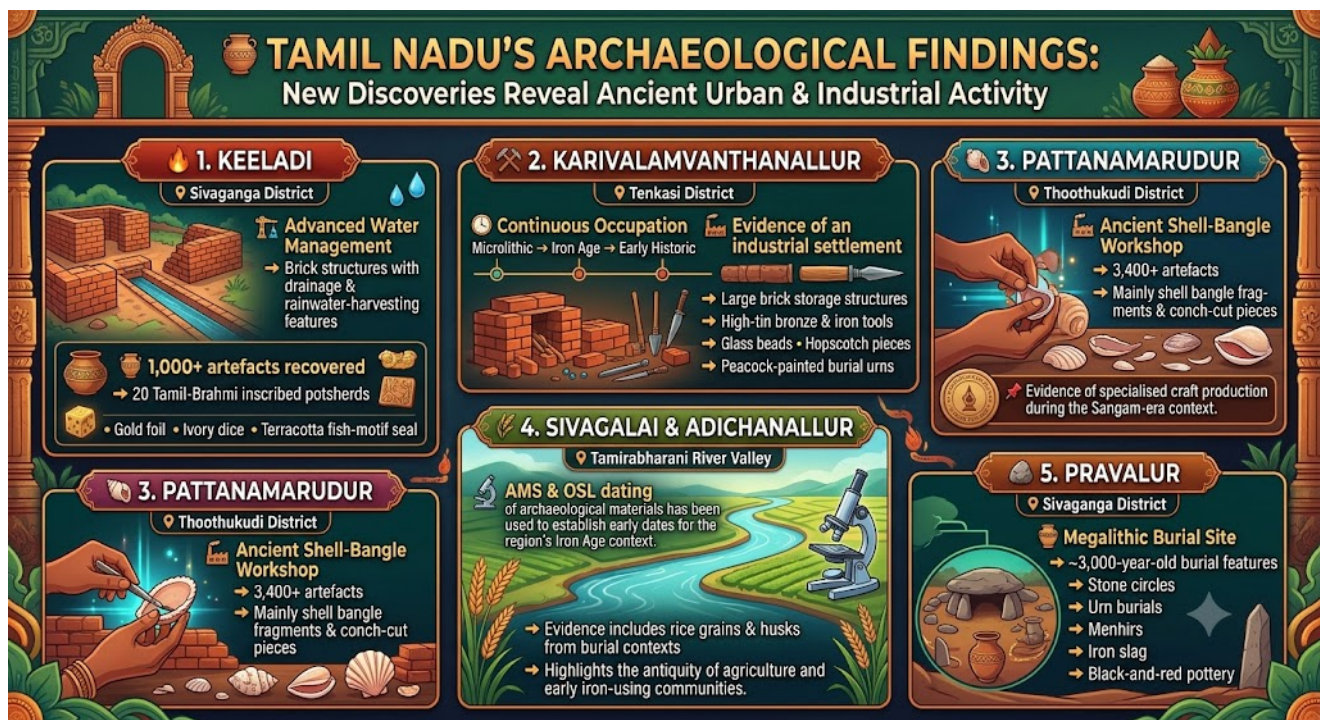
- A 3-year field research project costing **₹3 crore** will document ancient Tamil maritime trade links and ancient ports.

Folk Arts Promotion

- 30–45 minutes will be mandatorily allocated for folk-art performances at government and private events attended by the **Chief Minister**, before the main function.
- Two art research centres will be established at Coimbatore and Thanjavur at a cost of **₹2 crore** to preserve and promote traditional arts such as Karagattam, Kummi, Oyilattam and Kolattam.
- Monthly financial assistance will be extended to 1,500 additional folk artists.
- Annual assistance for purchasing musical instruments and costumes will increase from **₹10,000** to **₹20,000** and be extended to 500 additional young artists.

Tamil Heritage & Museums

- A **Detailed Project Report** will be prepared at a cost of **₹2 crore** for a **Tamil Heritage Museum** in Madurai.
- To commemorate **175 years** of the **Government Museum**, Chennai, a commemorative postage stamp will be released.
- **2026–27** will be observed as “**Visit Museum Year**” to encourage school students, college students and the general public to visit museums.



