

"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

Political Priorities

For decades, Ashok Gehlot stood as one of the Congress party's most formidable strategists, a leader known for his organizational skills, crisis management, and ability to navigate the complex politics of Rajasthan. Yet, as the state's political landscape evolves and a new generation of leaders gains prominence, Gehlot appears to be confronting one of the most challenging phases of his long political career. Political observers increasingly argue that Rajasthan Congress is witnessing a gradual but significant shift in leadership dynamics. Once regarded as the undisputed center of power within the state unit, Gehlot now faces a political environment where his influence is being tested by changing electoral realities, internal party calculations, and the continued prominence of his long-time rival, Sachin Pilot. A Leadership Battle That Refuses to End

The rivalry between Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot has defined Rajasthan Congress politics for nearly a decade. What began as a contest between an experienced administrator and a young reformist leader eventually evolved into one of the party's most visible internal conflicts. The 2020 political crisis, when Pilot openly challenged the Gehlot government, exposed deep divisions within the Congress organization. Although Gehlot managed to retain power at the time, the episode permanently altered the balance of authority within the state party. Even after multiple rounds of reconciliation efforts by the national leadership, the differences between the two camps never entirely disappeared. Instead, they transformed into a prolonged struggle over organizational control and political succession. The Rahul Gandhi Factor

Within Congress circles, many analysts believe the party's central leadership has increasingly prioritized generational change and organizational restructuring. Rahul Gandhi's emphasis on grassroots mobilization, youth participation, and ideological campaigns has elevated several younger leaders across India. In Rajasthan, this broader strategy has often been interpreted as creating greater space for leaders like Sachin Pilot, who enjoy significant support among younger workers and sections of the party cadre. Whether this represents a deliberate shift or merely a natural evolution remains open to debate, but it has undoubtedly fueled speculation about the future distribution of power within the Rajasthan Congress. Sachin Pilot's Continued Political Relevance

Despite periods of uncertainty following his rebellion, Sachin Pilot has managed to remain a central figure in Rajasthan politics. His outreach programs, public campaigns, and consistent engagement with local issues have helped maintain his visibility. Many political analysts argue that Pilot has successfully positioned himself as a long-term contender for state leadership while carefully avoiding actions that could permanently damage his standing within the national party. His political resilience demonstrates how younger regional leaders are increasingly shaping Congress's future narrative. Changing Political Priorities

The Congress party today faces challenges that extend well beyond Rajasthan.

Changing Strategic From Strategic Asset to Strategic Burden? Why Pakistan Faces New Challenges as Trump Refocuses on South Asia

As geopolitical tensions continue to reshape South Asia, Pakistan is finding itself under increasing international scrutiny amid renewed attention from former U.S. President Donald Trump. While Islamabad has often played a pivotal role in American regional strategy, analysts suggest that a shift in Washington's priorities could present fresh diplomatic and economic challenges for the country. Recent discussions surrounding counterterrorism, regional stability, Afghanistan, and great-power competition have once again brought Pakistan into the spotlight. Trump's comments and policy signals have reignited debate over whether Islamabad could face tougher expectations from a future U.S. administration. Changing Strategic Calculations

During his previous tenure, Trump maintained an unpredictable approach toward Pakistan. At different times, he accused Islamabad of failing to act decisively against militant groups while simultaneously acknowledging its strategic importance in facilitating negotiations related to Afghanistan. If similar policies return, Pakistan may once again face demands for stronger counterterrorism measures, greater transparency in security cooperation, and stricter accountability regarding regional security issues. Experts believe Washington's focus could increasingly center on measurable outcomes rather than traditional strategic partnerships. Economic Pressures

Could Intensify

Pakistan continues to navigate economic vulnerabilities, including external debt obligations, inflationary pressures, and dependence on international financial institutions. Any deterioration in relations with the United States could influence investor confidence and complicate negotiations involving multilateral lenders. Although economic decisions are influenced by numerous factors, diplomatic uncertainty often adds another layer of risk. Foreign direct investment, already facing challenges, could become more volatile if geopolitical tensions escalate. Balancing China and the United States

One of Pakistan's biggest diplomatic tests remains maintaining a delicate balance between its deep strategic partnership with China and its relationship with Washington. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has strengthened economic ties with Beijing, but a future U.S. administration led by Trump could adopt a more competitive stance toward Chinese influence across Asia. This may place Islamabad in a difficult position, forcing it to carefully manage relations with both major powers without alienating either side. Regional Security Concerns

Instability in neighboring Afghanistan continues to pose security concerns for Pakistan. Border management, refugee issues, and militant activity remain significant challenges. Should Washington increase pressure for more aggressive regional security cooperation, Pakistan could face additional diplomatic

expectations while dealing with its own domestic security priorities. Analysts note that regional security dynamics are likely to remain central to U.S.-Pakistan engagement regardless of political leadership in Washington. India Factor

Another key variable is the growing strategic partnership between the United States and India. Over the past decade, defense cooperation, technology partnerships, and economic ties between Washington and New Delhi have expanded considerably. If this trajectory continues, Pakistan may perceive a widening strategic imbalance in South Asia. While U.S. officials have repeatedly emphasized that relations with India and Pakistan are not mutually exclusive, Islamabad closely watches developments that could affect regional power dynamics. Diplomatic Challenges Ahead

