

“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

Changed Dynamics

Narendra Modi's BJP government is treading a familiar path to calm the restive Ladakh. The government has accused the 'sheep' of being a 'sheep' for Wednesday's unrest and has cancelled the license of the organization of Magsaysay Award-winning educationist and environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk, accusing her of violating the Foreign Contribution Control Act. The CBI has also started a probe against her organization. It is being heard that Sonam Wangchuk may be arrested for inciting Wednesday's unrest. She has been peacefully protesting for several years for various demands in the interest of Ladakh. This is the first time that unrest has broken out. Four people were killed and 80 injured in a clash between security forces and protesters demanding the formation of a separate state and inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in Leh on Wednesday. The Union Home Ministry has already said that Sonam incited the crowd to become violent. Although there is no example of such behavior so far. According to the people of Ladakh, on the one hand, the government's indifference, and on the other hand, the deterioration of the physical condition of two of the hunger strikers, have angered a section of the public. However, a section of the BJP has said that Sonam is getting support from Pakistan. The reason for this slander is Sonam's participation in the climate conference 'Breath Pakistan' held in the Pakistani capital Islamabad last February. The Pakistani media 'Dawn' was the organizer of that conference. Hindu extremists are spreading that after returning from there, Sonam Wangchuk started a new movement demanding the status of a separate state. Now the Congress is also supporting her. The BJP has directly alleged that local Congress leaders are also involved in the violent incidents. Despite being an integral part of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh has always lived in peace. Except for a few minor clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in 1989, this vast region has remained peaceful. That conflict 36 years ago was for the liberation of Buddhists from Muslim-dominated Kashmiri rule. However, it did not last long. At that time, despite the resistance of a section of the Buddhist community, the government and the administration took steps to stop the violence. Since then, the fire of unrest in Ladakh has not flared up even once. The Kashmir Valley also started to become turbulent in 1989. The unrest began with the expulsion of Hindu scholars from the valley. That unrest gradually spread to Jammu. Surprisingly, it did not affect the Shia Muslim or Buddhist-dominated areas of Ladakh. Muslim-dominated Kargil, Drass, Matain, Kankar, Batalik, Zaskar or Buddhist-dominated Leh remained like a desolate lake. It is alleged that Pakistan's army chief General Pervez Musharraf unsuccessfully tried to disturb the Shia-dominated Kargil of Ladakh in 1999. This time, the Muslims of Kargil have also fully supported the demand of the Buddhists of Ladakh. They are also vocal in their demand for a separate state and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Public life in the entire Kargil region was at a standstill on Thursday. In short, Muslims and Buddhists of Ladakh are united in their demands.

How committed are you?

Hidden Beyond the Headlines: The Kashmir Story Few Discuss Economic Opportunities Pakistan Is Pursuing

For decades, Kashmir has remained synonymous with geopolitical rivalry, military tensions, and diplomatic disputes. International coverage has largely centered on border conflicts and security concerns. Yet beneath these familiar headlines, another narrative is gradually emerging—one driven by infrastructure development, tourism expansion, and regional economic integration. In the territories administered by Pakistan, particularly Pakistan-administered Kashmir and neighboring Gilgit-Baltistan, authorities have increasingly focused on economic development through large-scale connectivity projects and investment initiatives. While political disagreements over the region continue, economic planning has become an important component of its evolving landscape. A major catalyst behind this transformation is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship initiative under China's Belt and Road Initiative. The corridor aims to strengthen transport links, energy infrastructure, and trade routes connecting western China with Pakistan's Arabian Sea ports through strategically important mountain regions. Researchers and policy analysts suggest that CPEC-related investments could improve road networks, logistics systems, tourism facilities, and regional connectivity, potentially creating long-term opportunities for economic growth. Supporters argue that modern infrastructure may encourage private investment, facilitate commerce, and improve access to remote areas. Tourism has emerged as one of the sectors receiving significant attention. The region's snow-capped mountains, alpine valleys, lakes, and trekking destinations have attracted growing numbers of domestic travelers, while authorities continue to promote eco-tourism and adventure tourism as engines of local development. Improved highways and transportation infrastructure have made several destinations more accessible, benefiting hotels, transport operators, restaurants, and small businesses that depend on visitor spending. For many local communities, tourism has become an increasingly important source of employment and income. Infrastructure development also carries broader strategic implications. New highways, bridges, power projects, and communication networks enhance regional connectivity while strengthening links between Pakistan and China. Analysts note that these projects extend beyond economics, influencing regional diplomacy and the geopolitical balance across South Asia. Despite these ambitions, significant challenges remain. Political uncertainty, governance concerns, periodic protests, and security issues continue to affect investor confidence and long-term planning. Demonstrations over public services and administrative matters in Pakistan-administered

