

20/05/2026 Daily Current News

1. New Coal Mines:

Context: Coal Production commences from Urtan and Dhirauli Mines in Madhya Pradesh.

More details:



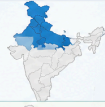
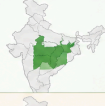
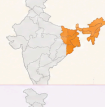
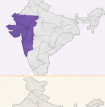
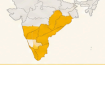
- ❖ The Ministry of Coal commenced coal production at the Urtan and Dhirauli coal mines in Madhya Pradesh to strengthen India's energy security and self-reliance.
- ❖ The Urtan Coal Mine is located in Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh, and has been allocated to M/s JMS Mining Private Limited.
- ❖ Coal production at the Urtan Coal Mine began on 15 May 2026.
- ❖ Urtan became the first underground coal mine to start production under the commercial coal auction regime.
- ❖ The Dhirauli Coal Mine is located in Singrauli district, Madhya Pradesh, and has been allocated to M/s Mahan Energen Limited.
- ❖ Coal production at the Dhirauli Coal Mine commenced on 17 May 2026.
- ❖ The Dhirauli mine is expected to strengthen coal supply from the resource-rich Singrauli region.

2. Zonal Councils:

Context: Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, today chaired the 26th meeting of the Central Zonal Council (CZC) in Bastar, Chhattisgarh.

About Zonal Councils:

- ❖ Zonal Councils are statutory bodies established under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, to promote cooperative federalism and inter-State coordination.
- ❖ The concept of Zonal Councils was proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1956 during discussions on the Fazal Ali Commission Report.
- ❖ Five Zonal Councils were created under Sections 15–22 of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.

ZONAL COUNCIL & STATES		
Zonal Council	States	
 NORTHERN ZONAL COUNCIL	Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Chandigarh	
 CENTRAL ZONAL COUNCIL	Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand	
 EASTERN ZONAL COUNCIL	Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim	
 WESTERN ZONAL COUNCIL	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman & Diu	
 SOUTHERN ZONAL COUNCIL	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry	

- ❖ The North Eastern region has a separate body called the North Eastern Council, established under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.
- ❖ The Union Home Minister serves as the Chairman of all five Zonal Councils and is also the ex-officio Chairman of the North Eastern Council.
- ❖ The Vice-Chairman is the Chief Minister of a member state, selected by annual rotation.
- ❖ Members include Chief Ministers, Lieutenant Governors, Administrators, and two ministers nominated by the Governor from each member state.
- ❖ Advisors include nominees from NITI Aayog, along with Chief Secretaries and Development Commissioners of member states.
- ❖ Each Zonal Council has a Permanent Committee of Chief Secretaries to examine issues before placing unresolved matters before the full Council.
- ❖ Zonal Councils provide a platform for dialogue and coordination between states and the Centre on common issues.
- ❖ Though advisory in nature, Zonal Councils have become important instruments of cooperative federalism, with 61 meetings held in the last 11 years.
- ❖ Key issues discussed include speedy investigation of sexual offences, implementation of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), banking access in villages, ERSS-112, and regional development sectors like health, education, nutrition, electricity, urban planning, and cooperatives.

3. *Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Project:*

Context: The National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) organized a One-day Community Awareness Programme on Dam Safety at the Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Project in Himachal Pradesh on 19 May 2026 with the objective of strengthening public awareness, disaster preparedness and coordination among stakeholders associated with dam safety and emergency response.

About Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Project:

- ❖ The Nathpa Jhakri Dam is a concrete gravity dam on the Sutlej river in Rampur Bushahr, Shimla district, Himachal Pradesh, India.
- ❖ The primary purpose of the dam is hydroelectric power production and it supplies a 1,500 megawatts (2,000,000 hp) underground power station with water.
- ❖ On 6 September 2025, after extreme levels of rainfall a massive landslide near the dam blocked the National Highway-5 nearby and caused concern for the dam.

4. Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer (SMILE) Mission:

Context: The SMILE mission successfully launched aboard a Vega-C rocket from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana.

About SMILE mission:

- ❖ Joint Mission of the European Space Agency and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.
- ❖ Objective: To capture the first-ever panoramic imaging of the interaction between solar wind and Earth's magnetosphere.
- ❖ The mission aims to improve understanding of space weather phenomena such as geomagnetic storms.
- ❖ Key instruments include Light Ion Analyser, Magnetometer, Soft X-ray Imager, and Ultraviolet Aurora Imager.
- ❖ It features the world's first space-borne Soft X-ray Imager (SXI) to visualize the previously invisible boundaries of Earth's magnetosphere.
- ❖ The mission uses an integrated observation system for simultaneous global imaging and direct measurement of solar wind parameters.

5. S-400 Defence System:

Context: India is set to receive the fourth squadron of the Russian-origin S-400 air defence missile system by the end of the week of 19 May 2026.

About S-400 Defence System:

- ❖ The S-400 Triumf, also known in India as “Sudarshan Chakra,” is one of the world's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems developed by Russia's Almaz-Antey.
- ❖ India signed a \$5.4 billion deal with Russia in 2018 to procure five S-400 units, making it one of India's largest defence acquisitions.
- ❖ The S-400 was designed to replace the older S-200 and S-300 air defence systems and counter advanced Western systems like the MIM-104 Patriot.
- ❖ During the May 2025 India–Pakistan conflict, India used the S-400 system to intercept Pakistani missiles and drones targeting areas such as Jammu, Pathankot, and Amritsar.
- ❖ The system can engage multiple aerial threats including fighter aircraft, drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles.
- ❖ The S-400's radar can detect targets up to 600 km away and simultaneously track around 300 targets while engaging 36 threats.
- ❖ Its missile variants include 9M96E/9M96E2 (120 km range), 48N6E3 (250 km range), and 40N6E (400 km range).

