CURRENT AFFAIRS: 09.05.2026

Trump pauses Hormuz operation; says war will end if Iran agrees to deal

Project Freedom will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the agreement can be finalised and signed, U.S. President says

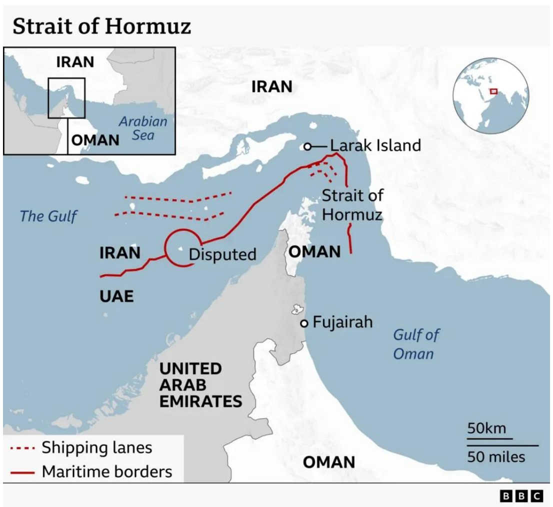
Updated – May 06, 2026 10:19 pm IST – Washington

Project Freedom

The US has announced a temporary suspension of **Project Freedom** to allow diplomatic negotiations mediated by **Pakistan** to reach a final agreement with **Iran**.

Project Freedom

- **About:** Project Freedom is a **United States** military and humanitarian mission launched in **May 2026** to **reopen the Strait of Hormuz** and escort thousands of **merchant vessels** stranded by an Iranian blockade.
- **Core Objectives:**
  - **Humanitarian Rescue:** The primary goal is to **extract** approximately **23,000 civilians** from 87 countries who have been stuck on ships in the **Persian Gulf** for weeks.
  - **Restoring Commerce:** The mission seeks to **restart** the flow of global trade through the Strait, which accounts for nearly **20% of the world's oil supply**.
  - **Defensive Overwatch:** U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) established an **"Enhanced Security Area"** on the southern side of the Strait (through Omani waters) to **protect neutral ships** from Iranian drones, fast boats, and mines.
- **Military Resources Deployed:** Guided-missile destroyers (including the **USS *Tripoli*** group) and multi-domain unmanned platforms. Over 100 land and sea-based aircraft (**F-16s, F-35s, and Sea Hawk helicopters**) providing 24-hour defensive overwatch.
- **Key Concerns:** CENTCOM warned that typical shipping routes remain "extremely hazardous" due to **Iranian mines** that have not yet been fully cleared.



Governor's Power in Post-Election Stalemates

What happens if a Chief Minister refuses to relinquish office after electoral defeat?

Following the Trinamool Congress's defeat to the BJP in the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced that she will not tender her resignation. Can a Governor remove a Chief Minister? What happens once the term of the Assembly expires? What legal remedies are available to challenge the election results?

Updated - May 07, 2026 01:22 pm IST

Why in News?

Following the **West Bengal Assembly election** results, a constitutional debate has emerged regarding the **Governor**'s power to remove a Chief Minister who refuses to resign despite a change in the legislative mandate.

What Happens if a Chief Minister Refuses to Resign after Electoral Defeat?