Kashmir illustrate that infrastructure investment alone does not resolve underlying local grievances. Moreover, recurring tensions between India and Pakistan continue to pose risks for tourism and commercial activity throughout the broader Kashmir region. Any escalation along the Line of Control can quickly disrupt travel, reduce visitor numbers, and negatively impact businesses dependent on the hospitality sector. Tourism, therefore, represents both an opportunity and a vulnerability. During periods of stability, visitor arrivals can support thousands of livelihoods and stimulate local economies. Conversely, security incidents or heightened geopolitical tensions often result in cancellations, financial losses, and economic uncertainty. The Kashmir issue is traditionally discussed through the lenses of diplomacy, sovereignty, and security. However, economics

apparent declarations that Delhi would "capture" the area. This fakery is not surprising. It is a calculated attempt to undermine and discredit civil action groups that have recently been at the forefront of the demands for basic rights and constitutional changes in the region. But first, a little about the region. Unfortunately, there are few in India who know or care about Gilgit-Baltistan, or the fact that it is one of the last colonies on earth. In the 1940s, Pakistan, quite simply, ignored United Nations resolutions asking it to withdraw its troops from the region and allow a referendum, and sat itself down on the highly strategic piece of territory that borders China and Afghanistan. Then it went one step ahead. In 1949, it secretly hived away a large slice of territory of more than 70,000 sq km under the 'Karachi agreement' supposedly signed by Gurmani

1951, had 12, even before Article 370 was set aside. Also note that the remaining 'Azad Kashmir' is a mere slice of some 13,000 sq km. In other words, almost a footnote to keep alive the theory of Kashmir self-determination. The only one doing any 'determination' here are the Pakistanis sitting in Islamabad. And that is what has led to repeated protests, the most recent ones being led by the Awami Action Committee (AAC), a civil society group made up of traders, transporters, students and lawyers. These are middle-class people who are tired of the incessant political instability, a severe power crisis, and an overbearing elite culture that sees locals as merely incidental to the ambitions of Islamabad. Which is why the recent elections revolved around the constitutional status of the state, along with a list of demands that includes ending taxes - imposed without any representation of the people - allocation of financial resources, providing electricity to the people from its own resources (now being given out to the mainland), and a royalty for all of this exploitation. The main demand is 'Gilgit-Baltistan First', which, in turn, has led to the rise of ethnic groups such as Ladakhis in Baltistan, and the Balwaristan National Front (BNF-Naji), led by Nawaz Khan Naji, all asking that their rights be safeguarded. In other words, for the first time, the locals are giving the mainland parties a run for their money. That is assuming that electoral fairness is maintained. With AAC leader Ehsan Ali Advocate in jail and other nationalist party leaders like Karakoram National Movement (KNM) leader Taaruf Abbas, Hasnain Ramal and others, incarcerated, Pakistan has again 'managed' elections well before the polling dates. Naturally, then, all are also accused by Pakistan of being 'Indian agents'. Results for the 26 direct-election seats of a total of 33 - nine of those are in the reserved category - indicate that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) seems to have gone past the hustings with a win in at least 10 seats. That bucks a pattern, where the 'ruling party' usually wins. Instead, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) has come in second, while the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, harassed and denied an election symbol, has won two seats with Independents, including one in Skardu. Overall, independents have seven seats, which makes them a power to reckon with. But the key issue is highlighted by a former senior police officer from the region. He notes that mainland parties use the seats won for their national power status, rather than providing for those who voted for them. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any national party backing the demand for constitutional change, for that would effectively mean curtailing their own power and pelf. True, the PPP did implement an order that gave Gilgit-Baltistan some political rights.



is becoming an increasingly important dimension of the conversation. Infrastructure investment, regional connectivity, and tourism promotion are gradually reshaping parts of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, even as longstanding political disputes remain unresolved. Whether these initiatives achieve their full economic potential will depend on sustained investment, effective governance, regional stability, and lasting peace. Until then, Kashmir will continue to stand not only as one of the world's most contested territories but also as one of South Asia's most strategically significant economic frontiers, where development and geopolitics remain deeply intertwined. India's Ministry of External Affairs is seriously annoyed. Not only did it have to issue the expected 'protest' note on the holding of the June 7 general elections in Gilgit-Baltistan - an integral part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir - but it also had to call out fake posts and sophisticated deepfake videos that claimed that Foreign Minister S Jaishankar had backed the strong protests in that region, and

