

“The Truth of Truth” DARPAN OF INDIA

❖ QUOTES ❖

“materialism leads us to lose awareness of our inner life, which is bad enough; but to be hypnotized by our own feelings and sensations and forget about others and the world around us is worse.”

—The Upanishads

Human Creativity

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is reshaping yet another cornerstone of human culture: literature. Once viewed merely as a technological tool for research and editing, AI is now capable of producing poems, short stories, novels and even screenplays that increasingly resemble the work of human writers. As the quality of machine-generated content continues to improve, a provocative question is emerging across literary circles worldwide: should artificial intelligence be eligible to receive literary awards? The debate has intensified following the growing use of advanced AI systems by writers, publishers and content creators. From generating plot ideas and refining prose to composing entire manuscripts, artificial intelligence is becoming an influential presence in the creative process. Some experts argue that AI-assisted writing could usher in a new era of literary experimentation, while others fear it may challenge the very foundations of artistic originality. Supporters of AI-generated literature contend that creativity has always evolved alongside technological innovation. They point out that typewriters, computers and digital publishing platforms were once viewed as disruptive forces but eventually became accepted tools for writers. According to this perspective, artificial intelligence represents the next stage in the evolution of storytelling and literary expression. Critics, however, argue that literature is more than the arrangement of words. They maintain that authentic storytelling is rooted in human experiences, emotions, memories and cultural understanding—qualities that machines cannot genuinely possess. While AI can analyze vast amounts of text and mimic literary styles, opponents question whether it can truly create art in the same sense as a human author. The controversy has already prompted discussions among publishers, literary organizations and award committees regarding transparency and authorship. Some institutions are reportedly considering separate categories for AI-assisted works, while others are exploring disclosure requirements that would require authors to specify the extent of artificial intelligence involvement in their creations. Beyond questions of recognition, the rise of AI-generated literature is also raising concerns about copyright, intellectual property and fair competition. Authors' groups have expressed worries that AI models trained on existing books may blur the boundaries of ownership and originality. Legal experts predict that governments and courts around the world will face increasing pressure to establish clear regulations governing AI-created content. Publishers, meanwhile, are navigating a rapidly changing landscape. While some see AI as a cost-effective tool that can accelerate content production, others emphasize the enduring value of human creativity and unique perspectives. Many industry observers believe that readers will ultimately determine the future balance between human-authored and machine-generated works. Despite the ongoing debate, one reality is becoming increasingly clear: artificial intelligence is no longer confined to science and technology.

Civic Infrastructure Kolkata Grapples with Rising Traffic and Pollution as Vehicle Numbers Surge Across the City

Kolkata is facing mounting challenges from increasing traffic congestion and deteriorating air quality as the number of vehicles on its roads continues to grow at a rapid pace. Urban planners, environmental experts and commuters alike are expressing concern over the city's ability to manage the dual pressures of rising mobility demand and environmental sustainability. Over the past several years, Kolkata has witnessed a steady increase in private cars, motorcycles, commercial vehicles and app-based transport services. While the growth reflects expanding economic activity and rising household incomes, it has also placed unprecedented strain on the city's already crowded road network. Major arterial corridors, including routes connecting central business districts, suburban neighborhoods and key transport hubs, are experiencing longer travel times and frequent bottlenecks. During peak hours, commuters often spend significantly more time navigating traffic than they did just a few years ago, affecting productivity and quality of life. The growing vehicle population has also contributed to heightened concerns over air pollution. Environmental observers note that vehicular emissions remain one of the primary contributors to urban air quality challenges. Increased fuel consumption, prolonged idling in traffic and higher traffic density have collectively added to pollution levels across several parts of the city. Experts argue that the issue is not solely about the number of vehicles but also about road capacity, urban planning and public transportation usage. As residential and commercial developments continue to expand, demand for daily transportation has risen faster than infrastructure upgrades in many areas. City authorities have been pursuing a range of measures to address congestion and pollution, including road modernization projects, intelligent traffic management systems, expansion of metro rail connectivity and promotion of cleaner transportation alternatives. Efforts to encourage electric vehicle adoption and strengthen public transport networks are also gaining momentum. Transportation specialists believe that long-term solutions will require a combination of policy reforms, investment in mass transit, stricter emission standards and greater emphasis on sustainable urban mobility. They caution that without coordinated intervention, traffic congestion and environmental pressures could continue to escalate alongside Kolkata's economic growth. As the city moves toward a future shaped by rapid urbanization, balancing mobility needs with environmental protection is emerging as one of the most significant challenges for policymakers. The coming years are expected to test how effectively Kolkata can transform its transportation ecosystem while