National Highlights

India's Makhana Sector

Context

- Makhana has emerged as one of India's fastest-growing agri-food sectors, driven by increasing health awareness, rising domestic demand and growing export opportunities.
- The government has taken steps to modernise the makhana value chain and improve farmers' incomes, processing and exports.

What is Makhana?

- Scientific name: *Euryale ferox*
- It is an aquatic crop cultivated mainly in shallow ponds, lakes and wetlands.
- The seeds of the plant are consumed as food.

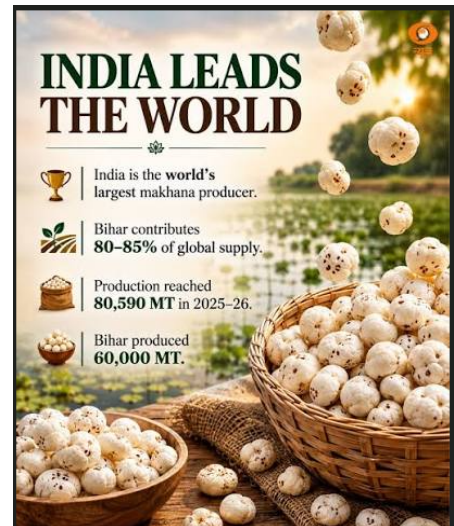
- Makhana is rich in carbohydrates, protein, dietary fibre, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus and iron.
- It is low in salt and cholesterol-free and has a relatively low glycaemic load.

India's Position

- India is the world's largest producer of makhana.
- Major producing states: Bihar, **West Bengal**, Assam
- Bihar accounts for nearly three-fourths of India's production and around 80–85% of global supply.
- Cultivation is particularly concentrated in **North Bihar**.

Government Initiatives

- **National Makhana Board**
 - Announced in **Union Budget 2025–26**.
 - Formally launched on **15 September 2025** in Bihar.
 - Aims to strengthen and modernise the entire makhana value chain.
- **Central Sector Scheme for Development of Makhana**
 - Outlay: **₹476.03 crore**
 - Period: **2025–26 to 2030–31**
 - Focus areas: Research and innovation, quality seed supply, farmer skill development, improved harvesting and post-harvest practices, value addition and processing, branding and marketing, export promotion, and quality control.



Topic: Polity

PM CARES Fund

Context

- The **PM CARES Fund** released its delayed audited statements for **FY 2023–24** and **FY 2024–25**.
- In **FY 2024–25**, it recorded: Income – **₹1,279.9 crore**; Expenditure – **₹87.85 lakh**; Closing balance – **₹8,452.06 crore**.

What is PM CARES?

- **Full Form: Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund.**
- It is a public charitable trust established to provide assistance during emergencies and distress situations.
- Established: **27 March 2020**, during the **COVID-19** pandemic.

- Registered under: **Registration Act, 1908.**
- Location: **New Delhi.**

Objectives

- Provide relief during public health emergencies, natural calamities, man-made disasters and other emergency situations.
- Support healthcare and pharmaceutical infrastructure.
- Fund critical research.
- Provide assistance to affected and distressed people.

Management

- Chairperson: **Prime Minister** of India — ex-officio.
- Ex-officio Trustees: Ministers of Defence, **Home Affairs** and Finance.
- **Nominated Trustees:** Eminent persons serving on a pro bono basis.

Sources & Key Features

- Funding: Voluntary contributions from individuals, organisations and public/private entities.
- **Government Budget:** Does not receive budgetary allocations from the Government of India.
- **Tax Benefit:** Donations qualify for **100%** tax exemption under **Section 80G** of the **Income Tax Act, 1961.**
- **CSR:** Eligible contributions can be counted as **CSR** expenditure under **Schedule VII** of the **Companies Act, 2013.**
- **Foreign Contributions:** Has **FCRA** exemption for receiving eligible foreign contributions.