Singh, Pakistan's Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (KANA), and Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, the 'President' of PoK, with the Chairman of the Muslim Conference almost as an aside. There was no representative of the Gilgit-Baltistan region. This was a complete violation of UN resolutions, which called for a plebiscite to decide the legality of any changes to the area. In later years, Sardar Ibrahim Khan claimed that he did not sign the document at all. Nobody ever saw the document itself, until the whole issue was debated in a PoK court in 1993, where it emerged that vital portfolios, including defence, UN-related matters on the plebiscite, foreign policy, and, by default, almost everything else, were allotted to give an appearance of self-rule (the bureaucracy was almost entirely headed by the Pakistanis, which remained the case even after several makeovers). In effect, the 'Emperor' of Gilgit-Baltistan was a Joint Secretary who led the division. It is in this region that 'general elections' are being held, only the third so far since it was cut away. Kashmir valley, from

India's Growing Oil Bill: Rising Global Prices Could Deepen Economic Pressure in the Months Ahead

Energy Market Volatility Raises Concerns Over Inflation, Trade Deficit, and Fiscal Stability

India's dependence on imported crude oil has once again become a major economic concern as rising international prices threaten to inflate the country's import bill and increase pressure on inflation, government finances, and the broader economy. While estimates suggest that higher crude prices have already added significant costs to India's energy imports, economists caution that the financial impact could grow substantially if geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions persist. As the world's third-largest consumer and importer of crude oil, India relies on overseas suppliers for more than 85% of its oil needs. This structural dependence makes the country highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy markets, where even modest price increases can translate into billions of dollars in additional import costs. Global Tensions Push Oil Prices Higher Recent instability in key oil-producing regions, combined with concerns over shipping routes and production levels, has fueled volatility in international crude markets. Traders remain cautious over potential disruptions to supply chains, causing benchmark oil prices to remain elevated. Energy analysts note that prolonged geopolitical uncertainty often creates a "risk premium" in oil prices, where markets price in the possibility of future supply shortages even before actual disruptions occur. For import-dependent economies like India, sustained high crude prices can have wide-ranging consequences beyond the energy sector. Import Bill Could Climb Sharply Every increase in international crude prices directly affects India's annual import expenditure. Since petroleum remains one of the country's largest import categories, a sustained rise in prices can significantly widen the trade deficit. A larger import bill increases demand for foreign currency, placing downward pressure on the Indian rupee. A weaker currency, in turn, makes imports even more expensive, creating a cycle that can amplify economic

challenges. Financial institutions have repeatedly warned that prolonged periods of elevated oil prices could complicate India's external balance and increase pressure on foreign exchange reserves. Inflation Risks Return Higher crude prices eventually flow through to transportation, manufacturing, logistics, aviation, and agriculture. Fuel serves as a key input across nearly every sector of the economy, meaning rising energy costs often push up the prices of goods and services. Economists warn that if crude prices remain elevated for an extended period, inflationary pressures could intensify, affecting household budgets and consumer spending. While government interventions and tax adjustments can temporarily cushion consumers from sharp fuel price increases, such measures may come at the cost of reduced fiscal revenues. Government Faces Difficult Choices A sustained rise in oil prices presents policymakers with a complex balancing act. The government may choose to reduce excise duties to ease pressure on consumers, but doing so would lower tax collections. Alternatively, allowing higher fuel prices to pass through to retail markets could help preserve fiscal revenues but risk fueling inflation and slowing consumption. Public sector oil marketing companies may also face margin pressures if retail price adjustments lag behind international crude costs. Impact on Economic Growth Energy costs influence nearly every major industry. Higher transportation and production expenses can reduce corporate profitability while increasing operational costs for businesses. Sectors such as aviation, chemicals, fertilizers, cement, logistics, and manufacturing are particularly sensitive to fuel price fluctuations. Small businesses and micro-enterprises, operating on thin margins, may find it especially challenging to absorb higher energy costs without passing them on to consumers. If consumer demand weakens due to inflation, overall eco-

economic growth could moderate despite strong underlying fundamentals. Strategic Diversification Offers Some Protection India has spent years diversifying its sources of crude oil imports, purchasing supplies from a wider range of countries to reduce dependence on any single region. The country has also expanded its strategic petroleum reserves, invested in renewable energy, promoted electric mobility, and encouraged domestic biofuel production as part of a long-term strategy to improve energy security. However, ex-