preserving livability for millions of residents. The debate over mobility, infrastructure and environmental sustainability is now at the center of Kolkata's urban future, as the city seeks solutions to keep pace with its growing population and expanding vehicle fleet. Political observers often note that leaders capable of balancing grassroots mobilization with administrative management tend to enjoy greater longevity in public life. Adhikari's supporters argue that his career reflects precisely that balance. The Dramatic Political Shift One of the most consequential moments in Bengal's recent



political history came when Adhikari switched political allegiance ahead of the 2021 Assembly election. The move reshaped the state's political dynamics and transformed him into one of the most closely watched figures in Bengal politics. His subsequent electoral battle against Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram became one of India's most discussed political contests. Regardless of political preference, few dispute the symbolic significance of that election. The contest reinforced Adhikari's status as a leader capable of influencing state-level political narratives rather than merely participating in them. The Face of Opposition Politics As Leader of the Opposition, Adhikari has positioned himself as one of the most vocal critics of the state government. Whether the issue concerns governance, law and order, corruption allegations, unemployment, or administrative decisions, he has sought to maintain a consistent presence in public discourse. This aggressive opposition strategy has helped him remain politically relevant even between election cycles. In an era where public attention shifts rapidly, sustained visibility has become a valuable political asset. His critics accuse him of pursuing confrontation over consensus, while supporters view his approach as essential democratic accountability. The debate itself re-

can emerge as major players without relying exclusively on metropolitan political networks. Looking Toward 2026 and Beyond As West Bengal moves closer to future electoral battles, Adhikari remains one of the most significant figures to watch. Questions surrounding leadership, governance, opposition unity, and electoral strategy are likely to place him at the center of political debates in the years ahead. Whether viewed as a challenger, strategist, administrator, or mass leader, Suvendu Adhikari has undeniably carved out a unique place in Bengal politics. His story is ultimately about more than one politician. It is about the evolution of political power itself—how influence can emerge not only from the corridors of Kolkata but also from the districts, towns, and grassroots networks that increasingly shape the future of West Bengal. For now, the Supreme Court's remarks have placed the spotlight firmly on what it described as the “grey area” surrounding voter deletions—a phrase that may continue to dominate India's political and legal discourse in the months ahead. That position has now evolved. India is increasingly positioning itself as a connectivity hub, linking South Asia with Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean region with Africa. Digital infrastructure with emerging economies. Supply

chains with manufacturing corridors. This shift is not isolated but part of a broader geopolitical transition where Global South countries seek alternatives to traditional dependency structures. Competing Corridors: India and the Rebalancing of Trade Routes. The Global South's connectivity landscape has long been shaped by large-scale initiatives such as Belt and Road Initiative. While that initiative expanded physical infrastructure across continents, it also raised concerns in several countries about debt sustainability and strategic dependence. In response, India has accelerated its own connectivity vision through India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) proposals. Expansion of ports and maritime links under the SAGAR doctrine. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) exports like UPI-style payment systems. Trade facilitation partnerships with Africa and ASEAN regions. These initiatives are not designed as a single bloc confrontation but as parallel systems of connectivity, offering countries choice rather than dependency. The Global South as a Shared Growth Zone. The idea of the Global South is evolving from a political identity into an economic operating system. Countries across Africa, Latin America, and Asia are increasingly interconnected through shared challenges: Infrastructure gaps. Energy transition needs. Food security pressures. Digital inclusion demands. India is positioning itself as a technology and infrastructure bridge, particularly in: Affordable digital payment systems. Vaccine and pharmaceutical supply chains. Climate-resilient agriculture technologies. Skill development and education platforms. This has created a new model often described as “developmental connectivity” rather than extractive trade. Maritime Strategy and the Indian Ocean Advantage. A major pillar of India's connectivity compact lies in maritime geography. The Indian Ocean region is becoming central to global trade flows, and India's strategy emphasizes secure sea lanes, port connectivity, and regional stability. Through partnerships with island nations and East African economies, India is strengthening: Port modernization projects. Coastal surveillance cooperation. Blue economy initiatives. Shipping route diversification. This maritime focus enhances India's role as a stabilizing force in Indo-Pacific trade architecture. Digital Infrastructure: The New Trade Highway. Unlike earlier eras where connectivity meant roads, railways, and ports, today's connectivity is increasingly digital. India's Digital Public Infrastructure model—especially its real-time payments system—has become a reference point for several developing economies. Countries in Africa and Southeast Asia are studying or adopting similar frameworks for: Financial inclusion.

