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**THE HINDU**



**The Indian EXPRESS**

# **SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS**

**12th May 2026**

## **TOPICS:-**

**1. Belated warning**

(GS Paper III Economy)

**2. A new phase in the India-Vietnam strategic partnership**

(GS Paper II International Relations)

**3. India has demonstrated strategic autonomy, but its record is not perfect**

(GS Paper II International Relations)

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# 1. BELATED WARNING

*(GS Paper III Economy)*

This editorial ‘**Belated warning**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 12th May 2026, highlights how PM Modi’s belated **public austerity message** signals serious economic stress from the West Asia crisis.

## Timing, Credibility and Policy Messaging

- Prime Minister Modi’s **seven-point call** exposes the severity of the **West Asia crisis**, despite earlier official reassurances that there was little to worry about.
- The appeal’s **timing** weakens credibility, as it came after nationwide election campaigning by the Prime Minister and Ministers without mentioning these constraints.
- Pre-election fuel-tax cuts followed by post-election consumption restraint reveal a **policy flip-flop**, diluting the government’s **economic messaging**.
- The parallel appeal by the **Confederation of Indian Industry** to corporates suggests coordinated messaging around a deeper **economic situation**.

## Economic Costs and Practical Limits

- Cutting chemical fertiliser use could hurt **crop output** when **El Niño** already threatens agriculture, worsening rural and food stress.
- Travel restraint may conserve foreign exchange, but **RBI data** showed Indians’ foreign travel spending in **2025-26** had already fallen 3% till February.
- March is likely to show a sharper decline after the **Iran war**, indicating that **economic damage** had begun before the appeal.
- Foreign exchange pressure may persist as foreign institutional investors exit while the **Reserve Bank of India** uses dollars to support the **rupee**.
- Asking Indians to buy local effectively means consuming less, since **domestic supply** alone cannot fully meet national **demand**.
- Asking people to buy less gold is likely to be **futile**, making parts of the appeal weaker than the **economic stress** it seeks to manage.

## BEYOND EDITORIAL

### External Shock Preparedness and Macroeconomic Communication

- **Crisis communication:** Early, transparent messaging prevents panic, as **RBI MPC** briefings help markets track inflation, liquidity and growth risks.

- **Policy consistency:** Fuel taxes, import curbs and consumption appeals need one macro logic, as **2022 fuel-duty cuts** showed fiscal-inflation trade-offs.
- **Sectoral preparedness:** Agriculture, energy, aviation and trade need contingency plans, as **El Niño** and West Asia tensions can hit food, fuel and freight together.
- **Forex resilience:** Public restraint cannot protect foreign exchange alone, as the **1991 BoP crisis** showed the need for exports, remittances and reserves.
- **Trust protection:** Reassurance followed by austerity appeals weakens credibility, as **COVID-19 lockdown** messaging showed the cost of sudden policy communication.
- **Institutional coordination:** A crisis dashboard linking Finance Ministry, RBI and sectoral ministries can improve response, like **GST Council** coordination during revenue shocks.
- **Governance credibility:** Citizens accept difficult measures when communication is timely and data-backed, as **inflation-targeting** frameworks make policy sacrifices more credible.

## 2. A NEW PHASE IN THE INDIA-VIETNAM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

*(GS Paper II International Relations)*

This editorial 'A new phase in the India-Vietnam strategic partnership' was published in **The Hindu** on 12th May 2026, highlights the strategic **deepening of India-Vietnam ties** amid shifting Indo-Pacific security and economic dynamics.

### **Strategic Upgrade and Indo-Pacific Context**

- President Tô Lâm's May 2026 visit marked a qualitative shift through an **Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, expanding India-Vietnam ties beyond incremental diplomacy.
- The upgrade reflects sharper **Indo-Pacific** flux, as Vietnam faces Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea while India's **Act East** policy becomes more security-oriented.
- Converging concerns over maritime coercion, supply-chain vulnerabilities and **strategic autonomy** have created a durable foundation for deeper **bilateral engagement**.
- India-Vietnam ties have evolved from Look East to Act East, with the **2016** comprehensive partnership enabling regular defence exchanges, dialogues and **capacity-building**.

## Defence and Economic Deepening

- Defence cooperation has become the partnership's backbone through **INS Kirpan** transfer, finance lines, training assistance and maritime cooperation structures.
- Possible BrahMos supplies signal a shift from capacity-building to **capability enhancement**, strengthening Vietnam's **deterrence** calculus in the South China Sea.
- Bilateral trade has crossed **\$16 billion**, with a target of **\$25 billion** by 2030, showing growing but still under-realised economic potential.
- New economic priorities include supply-chain resilience, rare earth collaboration and **digital payments**, reducing exposure to **China-centric** supply networks.
- Vietnam's position as an **ASEAN** manufacturing hub makes it essential for India's diversification strategy and wider regional **economic participation**.

## Regional and Strategic Significance

- India-Vietnam ties form a key component of **milateral balancing**, alongside Japan, Australia and the U.S., without entering formal alliance structures.
- Shared references to rule of law, peace and stability show a common **normative framework** against unilateralism in the **South China Sea**.
- Vietnam reinforces **ASEAN centrality** in India's Indo-Pacific vision, acting as a strategically consequential Southeast Asian **linchpin**.
- Hanoi's foreign policy of diversified partnerships and **strategic hedging** complements India's **multi-pronged** engagement approach.
- Cooperation in critical minerals and emerging technologies marks a shift from conventional ties toward **economic security** and alternative supply-chain architecture.