PM CARES FUND: Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund

RECENT UPDATE

FY 2024-25

 Income: **₹1,279.9 crore**
 Expenditure: **₹87.85 lakh**
 Closing Balance: **₹8,452.06 crore**

WHAT IS PM CARES?

PM CARES = Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations

 Established: 27 March 2020
 During the COVID-19 pandemic

 **New Delhi**

 **Public Charitable Trust**

MAIN OBJECTIVES

-  Emergency healthcare support
-  Natural & man-made disasters
-  Critical research
-  Assistance to affected people
-  Healthcare & pharmaceutical infrastructure



MANAGEMENT

-  **Chairperson:**
Prime Minister — Ex-officio
-  **Ex-officio Trustees:**
• Defence Minister
• Home Minister
• Finance Minister
-  **Nominated Trustees:**
• Eminent persons
→ Serve pro bono

FUNDING

-  Voluntary contributions from individuals & organisations
-  No Government budgetary allocation

IMPORTANT FEATURES

-  **Tax Benefit:**
Donations → 100% deduction under Section 80G
-  **CSR:** Eligible donations can count as CSR expenditure under Schedule VII, Companies Act, 2013
-  **Foreign Contributions:**
→ Can receive eligible foreign contributions under FCRA exemption

Punjab's Sacrilege Law

Context

- Punjab's new law on sacrilege of **Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji** has renewed debate over the criminalisation of religious offences in a secular State.
- The Governor of Punjab gave assent to the **Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act**, introducing stricter punishment for sacrilege.

Key Provisions

- Persons involved in or supporting sacrilegious acts can face **10 years** to life imprisonment.
- Fine: **₹5 lakh to ₹25 lakh**.
- The Act covers “wilful and deliberate” acts of sacrilege involving physical damage, defacement, burning, tearing and theft.
- It also extends to acts through speech, writing, visual representation and electronic means.

Sacrilege vs Blasphemy

- **Sacrilege**: Traditionally refers to the physical desecration or violation of something considered sacred.
- **Blasphemy**: Generally concerns expressions such as contemptuous or irreverent speech, writing or imagery concerning a religion, deity, prophet, scripture or beliefs.

Legal Framework under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

- **Section 298**: Punishes injuring or defiling a place of worship with the intention of insulting a religion.
- **Section 299**: Punishes deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings through words, signs or visible representation.

Origin of Blasphemy Laws in India

- **Section 295A** of the **Indian Penal Code, 1927** criminalised deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings through words, signs or visible representations.
- In **Ramji Lal Modi v. State of Uttar Pradesh (1957)**, the **Supreme Court** upheld the constitutional validity of **Section 295A**.

Constitutional Concerns

- **Article 19(1)(a)**: Criminalising speech, writing, signs or electronic representations may affect the freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(2)**: Restrictions must fall within the constitutionally permitted grounds, such as public order; mere religious offence may not automatically amount to a threat to public order.

- **Article 14:** Vague expressions such as “disrespect” may raise concerns regarding equality, clarity and non-arbitrariness in criminal law.
- **Proportionality:** Punishment extending to life imprisonment may be examined against the nature of the offence, intention, harm caused and availability of less restrictive measures.

Supreme Court to Quash FIRs Against Peaceful Student Protesters Using Article 142

Context

- On **18 August 2026**, the **Supreme Court** agreed to invoke **Article 142** to quash FIRs registered against students who participated in nationwide protests over **NEET-UG** paper-leak allegations.
- The Court also proposed a high-powered committee to examine broader issues related to the protests.

Key Supreme Court Observations

- The Court sought a list of FIRs in which only students were named.
- The **Chief Justice** indicated that such FIRs could be quashed using **Article 142**.
- However, cases involving persons with serious criminal antecedents would be considered separately.
- The Court distinguished between students peacefully exercising their right to protest, and persons who allegedly entered the protests with an intention to create violence.

Article 142

- **Article 142** empowers the **Supreme Court** to pass orders necessary for doing “complete justice” in any matter before it.
- It gives the Court a wide discretionary power to ensure that justice is achieved where ordinary legal remedies may be inadequate.
- The power is extraordinary and discretionary, and must be exercised within constitutional limits.