War Pressures Mount on India's Economy: Can the Modi Government Accelerate New Wave of Financial Reforms?

Rising Geopolitical Tensions Put Economic Stability to the Test as New Delhi Weighs Growth

As global geopolitical tensions continue to disrupt trade routes, energy markets and investment flows, concerns are growing over the potential impact on India's economic trajectory. With international conflicts contributing to volatility in crude oil prices, supply chains and financial markets, policymakers in New Delhi are facing renewed pressure to safeguard growth while maintaining fiscal stability. Economic analysts note that prolonged global instability often affects emerging economies through higher import costs, inflationary pressures and uncertainty in foreign investment. For India, one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, the challenge lies in balancing immediate economic concerns with long-term development goals. The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly emphasized infrastructure expansion, manufacturing growth, digital transformation and investment-friendly policies as pillars of economic resilience. However, the changing global environment has sparked debate over whether a fresh round of financial and structural reforms may be required to sustain momentum. Experts suggest that reforms in taxation, banking, labor markets, logistics and public-sector efficiency could help strengthen India's ability to withstand external shocks. Greater focus on domestic manufacturing under initiatives such as “Make in India,” expansion of renewable energy capacity and efforts to reduce dependence on imported resources are also being viewed as critical elements of long-term economic security. The banking sector remains another key area of attention. While financial institutions have shown improved balance sheets in recent years, economists argue that increasing access to credit for small and medium enterprises could support employment generation and boost domestic demand during periods of global uncertainty. Meanwhile, inflation management remains a central concern. Rising energy costs resulting from international conflicts could place additional pressure on household budgets and industrial production costs. Policymakers are therefore expected to closely monitor fuel prices, food inflation and supply-chain disruptions in the coming months. Business leaders have called for continued regulatory simplification and faster implementation of investment projects to maintain investor confidence. Many believe that accelerating capital expenditure, strengthening export competitiveness and attracting high-value manufacturing investments

could help offset the impact of external economic headwinds. Government officials have maintained that India's economic fundamentals remain strong, citing robust domestic consumption, expanding infrastructure networks and growing digital adoption. Nevertheless, economists caution that sustained global instability may require proactive policy responses and targeted reforms to preserve growth momentum. As international uncertainties continue to influence the global economy, attention is increasingly turning to whether the Modi government will introduce a new generation of financial reforms aimed at enhancing competitiveness, strengthening economic resilience and positioning India for long-term growth in an unpredictable world. The coming months are expected to provide clearer indications of the government's economic strategy, with investors, businesses and policymakers closely watching for measures that could help India navigate an increasingly complex global landscape. Shivakumar is widely expected to play a central role in these efforts. Managing the Siddaramaiah-Shivakumar Dynamic. The political relationship between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar remains one of the most closely watched aspects of Karnataka politics. Both leaders command significant support bases. Siddaramaiah is viewed as a seasoned administrator with extensive experience in governance and mass politics. Shivakumar, meanwhile, is regarded as a powerful organizational leader capable of mobilizing resources, workers, and electoral support. Their partnership has been essential to Congress' success. However, the existence of multiple power centers within a ruling party inevitably generates discussion about future leadership arrangements. Despite recurring speculation, both leaders have consistently emphasized unity and collective responsibility. Publicly, they have projected an image of cooperation, recognizing that internal instability could undermine governance and provide opportunities for opposition parties. For Shivakumar, managing this relationship effectively is arguably as important as any cabinet decision. A stable leadership arrangement allows him to expand his influence while preserving the party's electoral strength. Preparing for the Next Electoral Cycle. Political planning rarely stops after a victory. Congress leaders understand that public expectations rise significantly once a party assumes power. Delivering on welfare commitments, infrastructure projects, employment ini-