## Structural Constraints and Future Trajectory

- Future progress depends on converting **strategic intent** into outcomes, especially in trade, connectivity and defence industrial cooperation.
- Defence exports such as **BrahMos** require resolution of scientific, financial and geopolitical obstacles before targets become operational.
- Connectivity ambitions need solutions in logistics, legal frameworks and **private sector** participation to make **maritime routes** viable.
- The relationship is likely to deepen within Indo-Pacific architecture, where functional cooperation and **strategic trust** will matter amid great-power competition.

## BEYOND EDITORIAL

### Minilateralism and Middle-Power Coordination in the Indo-Pacific

- **Middle-power agency:** India and Vietnam show how non-allied powers shape the Indo-Pacific, as **INS Kirpan** transfer strengthened security without treaty alliances.
- **Minilateral logic:** Defence, maritime security and technology cooperation enable practical coalitions, as the **Quad** works flexibly beyond formal treaty obligations.
- **ASEAN balance:** Vietnam helps India deepen Southeast Asian engagement without bypassing **ASEAN centrality**, reinforcing Act East through India-ASEAN maritime cooperation.
- **China management:** Middle-power coordination creates deterrence by denial, as BrahMos talks and **maritime domain awareness** raise coercion costs in the South China Sea.
- **Strategic flexibility:** India-Vietnam ties support multi-alignment, allowing cooperation with the **U.S., Japan and Australia** while retaining diplomatic autonomy.
- **Economic security:** Critical minerals, rare earths and resilient supply chains make cooperation strategic, as Vietnam's manufacturing base supports India's **China-plus-one** diversification.
- **Global South relevance:** India-Vietnam ties show developing countries can build security and technology partnerships, as both avoid reducing cooperation to **great-power rivalry**.

## 3. INDIA HAS DEMONSTRATED STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, BUT ITS RECORD IS NOT PERFECT

*(GS Paper II International Relations)*

This editorial 'India has demonstrated strategic autonomy, but its record is not perfect' was published in **The Indian Express** on 12th May 2026, highlights India's practice of **strategic autonomy amid pressure** from China, Russia, the U.S., and wider geopolitical constraints.

### Meaning and Assessment of Strategic Autonomy

- Shyam Saran defined **strategic autonomy** as the capacity to take relatively independent decisions on issues of **vital interest**, while accepting trade-offs on lesser interests.

- Strategic autonomy is visible in decisions where India resists external pressure, especially from **China**, the **European Union**, Russia and the U.S.
- India's record is mixed because it has acted independently in several cases, but has also shown caution, rigidity and selective compromise.

### China and the Indo-Pacific Test

- India has rejected China's demands to stop sheltering the **Dalai Lama**, recognise Taiwan diplomatically, concede **Aksai Chin-Arunachal** claims, and reject U.S.-led Asian containment.
- India has maintained Tibet and Taiwan positions and retained trade with China, but rejected border concessions, showing selective resistance to **Chinese pressure**.
- India has partnered with the U.S., Japan, Australia and the **Quad**, signalling an autonomous response to a rising and assertive **China**.
- The **European Union** has not made high-stakes demands beyond trade and rights, while India has resisted pressure over the Ukraine war.

### Russia, Sanctions and Energy Choices

- India has refused to condemn Russia's **February 2022** invasion, maintained neutrality between Ukraine and Russia, reduced dependence on Russian oil, and honoured international sanctions.
- India's resistance to Western pressure is shaped by dependence on Russian arms and Russia's need for the **Indian market**, limiting both sides' leverage.
- On oil, India retained room to purchase **Russian crude** by diversifying supplies and benefiting from global constraints on completely cutting Russian oil.

### U.S., BRICS and Iran Constraints

- The U.S. remains the toughest test of Indian **strategic autonomy**, demanding lower tariffs, stronger intellectual property protections and reduced purchases of Russian oil.
- Washington also wants India to buy U.S. energy, technology and agriculture, rearm from Russia, avoid **BRICS de-dollarisation**, and curtail Iran ties.
- India has opposed BRICS de-dollarisation and retained Iran policy, though it is unclear whether this reflects **U.S. pressure** or Indian calculations.
- India has continued work on **Chabahar port** and rail connectivity, but has curtailed broader Iran relations and avoided condemning U.S.-Israeli actions in Iran and Lebanon.

## Limits and Final Evaluation

- India has shown willingness to defy major powers, but **rigid diplomacy** and big-power criticism have reduced flexibility and global influence.
- Critics argue India resists pressure only on core interests while accepting restrictions elsewhere, producing **multi-alignment** with limited global leverage.
- Supporters argue India's **stubborn resistance** preserves strategic space when interests are directly threatened, allowing stronger focus on domestic **economic development**.

## BEYOND EDITORIAL

### Strategic Autonomy Beyond Foreign Policy: Domestic Capacity as the Real Foundation

- **Economic strength:** Strategic autonomy needs manufacturing depth, export competitiveness and macroeconomic resilience, as the **1991 BoP crisis** showed how weak capacity increases external dependence.
- **Defence indigenisation:** Imported weapons narrow crisis choices, making **Atmanirbhar defence** vital, as Kargil exposed dependence on foreign spares and emergency ammunition.
- **Energy security:** Oil dependence limits diplomatic freedom during West Asian shocks, while **SPRs**, renewables and diversified suppliers widen India's policy space.
- **Technology sovereignty:** Semiconductors, cyber security and critical minerals shape autonomy, as **India Semiconductor Mission** reflects efforts to reduce chip dependence.
- **Fiscal capacity:** Strong revenues and manageable deficits help absorb shocks, as India's **COVID-19** food transfers showed welfare capacity during disruption.
- **Social cohesion:** Internal stability strengthens bargaining power, because polarisation or unrest can weaken credibility, as seen during global scrutiny after **Manipur violence**.
- **Policy continuity:** Strategic autonomy needs institutional planning, as **nuclear policy** after 1998 sanctions showed long-term resolve beyond case-by-case diplomacy.