Right to Peaceful Protest

- The Court linked the students' right to protest with **Article 19**, particularly **Article 19(1)(a)** — Freedom of speech and expression, and **Article 19(1)(b)** — Right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- These freedoms are not absolute and are subject to reasonable restrictions under **Article 19(2)** and 19(3) respectively.

Proposed High-Powered Committee

- Treatment of student protesters.

- Alleged police excesses.
- Use of force during protests.
- Allegations of sexual misconduct/molestation of women protesters by police personnel.
- Other concerns raised before the Court.

SUPREME COURT & STUDENT PROTEST FIRs | Article 142 & Right to Peaceful Protest

RECENT UPDATE

18 August 2026 | The **Supreme Court** agreed to consider using **Article 142** to quash FIRs against students involved in protests over NEET-UG paper-leak allegations.
→ Court also proposed a **high-powered committee** to examine wider issues linked to the protests.

COURT'S OBSERVATIONS

- 1. Students named alone in FIRs**
→ Court sought a list of such FIRs.
- 2. Article 142**
→ FIRs against students may be quashed to ensure "**complete justice**."
- 3. Serious criminal antecedents**
→ Such cases will be considered separately.
- 4. Peaceful protest vs violence**
→ Court distinguished students exercising their right to protest from persons allegedly joining protests with an intent to cause violence.

ARTICLE 142

"Complete Justice"
→ Supreme Court can pass orders necessary to ensure complete justice in matters before it.

★ **Nature:** Extraordinary + Discretionary Power
⚠ **Must be exercised within constitutional limits.**

RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST

Protected through **Article 19**:

- **Article 19(1)(a)**
→ Freedom of speech & expression
- **Article 19(1)(b)**
→ Right to assemble peacefully and without arms

Topic: Economy

Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS)

Context

- The Ministry of Electronics and **Information Technology** (MeitY) approved projects worth **₹7,877 crore** for incentives under the **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS)** to strengthen domestic electronics component manufacturing.

Objective

- Build a robust domestic component ecosystem and integrate India's electronics industry with **Global Value Chains (GVCs)**.

Target segments

- Sub-assemblies, bare components, selected bare components, supply-chain ecosystem and capital equipment, and telecom sub-assemblies.

Incentives

- Turnover-linked incentive, Capex incentive and Hybrid incentive.

Tenure

- Turnover-linked incentive — **6 years** including 1-year gestation; Capex incentive — **5 years**.

Electronics production

- Increased from **₹1.90 lakh crore (2014–15)** to an estimated **₹13.11 lakh crore (2025–26)**.

Significance

- Electronic goods are now India's 3rd-largest export category, with exports of **USD 47.96 billion** in **FY 2025–26**; India is the world's 2nd-largest mobile phone manufacturer.

Topic: Science and Technology

Rotating Detonation Engines (RDE)

Context

- Defence start-up D-Propulse successfully demonstrated a **Rotating Detonation Engine (RDE)** at a **DRDO** facility in Hyderabad, highlighting advances in next-generation propulsion technology.

What is RDE?

- An advanced propulsion system that uses detonation rather than conventional combustion/deflagration to generate thrust.
- Conventional engine: Fuel undergoes deflagration, where the flame front travels at a speed below the speed of sound.
- **RDE**: A fuel–oxidiser mixture undergoes detonation, producing a supersonic shock wave.

Working

- The detonation wave continuously rotates around a ring-shaped (annular) combustion chamber, producing high-pressure gases.

Advantage

- RDEs can potentially provide greater fuel efficiency than conventional engines.

Space applications

- Lower fuel requirements could reduce propulsion mass and potentially allow greater payload capacity.

Draft SHANTI Rules, 2026

Context

- The Government has released the draft **SHANTI Rules, 2026**, proposing detailed norms on nuclear operator liability, insurance and financial security.

- The rules seek to support the planned expansion of nuclear power and greater private-sector participation.

Purpose

- Seek to operationalise the nuclear liability framework under the **SHANTI Act, 2025**.
- Aim to provide greater regulatory clarity for the expansion and diversification of India's nuclear sector.
- Combine strict operator liability, mandatory financial protection and lifecycle financial planning.