perts note that these initiatives can only partially offset the immediate impact of sharp movements in global crude prices. Markets Watching Central Bank Response Persistent energy-driven inflation could influence monetary policy decisions. If inflation remains above target for an extended period, the central bank may face pressure to maintain tighter financial conditions, potentially affecting borrowing costs for businesses and consumers. Investors are also closely monitoring currency markets, bond yields, and equity performance for signs of broader economic stress linked to energy prices. Looking Ahead Much will depend on developments in global energy markets and geopolitical conditions over the coming months. If crude prices stabilize, India

may be able to manage the additional costs without significant disruption. However, if supply concerns intensify and oil prices continue to climb, the country could face mounting challenges ranging from higher inflation and a wider trade deficit to increased fiscal pressures and slower economic growth. For policymakers, businesses, and consumers alike, the trajectory of global oil markets will remain one of the most important economic variables to watch in the remainder of 2026. So much has been written

about Donald Trump, but almost nothing has been written about his love of poetry. Yet there is at least one poem that he loves and regularly recites to cheering crowds. Last month, the White House made a documentary about Trump's recitation. The poem is called "The Snake." It is originally a song written by Oscar Brown Jr. This poem is very dear to Trump and it is close to his philosophy of life. The poem begins with the words of a snake that is almost frozen in the bitter cold. The snake, "frozen in the snow," is pitifully begging for a little warmth. But no one is listening to him. His plea is heard by a "kind woman." The poem says, "She (that woman) wrapped the snake in a comfortable silken sheet. Then she put it by the stove with honey and

milk. She touched and caressed the snake's beautiful skin, kissed it, held it tightly. But instead of thanking, the snake gave me a terrible bite." These words are the essence of Trumpism: don't pull an outsider too close, because you'll get poison in return. Trumpism has no embrace for outsiders, only exploitation. Business, politics and, of course, immigration - that's how Trump sees it. Trump's recitation is voiced over in a White House documentary. At the same time, images of handcuffed brown-skinned people being led away flashed across the screen. I thought of "The Snake" again as I listened to Trump's extraordinary speech at the United Nations this week. It's a perfect depiction of the relationship between Trump and the British aristocracy, with Trump the fearsome snake and the British aristocracy the woman. Last week, Trump was the most honored guest of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. He enjoyed a royal banquet at Windsor Castle. During the event, King Charles called him his 'closest relative'. But on the return flight, Trump took a stab at his British hosts. Last week, Trump was the most honored guest of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. He enjoyed a royal banquet at Windsor Castle. At that time, King Charles called him his "closest relative." But on the return flight, Trump took a stab at his British hosts. He made the extremely insulting remark of "I hope the Prime Minister is listening," and relegated the UK to the ranks of the "hell-bound" countries of the old world. Seeing this, I was reminded of the last two lines of the poem. Where the woman says to the snake, "You bit me, but why? You know your bite is poisonous and now I am dying." For almost a year, Starmer has been holding Trump as tight as he can, with an unprecedented second state visit, a night in a castle and a day at checkers, photoshoots with the royal family—all in the hope of dollars. Low taxes and high investment, that is Starmer's ROI (return on ingratiatio).

Last week he received his biggest prize, the US-UK technology deal. Downing Street declared it a "record-breaking" investment. The BBC's renowned business editor Simon Jack agreed, calling it an "absolutely astonishing deal." But be prepared, there will be a ruckus and a shake of the heads at the Labour conference next week. The journalists will cover it seriously. They spent more time last week looking at Melania's hat than delving into the figures and discussing the real economic or technical details. But if Labour members and other voters found out what they had actually signed up for, they would be outraged, not delighted. The truth is that a striped snake is slowly winding its way around your land, your data, your water supply and your electricity poles. And the moment is claimed to be for your own good. Not only that, but projects announced more than a year ago, such as Google's grand opening on the M25 or Blackstone's investment in Northumberland, are being re-examined. Such is the dirty standard of the British government. But even more surprising is Starmer's intention to take off his hat and declare foreign investors 'life-changing'. Most Britons will see it differently. The Glazers, Blackstone and Macquarie are all examples of 'foreign investment'. But Manchester United fans, Southern Cross care home patients and Thames Water customers will be able to tell MPs how well they have fared. So it seems that the same will happen with the £31 billion investment in the technology sector. The White House's own publication makes it clear that most of the US capital is not going into new businesses or shiny new offices. The main money is going to big data centres, which are crucial for artificial intelligence, but are not much talked about in British politics. The government is promoting them as 'AI factories', but in reality they are more like modern warehouses, where machines are kept, not people. They don't produce anything, they just store your data and mine.