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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

6th May 2026

TOPICS:-

1. **Silencing academia, weakening democratic space**

   (GS Paper II Governance)

2. **Building bridges**

   (GS Paper III Economy)

3. **Weakening rupee points to challenges ahead**

   (GS Paper III Economy)

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1. SILENCING ACADEMIA, WEAKENING DEMOCRATIC SPACE

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Silencing academia, weakening democratic space**' was published in **The Hindu** on 6th May 2026, highlights how **shrinking academic freedom** weakens democratic accountability, pluralism and dissent.

Democratic Backsliding and Academic Freedom

- India's **V-Dem** classification as an "electoral autocracy" reflects declining expression, media independence and civil society, placing it among major **autocratisers**.
- The **Free to Think 2024** report calls India's academic freedom "completely restricted", citing political interference, institutional pressure and shrinking **intellectual dissent**.
- The editorial links campus restrictions with wider democratic erosion, as universities once enabled **critical thought** and plural debate but now face ideological control.
- The **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill** is presented as deepening centralisation, prioritising conformity over autonomy in higher **education governance**.

Pattern of Institutional Suppression

- According to **The Wire**, 62 academics faced punitive action during 2014-26 for political views, showing service rules used to treat faculty as **government servants**.
- A **Nature 2024** report by Yamini Aiyar cited disruptions, arrests and visa hurdles, reflecting pressure on faculty, students and foreign **researchers**.
- The case of **J.B.S. Haldane** contrasts earlier scholarly freedom with present hostility, showing how dissent in academia has sharply **narrowed**.
- Since 2024, legal action and institutional pressure against students, researchers and faculty indicate expanding **campus surveillance** and fear-driven self-censorship.
- Internal complaints committees are described as **ornamental bodies**, creating formal compliance without accountability and weakening protection for students and faculty.

Erosion of Rights and Accountability

- Suppressing academic dissent weakens civil society's ability to question power, eroding the knowledge sector's role in **democratic accountability**.
- India signed the **First Optional Protocol** to the ICCPR but did not accept the UN complaint mechanism, limiting international redress after domestic **remedies** fail.

- The Constitution protects similar rights under **Articles 14, 19 and 21**, yet citizens lack access to external rights mechanisms despite judicial reliance on international norms.
- The editorial cites **Umar Khalid** and Sharjeel Imam, whose prolonged incarceration and bail restrictions show how dissent can be legally **criminalised**.
- The contrast between activists facing trials and some influential accused securing parole reflects unequal protection, deepening concerns over **selective justice**.

Homogenisation and Democratic Cost

- The editorial questions why a self-proclaimed **Mother of Democracy** prefers ideological uniformity over free thought within institutions meant for inquiry.
- Universities historically shelter methodological disagreement and minority opinion, while **homogenisation** undermines innovation, debate and knowledge production.
- Authoritarianism often advances slowly through public conditioning, cultivated fear and institutional silence rather than sudden collapse of **democratic norms**.
- The decline recorded in the **Academic Freedom Index** is framed as a measure of Indian democracy's health, not an abstract ranking.
- When scholars, students and journalists are silenced, the foundation of democratic **public reasoning** weakens through accumulated institutional surrender

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Institutional Safeguards for Academic Autonomy

- **Transparent appointments:** University leadership appointments should follow merit-based, transparent and search-cum-selection processes, as recommended for higher education governance under the **NEP 2020**.
- **Due process protection:** Disciplinary action against students and faculty must follow written charges, fair hearings and appeal mechanisms, as upheld in **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India**.
- **Regulatory independence:** Higher education regulators should function with institutional distance from executive pressure, as the **UGC Act, 1956** envisages coordination and standards in universities.
- **Campus grievance systems:** Internal complaints committees and inquiry bodies must be independent and time-bound, as mandated under the **POSH Act, 2013** for institutional accountability.
- **Research freedom:** Scholars should study sensitive themes without fear, because knowledge production requires disagreement, critique and methodological diversity, as protected under **Article 19**.

- **Funding safeguards:** Public funding should follow academic standards and inclusion goals, as seen in **NAAC** accreditation and NIRF-linked institutional quality assessment.
- **Democratic value:** Academic autonomy strengthens constitutional culture by keeping universities as spaces of reason, debate and civic questioning, as envisioned by the **Kothari Commission**.

2. BUILDING BRIDGES

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial '**Building bridges**' was published in **The Hindu** on 6th May 2026, highlights the need to **expand battery storage** so solar growth can reliably meet India's power demand.

Solar Growth and Demand Mismatch

- India's **peak demand** touched 256.1 GW on April 25, with solar meeting 21.5% of afternoon load but failing after sunset.
- On the same day, solar formed only **10.8%** of daily generation and just **0.1%** of evening needs, exposing the storage gap.
- Solar's share in installed capacity nearly doubled from 15% in **2022** to 28% in early 2026, but output gains remain limited.
- On India's peak-demand day, solar generation rose only from **5.6%** in 2022 to 10.8% in April, showing the gap between capacity and usable supply.