Strict & No-Fault Liability

- Nuclear installation operators would be strictly liable for nuclear damage, without requiring proof of fault.
- Liability would also cover damage occurring during the carriage of nuclear material.

Mandatory Financial Protection

- Operators must maintain insurance, financial security, or a combination of both.
- Financial security must be irrevocable and remain valid until all spent fuel is removed from the spent-fuel storage pool after removal from the reactor.
- Financial security is to be pledged to the **Central Government**.
- Where shares, bonds or other financial instruments are used, a 1:1.33 security margin is required.
- Any shortfall must be immediately covered through additional insurance or financial security.

Wider Nuclear Applications

- Nuclear technology would be extended beyond electricity generation to captive power and process heat, hydrogen production, medical isotopes, and education, training and research.
- Captive nuclear power is proposed for hard-to-abate industries.
- Emerging applications include data centres, semiconductor manufacturing, quantum technologies, high-performance computing and **Artificial Intelligence**-enabled technologies.

Lifecycle Financial Planning

- Licensed facilities would need financial arrangements covering civil liability, operating costs, spent-fuel management, radioactive-waste management, decommissioning, and site remediation.

Government-Owned Installations

- **Specified Central Government**-owned installations may be exempted from insurance or other financial-security requirements.
- In such cases, the **Central Government** would assume liability for attributable damages.

Periodic Review

- An expert group would review maximum civil-liability limits every **5 years**.
- The group would draw expertise from nuclear science, engineering, actuarial science, insurance, law and public interest.

India's Nuclear Landscape

- Nuclear energy is an important component of India's clean-energy strategy, providing reliable low-carbon electricity alongside renewables.
- India has set a target of **100 GW** nuclear power capacity by **2047**.
- The Department of **Atomic Energy** and its public-sector undertakings have historically played a central role in the nuclear programme.
- India is pursuing indigenous technologies including **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors** and **Small Modular Reactors**.
- Nuclear technology is also used in healthcare, agriculture, food preservation, industry, research and isotope production.
- The Government is seeking greater private-sector participation to mobilise capital, technology and manufacturing capacity.

SHANTI Act, 2025

- Provides the statutory framework for the next phase of India's nuclear-energy programme.
- Seeks to enable wider participation in nuclear power generation while retaining government oversight over nuclear safety and security.
- Provides a framework for licensing nuclear installations and activities and defines operator responsibilities.
- Creates greater legal and regulatory certainty for investment.
- Covers civil nuclear liability and compensation for nuclear damage.
- Provides for financial security and insurance mechanisms.
- Supports wider non-power applications of nuclear technology.

Topic: Defence

Indian Navy to Lease MQ-9B Sea Guardian

Context

- The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with **General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI), USA**, to lease two **MQ-9B Sea Guardian HALE RPAS** for the **Indian Navy**.

Platform

- **MQ-9B Sea Guardian** — a High-Altitude Long-Endurance (**HALE**) remotely piloted aircraft system.

Primary role

- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (**ISR**) and precision-strike missions.

Endurance

- Can remain airborne for over **30 hours** and operate at altitudes above 40,000 feet.

Maritime capability

- Designed to monitor extensive maritime and land areas, making it particularly useful for India's maritime surveillance.

MRO facility

- A global Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (**MRO**) facility will be established in India.

Indigenisation

- The arrangement envisages assembly of some **MQ-9Bs** in India and sourcing a portion of components domestically.

Positive Indigenisation List (PIL)

Context

- The Department of **Defence Production (DDP)** under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) notified the 6th **Positive Indigenisation List (PIL)**.
- It includes 405 strategically important defence items, with an estimated business potential of **₹3,070 crore**.

What is PIL?

- The **Positive Indigenisation List** is a list of defence items for which imports are progressively prohibited after specified deadlines.
- It promotes indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment.

Key Objectives

- Reduce dependence on defence imports.
- **Promote Aatmanirbhar Bharat** in defence.
- Encourage participation of MSMEs and Indian startups.
- Develop indigenous critical components, sub-systems and raw materials.
- **Make India** a global defence manufacturing hub.