- ❖ The missiles can travel at speeds up to 17,000 km/h (around Mach 14) and operate at altitudes ranging from 10 metres to 30 km.
- ❖ The system is highly mobile, can be deployed within 5–10 minutes, and features “shoot and scoot” capability for rapid relocation after firing.
- ❖ The S-400 integrates advanced phased-array radars, electronic warfare resistance, multiple guidance systems, and interoperability with systems like S-300, Tor, and Pantsir, making it a powerful air defence shield.

6. *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967:*

Context: The Delhi Police told the Supreme Court that the question of whether prolonged incarceration and delay of trial could override the statutory restrictions on bail under anti-terror laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, may warrant consideration by a larger Bench in view of two “conflicting” judgments rendered by coordinate Benches.

What has happened?

- ❖ The case relates to bail pleas filed by accused in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).
- ❖ Section 43D(5) of the UAPA places strict conditions on granting bail in terror-related cases and makes bail difficult if the allegations appear prima facie true.
- ❖ In *Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb*, the Supreme Court held that prolonged incarceration and delay in trial can override these strict bail restrictions.
- ❖ However, a January 2025 Supreme Court judgment denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam took a stricter view under UAPA.
- ❖ On May 18, 2026, another Supreme Court Bench while granting bail in a narco-terror case reaffirmed that “bail is the rule and jail is the exception,” even under UAPA, and questioned the earlier January 2025 ruling.
- ❖ Due to these differing judgments, the Delhi Police argued that there is a legal conflict regarding bail under UAPA.
- ❖ The main issue is whether constitutional rights such as personal liberty and speedy trial can outweigh the statutory restrictions on bail under anti-terror laws.

About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967:

- ❖ Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 was enacted in 1967 to prevent unlawful and anti-national activities in India.
- ❖ The Act defines “unlawful activity” as actions aimed at disrupting India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- ❖ The Central Government has the power to declare any activity or association as unlawful through an Official Gazette notification.
- ❖ The Act provides for stringent punishments, including life imprisonment and the death penalty in certain cases.
- ❖ Both Indian and foreign nationals can be prosecuted under UAPA, even for offences committed outside India.

- ❖ Investigating agencies can file a chargesheet within 180 days of arrest, with possible extension through court approval.
- ❖ The 2004 amendment added “terrorist act” provisions and empowered the government to ban organisations involved in terrorism; 34 outfits were banned under these provisions.
- ❖ Before 2004, the Act mainly dealt with unlawful activities related to secession and cession of territory.
- ❖ The 2019 amendment empowered the government to designate individuals, and not just organisations, as terrorists.
- ❖ The Act authorises the Director General of the National Investigation Agency to approve seizure or attachment of property in NIA-investigated cases.
- ❖ Officers of the NIA of Inspector rank or above are empowered to investigate terrorism cases under the Act.

7. *AH-64E Apache attack helicopters:*

Context: The U.S. Department of State has approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to India for follow-on sustainment support and related equipment for AH-64E Apache attack helicopters at an estimated cost of \$198.2 million.

About AH-64E Apache attack helicopters:

- ❖ Boeing AH-64E Apache Guardian is regarded as one of the world’s most advanced multi-role combat helicopters.
- ❖ The helicopter is widely used for advanced reconnaissance, precision strike, and close air support missions.
- ❖ It is manufactured by Boeing in the United States and is also known as the “Apache Guardian.”
- ❖ The AH-64E is the latest Apache variant operated by the United States Army.
- ❖ Several countries including India, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Kuwait, Netherlands, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, UAE, and the UK operate the Apache helicopter.
- ❖ India currently operates 22 AH-64E Apache helicopters with the Indian Air Force, and in 2020, India signed a deal with Boeing for six additional Apaches for the Indian Army.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ Under India’s BRICS Chairship for 2026, the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India will be organising the BRICS Youth Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting on 20–21 May 2026 in Indore.
- ☐ Iran has announced the establishment of the Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), a new regulatory body tasked with overseeing and managing operations in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. The PGSA will monitor developments and coordinate activities related to the vital global shipping corridor. Under the new regulatory framework, vessels entering the Strait of Hormuz will be required to comply with directives issued by the authority and obtain transit permits before passage.
- ☐ Bharat Forge, through its Aerospace business, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Andhra Pradesh on 19 May 2026 to establish India’s first private-sector Marine

Gas Turbine repair, overhaul, and indigenous development complex in Visakhapatnam. The project will come up over about 80 acres within the Andhra Pradesh Defence Manufacturing Corridor and will be located near the Naval Dockyard, INS Eksila, and the Eastern Naval Command Headquarters.

- ☐ The solar wind is a stream of charged particles flowing outwards from the sun. As the solar wind nears the magnetic field of a planet, it becomes compressed near the magnetic boundaries. This creates a difference in pressure, or pressure gradient, that squeezes the charged particles along the magnetic field, away from the stream. As a result, closer to the stream is an area with a lower density of charged particles. This is called the Zwan-Wolf effect.

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