Battery Storage as the Main Bottleneck

- The main constraint is not panels, land or ambition, but the inability to store **generated electrons** through battery systems.
- Storage scarcity is forcing solar-rich States to reduce supply, as excess daytime power can threaten **grid stability** without balancing capacity.
- India curtailed **2.3 terawatt hours** of solar power in 2025 between May and December, equal to 18% of average monthly solar output.
- Another **0.9 TWh** was wasted in October alone, and compensation to producers shifted curtailment costs to the public exchequer.
- The **IMD forecast** of below-normal monsoon at 92% of the Long Period Average strengthens the case for solar-backed summer reliability.

Falling Costs and Execution Gap

- Battery economics are improving, with two-hour standalone storage tariffs falling from **₹2.21 lakh** per MW per month in early 2025 to ₹1.48 lakh by year-end.
- Execution remains weak, as only **0.7 GWh** of battery storage was operational by end-2025 against 2 GWh expected by December 2026.
- The Centre and States must move beyond tenders and action plans by pairing every major solar project with **co-located storage**.
- Solar capacity without storage remains a **half-built bridge**, because generation growth alone cannot secure evening supply or grid reliability.

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Energy Storage as Critical Infrastructure

- **Grid reliability:** Battery storage should be treated as core grid infrastructure, as India's 2025 solar curtailment showed generation without storage cannot meet evening peaks.
- **Co-located storage:** Large solar projects should include mandatory storage capacity, as SECI's RTC tenders show surplus solar can be shifted to demand hours.
- **Viability support:** Public financial support is needed for early storage projects, as India's VGF scheme supports 4,000 MWh battery storage capacity.
- **Domestic manufacturing:** India must strengthen battery cell manufacturing, minerals processing and recycling, as PLI-ACC targets 50 GWh domestic storage capacity.
- **Market design:** Power markets should reward peak supply, flexibility and ancillary services, as CERC's ancillary services framework recognises grid-balancing needs.
- **State coordination:** Solar-rich States need common standards and transmission planning, as Rajasthan and Gujarat curtailment shows uncoordinated evacuation raises system costs.
- **Energy transition:** Storage converts renewable capacity into dependable clean power, supporting India's 500 GW non-fossil capacity target by 2030.

3. WEAKENING RUPEE POINTS TO CHALLENGES AHEAD

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial '**Weakening rupee points to challenges ahead**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 6th May 2026, highlights how **rupee depreciation**, **high crude prices** and **capital outflows** can intensify India's macroeconomic pressures.

Rupee Pressure and External Risks

- The Indian rupee weakened to **95.36 per dollar**, falling about **5.64%** since January amid renewed geopolitical and investor concerns.
- Unlike last year's Iran-war phase, when the rupee fell about **5%**, current pressure affects both current and capital accounts.
- Elevated global crude prices are pressuring the **current account**, with Brent around $113 per barrel and India's crude basket at $114.48.
- The current account deficit may widen to nearly **2% of GDP** in 2026-27, though still below the taper-tantrum level of 4.8% in 2012-13.

Capital Outflows and Policy Strain

- Capital flows are weakening, as foreign portfolio investors withdrew around **$21.2 billion** from stock markets this calendar year.
- The outflow nearly matches last year's **$18.9 billion**, intensifying pressure despite central bank steps to support the rupee.
- Previous stress episodes saw the **RBI** use instruments like FCNR-B deposits during the taper tantrum to mobilise foreign capital.

Inflation and Growth Concerns

- Retail fuel prices have not yet reflected higher crude because **oil companies** and the government are absorbing the burden.
- Prolonged high energy prices can raise pump prices, pushing retail **inflation** from 3.4% in March and worsening household costs.
- Costlier Brent can raise input costs for restaurants, hotels and commercial kitchens due to higher **LPG cylinder** prices.
- A prolonged conflict will weaken economic momentum, deepen **growth-inflation** pressures and require careful macroeconomic management.

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External Sector Resilience Beyond Currency Defence

- **Export competitiveness:** India must strengthen high-value exports and services earnings, as IT services and electronics exports reduce rupee pressure during external shocks.
- **Energy diversification:** Reducing crude dependence through renewables, LNG contracts and diversified suppliers, as with Qatar LNG and Russian crude, can soften current account stress.
- **Stable capital:** Policy should attract long-term FDI over volatile FPI flows, as Apple's India manufacturing ecosystem shows stickier investment inflows.
- **Forex buffers:** Adequate forex reserves give the RBI space to manage volatility, as seen during the 2013 taper tantrum and later rupee pressures.
- **Import efficiency:** Domestic production of critical inputs and efficient logistics, as under PLI electronics and PM Gati Shakti, can reduce external vulnerability.
- **Inflation shielding:** Currency management must align with fuel taxes, MSP procurement and supply measures so depreciation does not sharply transmit into household inflation.
- **Macroeconomic balance:** Rupee stability depends on credible growth, moderate inflation and manageable deficits, as India's post-1991 external reforms showed.