Institutional Framework

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Defence.
- **Key Departments:** Department of **Defence Production (DDP)** and Department of **Military Affairs (DMA)**.
- Policy framework: **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)** and **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.
- **SRIJAN Portal:** Launched in August **2020** to facilitate the indigenous development of imported defence items.

Two Broad Lists

- **DMA List:** Major platforms such as artillery guns, corvettes, radars and transport aircraft.
- **DDP List:** Sub-assemblies, LRUs, sensors, ammunition and specialised raw materials.

Make Categories

- **Make-I:** Government-funded prototype development.
- **Make-II:** Industry-funded prototype development.
- **Make-III:** Procurement of indigenously developed substitutes.

Topic: Sports

Magnus Carlsen Wins Esports World Cup Chess 2026

Context

- **Norwegian Grandmaster Magnus Carlsen** successfully defended his **Esports World Cup Chess** title in Paris, becoming champion for the second consecutive year. He defeated **Belarusian GM Denis Lazavik** in the final.

Winner

- **Magnus Carlsen** — Norway, representing **Team Liquid**.

Runner-up

- **Denis Lazavik** — Belarus.

Final

- Carlsen defeated Lazavik 2–0 in sets, winning both sets 3–1.

Venue & Date

- Paris, France — **11–15 August 2026**.

Prize

- Carlsen won **USD 250,000** and 1,000 **Club Championship** points.

Other positions

- **Hikaru Nakamura** — 3rd; **Alireza Firouzja** — 4th.

International Highlights

BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)

Context

- Iran is advancing towards official membership in the **BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)**, according to the Governor of the **Central Bank** of Iran, **Abdolnasser Hemmati**.

What It Is?

- The **New Development Bank (NDB)**, formerly known as the **BRICS Development Bank**, is a multilateral development bank established by the **BRICS** countries.
- Headquarters: Shanghai, China.
- It finances sustainable infrastructure and green development projects in emerging markets and developing countries.

History & Formation

- **2012:** Idea of a South-South development bank was first proposed by India at the 4th **BRICS Summit** in **New Delhi**.
- **2014:** Agreement establishing the **NDB** was signed on **15 July 2014** at the 6th **BRICS Summit** in Fortaleza, Brazil.
- The agreement was accompanied by the \$100 billion **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- **2015:** **NDB** became operational.
- **First President:** **K. V. Kamath**.
- **Regional Offices:** Johannesburg, São Paulo, Moscow and **GIFT City**, Gujarat.