- **Constitutional Mechanism:** Under **Article 164(1)**, the **Chief Minister** is appointed by the Governor and holds office **"during the pleasure of the Governor."** However, the **Supreme Court** (e.g., ***A.G. Perarivalan case 2022***) clarified that this "pleasure" is not arbitrary and is subject to the Council of Ministers enjoying the **confidence of the Legislative Assembly**.
  - As a result, if the election results show the CM's party has lost the majority, their legal right to govern effectively ends.
- **Role of the Governor:** They have several tools to resolve the stalemate:
  - **Direct Communication:** The Governor can **formally ask** the CM to submit their **resignation**.
  - **Invitation to the Majority Party:** Once the **Election Commission** notifies the results, the Governor can officially invite the **leader of the party or coalition** that holds the **majority** to form the government.
  - **The Floor Test:** If there is any ambiguity, the Governor can order an immediate **Floor Test** in the newly elected Assembly. If the incumbent CM cannot prove a majority (more than **50% support** from sitting MLAs), he/she must resign.
    - In the ***SR Bommai case (1994)***, and ***Shivraj Singh Chouhan case (2023),*** the **Supreme Court** has held that a floor test is the only constitutional method to determine a majority.
- **Automatic Dissolution of the Assembly:** Under **Article 172,** a State Assembly has a fixed tenure of **5 years**. Once that tenure ends, the Assembly **automatically stands dissolved**. At this point, the old government's legal status technically ceases to exist regardless of a formal resignation letter. E.g., West Bengal Governor dissolved the State Legislative Assembly on **7th May, 2026**, exercising his constitutional powers under **Article 174**.
  - While it is a **parliamentary convention** for a defeated Chief Minister to resign immediately, the legal transition of power is secured by the expiration of the Assembly's term and the Governor's duty to initiate the formation of a new government.
- **Forced Dismissal and President's Rule:** If the CM persists in occupying the office despite losing the majority and the Assembly's dissolution:
  - **Dismissal:** The Governor can formally **dismiss** the Council of Ministers.
  - **President's Rule (Article 356):** If the stalemate prevents a new government from being formed, the Governor can recommend **President's Rule**, citing a **"failure of constitutional machinery"** in the state.

- **Legal Recourse against Results:** A defeated candidate can file an **Election Petition** under the **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (Section 100)** in the **High Court** within **45 days**. Grounds include **corrupt practices** or non-compliance with statutory provisions.

'Ecocide': How international law falls short in addressing the environmental toll of war

The Rome Statute recognises four serious crimes: genocide; crimes against humanity; war crimes; aggression. In a belligerent world, should 'ecocide' be the fifth?

What is 'Ecocide'?

- **Definition:** 'Ecocide' literally translates to **"killing one's home."** It refers to the mass destruction, degradation, or devastation of ecosystems and the natural environment, whether by human agency or other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants is severely diminished.
  - The term was coined in **1970 by Yale plant biologist Prof. Arthur W. Galston.** He used it to describe the massive, long-term environmental devastation caused by the **US military's use of the herbicide Agent Orange during the Vietnam War (1955–1975).**
  - In 2021, an expert panel convened by Stop Ecocide International proposed a formal legal definition**: "unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment."**
- **Early Political and Legal Adoption:** Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme brought the term to the global stage at the **1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference).**
  - In 1990, Vietnam became the **first country to officially codify ecocide into its domestic law.**
- **Current Status:** Despite its growing usage and adoption in domestic laws by nations like Russia, Ukraine, France, and Belgium, there is still **no universal recognition of ecocide as an international crime.**

What is the Legal Status of Ecocide in India?

- **Legal Status:** India does not legally recognize or define "ecocide" as a distinct criminal offense.
  - Instead of a single overarching criminal law, India relies on a fragmented patchwork of civil and regulatory statutes (like the **Environment Protection Act of 1986,** the **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**, and the **Forest Conservation Act of 1980).**
  - Penalties under these existing laws are often limited to minor fines and short-term imprisonments, treating environmental degradation primarily as a regulatory violation or a **"civil wrong" rather than a heinous crime.**
- **Judicial Acknowledgment:** In a monumental recent ruling ***(M.K. Ranjitsinh vs. Union of India, 2024),*** the Supreme Court formally recognized the "Right against the adverse impacts of climate change" as a distinct fundamental right under **Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 21 (Right to Life).**
  - While it didn't criminalize ecocide, it laid the constitutional groundwork required to **eventually penalize state or corporate actions that trigger mass ecological collapse.**
- **Concept of "Continuing Offense":** The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** frequently treats severe pollution as a "continuing offense" against public trust.
  - Through the **Polluter Pays Principle,** the NGT imposes massive, multi-crore environmental compensation fines on **states and corporations acting as a pseudo-penalty for ecocide-like destruction.**

EAC-PM paper proposes overhaul of India's Priority Sector Lending (PSL) framework

Key Highlights of ReportIssues with Current Framework:

- **Bank Performance Gap:** Private Banks consistently fall short of the 40% target via direct lending and heavily rely on indirect mechanisms like Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs) and Rural Industrial Development Fund (RIDF) deposits sold by Nationalised Banks & Small Finance Banks (SFBs).

