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Current Affairs Today — May 31, 2026

31 May 2026 ·

SOCIAL ISSUES**SECURITY & DEFENCE****ECONOMY****ENVIRONMENT****GS2****GS3**

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Current Affairs Today — May 31, 2026

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*A snapshot of the most exam-relevant developments for **Sunday, May 31, 2026** — anchored by **World No Tobacco Day**, the conclusion of **Exercise PRAGATI 2026**, and the Supreme Court’s **Agasthyamalai** clean-up order, with shorter notes on governance, defence, economy, and environment.*

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2026

*May 31 is **World No Tobacco Day**; WHO’s 2026 theme is “Unmasking the appeal — countering nicotine and tobacco addiction.”*

Key Points

- Targets youth-focused industry tactics: **e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, synthetic nicotine**.
- India’s laws: **COTPA 2003, PECA 2019** (e-cigarette ban); **FCTC** ratified 2004.

(See the full deep-dive article in today’s edition.)

EXERCISE PRAGATI 2026 CONCLUDES AT UMROI

*India’s **maiden 13-nation Army multilateral exercise** concluded May 31 at **Umroi, Meghalaya**.*

Key Points

- **PRAGATI** = Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region.
- 13 nations, 400+ troops, counter-insurgency focus. *(Full article in edition.)*

SUPREME COURT ORDERS AGASTHYAMALAI CLEAN-UP

*The SC (May 29) ordered eviction of **4,601 encroachers** from the **Western Ghats’ Agasthyamalai** landscape.*

Key Points

- Case: *A. John Kennedy v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2026 INSC 605); CEC monitoring; next hearing Sept 1. (Full article in edition.)

COTTON IMPORT DUTY WAIVED

India suspended the **11% cotton import duty** for **June 1–end-October 2026** to aid textile MSMEs.

Key Points

- Second waiver in 12 months; welcomed by **CITI, AEPC**; mills-vs-farmers tension. (Full article in edition.)

CBSE ON-SCREEN MARKING (OSM) CONTROVERSY

CBSE's switch to **On-Screen Marking (OSM)** for **Class 12 (2026)** and the scrapping of post-result mark verification drew criticism over scanning errors.

Background

- **OSM:** answer scripts are scanned and evaluated digitally on a secure portal; system auto-totals marks.
- Aimed at fewer totalling errors and faster results; critics cite a rushed, un-piloted rollout.
- **Class 10 evaluation remains physical** for 2026. CBSE functions under the **Ministry of Education**.

UPSC Angle

- GS2 governance: digitisation of high-stakes assessment requires piloting, transparency, and grievance redress; links to wider exam-credibility concerns (NTA/CUET).

★ FACTS CORNER

OSM = On-Screen (digital) Marking; CBSE Class 12, 2026; Class 10 stays physical.

BRAHMOS EXPORT DEAL WITH VIETNAM

India finalised a **~\$629 million BrahMos coastal-defence deal with Vietnam**, confirmed around the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Background

- **BrahMos** = India-Russia joint venture (1998); name from **Brahmaputra** + **Moskva** rivers; supersonic cruise missile (~Mach 2.8–3).
- First export customer: **Philippines (2022)**; Indonesia negotiations in final stages.
- Aligns with **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** defence-export goals.

UPSC Angle

- GS3 security / GS2 IR: India's shift from arms importer to credible exporter; Act East and South China Sea signalling.

★ FACTS CORNER

BrahMos = India + Russia JV; named Brahmaputra + Moskva; 1st export buyer Philippines (2022); Vietnam deal ~\$629 mn.

NFHS-6 — INDIA'S DOUBLE BURDEN OF DISEASE

NFHS-6 data show gains in child nutrition and healthcare access alongside a sharp rise in **obesity, diabetes, and C-sections**.

Background

- **NFHS** is conducted by the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)**, **Mumbai**, under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**; NFHS-6 is the **sixth round**.
- Reveals an **epidemiological transition** — under-nutrition coexisting with rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
- Women's digital access and schooling improved, but **asset ownership and financial autonomy lag** (access ≠ agency).

UPSC Angle

- GS2 social sector: NCD policy (NP-NCD), regulating unnecessary C-sections, women's economic empowerment.

★ FACTS CORNER

NFHS by IIPS Mumbai under MoHFW; NFHS-6 = 6th round; “double burden” = undernutrition + NCDs.

AIR POLLUTION CUT INDIA'S SOLAR OUTPUT BY ~9.6% (2023)

Research finds **aerosols / air pollution** reduced India's solar generation by **~9.6% in 2023** — among the highest losses globally.

Background

- Aerosols scatter/absorb sunlight and soil panels ("**solar dimming**"), cutting PV yield.
- India targets **500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030**; clean air directly raises solar returns — a co-benefit with the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP, 2019)**.

★ FACTS CORNER

India non-fossil target: 500 GW by 2030; NCAP launched 2019; pollution cut solar output ~9.6% (2023).

SUNDAY SCIENCE — ELEPHANTS AS A KEYSTONE SPECIES

A 15-year savanna study (published in *Science*) shows **elephant dung is critical to dung-beetle biodiversity** — a keystone-species cascade.

Background

- Excluding elephants cut dung-beetle **species richness by 23%** and **biomass by 51%**.
- **Keystone species** — disproportionate ecological impact relative to abundance (concept: Robert Paine, 1969).
- India link: **Project Elephant (1992)**; elephant is India's **National Heritage Animal (2010)**.

★ FACTS CORNER

Keystone-species concept: Robert Paine (1969). India: Project Elephant (1992); National Heritage Animal (2010).

UPSC RELEVANCE (COMBINED)

PAPER	THEMES TODAY
GS2	Health governance (WNTD, NFHS-6, CBSE OSM); IR (BrahMos exports, mediation)
GS3	Defence (PRAGATI, BrahMos); economy (cotton duty); environment (Agasthyamalai, e-waste gold, solar/pollution, keystone species)

FACTS CORNER — COMBINED SNAPSHOT

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

World No Tobacco Day: May 31; 2026 theme “Unmasking the appeal”; FCTC ratified 2004; PECA 2019.

Exercise PRAGATI 2026: maiden 13-nation Army drill; Umroi, Meghalaya; IOR counter-insurgency.

SC Agasthyamalai (2026 INSC 605): evict 4,601 encroachers; Western Ghats; KMTR; next hearing Sept 1.

Cotton duty: 11% waived June 1–end-Oct 2026; CITI, AEPC; second waiver in a year.

CBSE OSM: On-Screen Marking, Class 12 (2026); Class 10 stays physical.

BrahMos-Vietnam: ~\$629 mn; India-Russia JV; first buyer Philippines (2022).

NFHS-6: by IIPS Mumbai under MoHFW; double burden of disease.

Solar dimming: air pollution cut India’s solar output ~9.6% (2023); 500 GW non-fossil by 2030.

Keystone species: elephants → dung-beetle biodiversity (Science study); concept by Robert Paine (1969).

Sources: *The Hindu*, *PIB*, *Indian Express*, *WHO*

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