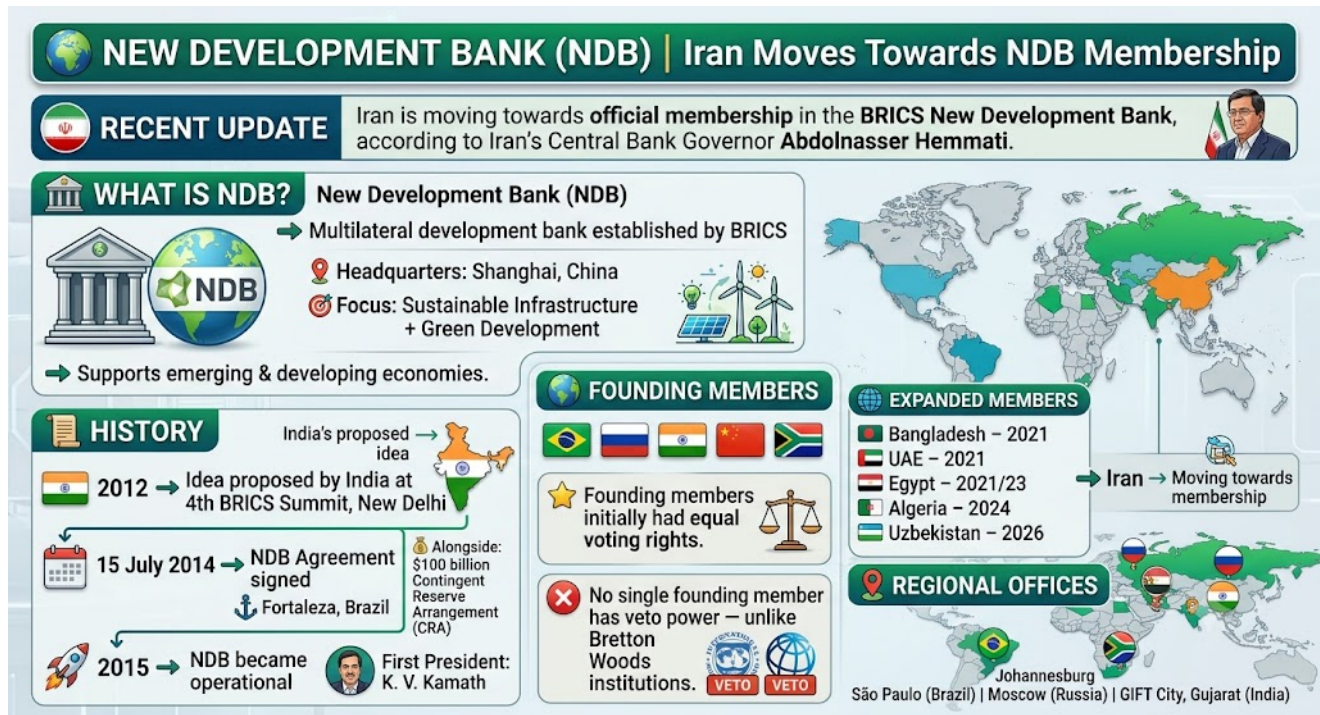
Membership & Shareholding

- **Founding Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China and **South Africa**.
- The founding members initially had equal voting rights.
- **Unlike Bretton Woods** institutions, no single founding member has veto power.
- The bank is open to **UN** member states, subject to its membership rules.
- **Expanded Members:** Bangladesh (**2021**), **UAE (2021)**, Egypt (**2021/2023**), Algeria (**2024**), Uzbekistan (**2026**).

Key Functions

- **Infrastructure Financing:** Loans, equity financing and guarantees for transport, clean energy, water and digital infrastructure.

- **Local Currency Lending:** Financing in members' domestic currencies to reduce foreign-exchange risks.
- **Green Financing:** Supports climate-resilient and renewable-energy projects.
- **Emergency Assistance:** Provides counter-cyclical assistance during major economic or public-health shocks.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provides feasibility studies, project preparation and institutional capacity-building.



The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Context

- The **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** is facing a severe Ebola outbreak, with over **2,300 deaths** and nearly **5,000 cases**, linked to the rare Bundibugyo strain.

What It Is?

- The **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, formerly known as Zaire (1971–1997), is a **Central African** country and the second-largest country in Africa by land area after Algeria; it is rich in cobalt, copper and industrial diamonds, contains the vast Congo rainforest, and gained independence from Belgium in **1960**.

Location & Borders

- Located in **Central Africa**, crossed by the Equator, with a narrow **Atlantic Ocean** coastline.
- Capital: Kinshasa.

- Shares borders with **Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola and Republic of the Congo.**

Congo Basin

- Dominated by the **Congo River** and its vast basin covering over 3.46 million sq. km.
- The **Congo River** crosses the Equator twice.
- Contains the **Cuvette Centrale**, associated with the world's second-largest tropical rainforest.



Albertine Rift & Great Lakes

- **Eastern DRC** forms part of the **Albertine Rift**, the western branch of the **East African Rift System**.
- Major lakes include **Lake Albert, Lake Edward, Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika.**
- **Lake Tanganyika** is the world's second-deepest lake.

Mountains & Volcanoes

- **Ruwenzori Range** contains **Margherita Peak (5,109 m)**, the highest point in the **DRC**.
- The Virunga volcanic chain, including **Mount Nyiragongo**, lies in the east.

Major Plateaus

- Katanga (Shaba) Plateau: Rich in copper and cobalt.
- Ubangi–**Uele Plateau**: Forms part of the Congo–Nile watershed divide.