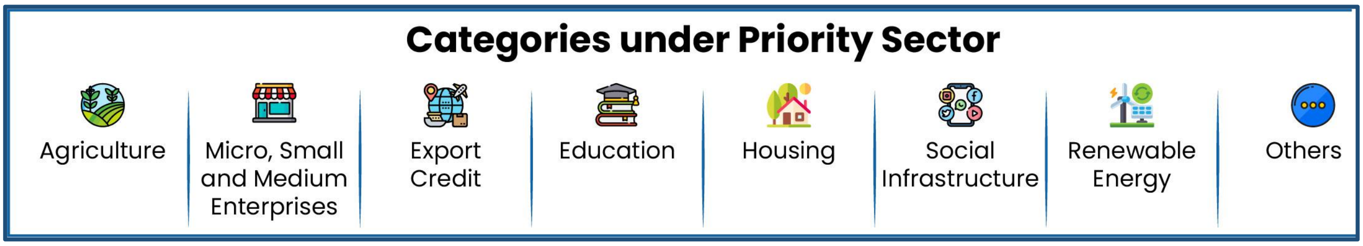
- **Economic Efficiency Trade-offs:** Mandated lending reduces Total Factor Productivity (TFP), encourages capital hoarding, and finances lower-yield projects.
  PSL portfolios also face high administrative costs and elevated default risks.

- Limited Growth Impact: District-level analysis (using nighttime luminosity as output proxy) shows insignificant effects on economic output.
- **Geographical Skew:** Less than 10% of districts (mainly state capitals, industrial hubs, and southern/western regions) account for over 45% of total Priority Sector Advances.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Shift to Social Equity Focus:** Treat PSL primarily as a social tool rather than growth engine.
- Exclude legacy categories (e.g., corporate farmers), strictly target small/marginal farmers, micro-enterprises, and weaker sections.
- Consider lowering overall targets forgreater bank flexibility.
- **Holistic Approach:** Avoid pure top-down credit mandates in lagging areas, which are inefficient.

Pair targeted credit with fiscal interventions addressing core constraints such as infrastructure, skills, and market linkages.



What is Priority Sector Lending?

- PSL is a lending requirement administered by the RBI, requiring banks to give a minimum proportion of their loans to sectors of development importance or the sectors that have difficulty of getting loans.

- The RBI is periodically updating the sectors that are eligible to get priority sector lending and the limits of loans. Similarly, the regulations identify institutions that are obliged to provide these loans.

- The categories of priority sectors are as follows:
  1. Agriculture
  2. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
  3. Export Credit
  4. Education
  5. Housing
  6. Social Infrastructure

7. Renewable Energy
8. Others

The targets under PSL:

- **Domestic SCBs and foreign banks with 20 branches and above:** 40 percent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure (CEOBE), whichever is higher.

- **Foreign banks with less than 20 branches:** 40 percent of ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is higher; out of which up to 32% can be in the form of lending to exports and not less than 8% can be to any other priority sector.

- **Regional Rural Banks and Small Finance Banks:** 75 percent of ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is higher.

- **Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs):** 40 percent of ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is higher, which shall be increased to 75 percent of ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is higher, with effect from FY2025-26.

- Banks can meet their PSL obligations by extending loans, providing credit facilities, and offering financial products and services to individuals, entities, and enterprises in the priority sectors.
- They can also fulfil their targets through investments in eligible instruments, such as bonds issued by entities engaged in priority sector activities.
- In case, banks fail to meet their PSL targets, they have to deposit the allocated amountto the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) established with NABARD and to other funds with NABARD, SIDBI, Mudra, National Housing Bank, etc., as decided by the RBI from time to time.

What are Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs)?

- PSLCs are certificates that are issued against priority sector loans for banks.
- They allow banks to meet their targets and sub-targets when it comes to priority sector lending by buying the instruments.
- The banks use PSLCs to guard against shortfalls.