tiatives, and development goals remains essential for maintaining public trust. In this context, Shivakumar's political calculations extend well beyond immediate administrative concerns. Every governance decision, organizational appointment, and strategic alliance is likely being assessed through the lens of future elections. The Congress leadership faces the challenge of consolidating support

and authority, and political pragmatism. For now, Karnataka's political equation remains anchored in a dual-leadership model—one driven by Siddaramaiah's administrative experience and reinforced by Shivakumar's organizational power. How that balance evolves may ultimately determine not only the future of the Congress in Karnataka but also the trajectory of state politics in



among traditional voter groups while simultaneously attracting younger voters and urban constituencies. Achieving this objective requires coordinated efforts between the government and the party apparatus. Shivakumar's ability to bridge these two spheres—administration and organization—has made him indispensable to the ruling establishment. The Road Ahead. As Karnataka's political landscape evolves, DK Shivakumar's influence appears set to grow further. Whether through cabinet negotiations, party-building exercises, or strategic political management, he remains one of the defining figures shaping the state's future. The coming months are expected to test the Congress leadership's ability to maintain unity while addressing governance challenges and preparing for future electoral contests. Much of that effort will depend on how effectively Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah continue to balance am-

the years ahead, past and its explosive future. The bigger lesson may not simply be about who becomes Chief Minister. It may be about whether Congress has finally realized that political timing itself can determine whether a transition becomes a smooth succession, a destructive rebellion, or an electoral disaster. If the Karnataka transition is completed without major factional damage, Congress may view it as a model for handling future leadership battles in other states as well. But if negotiations collapse, mixed messaging continues, or either camp feels betrayed, the crisis could once again expose the party's oldest weakness—the inability to decide before it is too late. For now, Karnataka remains more than a state-level power struggle. It is becoming a political laboratory for whether Congress has finally learnt that in politics, timing is not just important—it is often everything. Who is accountable for

AI-generated political misinformation? Should political AI systems be regulated during elections? How transparent should algorithmic targeting be? Can democracies protect free speech while limiting manipulation? Should voters know when content is AI-generated? How can societies preserve independent journalism in an AI-driven information economy? Democratic institutions across the world are struggling to answer these questions as technology evolves faster than legislation. Some countries are now considering laws requiring disclosure labels for AI-generated political content, while others are debating restrictions on deepfake technology and algorithmic advertising. However, global consensus remains weak. Journalism Under Pressure in the AI Era. News organizations are also facing major disruption. AI tools can now generate news summaries, headlines, video scripts, translations, and analytical reports within seconds. While this increases speed and efficiency, it also raises concerns about editorial quality, misinformation, and the future of independent journalism. Many fear that AI-generated “fast news” could replace investigative reporting, nuanced analysis, and human editorial judgment. At the same time, financially struggling media organizations may become increasingly dependent on automated systems, reducing the role of experienced journalists and editors. This creates a dangerous paradox: the more information societies produce, the harder it may become to protect truth, credibility, and public trust. Can Democracy Adapt? Despite growing concerns, many scholars argue that artificial intelligence itself is not inherently anti-democratic. The real issue lies in how societies choose to govern and regulate these technologies. AI can also strengthen democracy if used responsibly: Expanding access to information. Improving civic participation. Translating political content across languages. Helping citizens understand complex policies. Supporting transparency and public services. The challenge for democratic societies is to ensure that technology remains accountable to citizens rather than allowing citizens to become subjects of algorithmic influence. Experts increasingly argue that the future of democracy may depend on three key pillars: Strong digital literacy among citizens. Transparent regulation of political AI systems. Independent journalism and fact-checking institutions. Without these safeguards, democracies risk entering a future where public opinion is no longer shaped through open debate.