Pakistan's foreign policy establishment has increasingly pursued a multi-

Republican foreign policy debates, his attention toward Pakistan has the potential to reshape diplomatic calculations across South Asia. For Islamabad, the challenge will not simply be responding to criticism or policy demands but adapting to a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment where strategic partnerships are increasingly defined by tangible outcomes rather than historical alliances. As global competition intensifies and regional security concerns persist, Pakistan's ability to balance diplomacy, economic reform, and national security interests may determine how successfully it navigates the next phase of its relationship with the United States. 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

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 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 Ladakhs 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



vector diplomatic strategy, strengthening engagement with Gulf nations, China, Turkey, Central Asia, and other regional partners. However, renewed scrutiny from Washington could require Islamabad to invest greater diplomatic effort in maintaining constructive ties with the United States while preserving its broader strategic relationships. Managing competing expectations from global powers may become one of Pakistan's most significant foreign policy challenges in the coming years. Domestic Political Implications

International pressure often carries domestic political consequences. Government leaders may face criticism from opposition parties over foreign policy choices, economic management, and national security decisions. Public debate could intensify if external demands are perceived as infringing upon national sovereignty or influencing domestic policymaking. Such dynamics have historically shaped Pakistan's political landscape during periods of heightened engagement with major global powers. Looking Ahead

Whether Donald Trump returns to office or continues influencing

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 Gurmiani 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

LinkedIn or Intelligence Tool? How Digital Recruitment Platforms Emerging as a New Front in Global Espionage

The Future Battlefield Is Digital

In the digital age, espionage no longer relies solely on secret meetings, coded messages, or undercover agents operating in the shadows. Instead, intelligence gathering has increasingly moved online, where professional networking platforms, recruitment portals, and social media profiles have become valuable sources of strategic information. Among these platforms, LinkedIn has drawn growing attention from security experts worldwide over concerns that it can be exploited by foreign intelligence agencies to identify, approach, and recruit individuals with access to sensitive information. As geopolitical competition intensifies, questions are being raised about whether India is adequately prepared to counter such sophisticated digital influence and intelligence operations. The Rise of Digital Espionage

Professional networking sites were designed to connect employers with talent and help individuals advance their careers. However, the same features that make these platforms effective for recruitment—detailed career histories, educational backgrounds, professional connections, and industry expertise—also make them attractive tools for intelligence operatives. Analysts have warned that fake recruiters or seemingly legitimate consulting firms may approach professionals working in government agencies, defense sectors, technology companies, research institutions, or critical infrastructure. These interactions often begin with harmless networking messages or lucrative job offers before gradually evolving into requests for sensitive information or confidential discussions. Unlike traditional espionage, these methods exploit trust rather than secrecy. Why India Faces Unique Challenges

India has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing digital economies, with millions of professionals actively maintaining online profiles across global networking platforms. At the same time, the country is expanding

its footprint in strategic industries including defense manufacturing, semiconductor technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, pharmaceuticals, and space research. This combination makes Indian professionals attractive targets for foreign intelligence services seeking insights into emerging technologies, policy directions, and industrial capabilities. The rapid growth of India's startup ecosystem also creates opportunities for overseas entities to identify founders, researchers, and engineers working on cutting-edge innovations. How Recruitment Can Become an Intelligence Tool

Experts note that espionage rarely begins with direct requests for classified information. Instead, operatives may first seek to establish credibility by offering: High-paying overseas job opportunities; Invitations to exclusive conferences; Consulting assignments; Academic collaborations; Research partnerships; Paid surveys or expert interviews. Over time, seemingly innocent conversations may reveal organizational structures, project timelines, procurement plans, technological capabilities, or internal decision-making processes. Even fragmented pieces of publicly available information can be combined to produce valuable intelligence. The Growing Role of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence has transformed how intelligence gathering can be conducted. Automated systems can analyze millions of online profiles, identify individuals with specialized expertise, map professional relationships, and detect influential figures within strategic sectors. Machine learning algorithms can also personalize recruitment messages, making fraudulent approaches appear highly convincing. This increases the difficulty of distinguishing genuine career opportunities from sophisticated intelligence operations. Lessons From Around the World

Several Western intelligence agencies have publicly warned that foreign actors have attempted to exploit professional networking platforms to

contact government officials, military personnel, researchers, and private-sector executives. These warnings reflect a broader shift toward open-source intelligence collection, where publicly shared information can complement traditional espionage techniques. Many countries have responded by strengthening digital awareness training, improving cybersecurity education, and issuing guidance for employees working in sensitive sectors. Is India Prepared?

India has significantly expanded its cybersecurity

tries. Balancing Openness With Security

Professional networking platforms play an essential role in economic growth, innovation, and international collaboration. Restricting digital engagement would not be a practical or desirable solution. Instead, the emphasis should be on informed participation—encouraging users to verify recruiters, exercise caution when sharing non-public information, and remain alert to unusually persistent or highly lucrative unsolicited offers. Organizations can also implement internal

ment platforms continue to evolve, the line between career opportunity and intelligence operation may become increasingly difficult to distinguish. Remaining vigilant while embracing global connectivity will be one of the defining security challenges of the digital era. 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 docu-mentary 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.



infrastructure and strengthened national digital security initiatives in recent years. Government agencies, defense organizations, and major corporations increasingly recognize cyber threats as a critical national security concern. However, human behavior remains one of the most challenging vulnerabilities to address. Even the strongest technological defenses can be undermined if individuals unknowingly disclose sensitive information through social engineering or deceptive recruitment efforts. Experts argue that awareness programs should extend beyond government employees to include researchers, university faculty, startup founders, defense contractors, and professionals working in strategic indus-

tries. Balancing Openness With Security

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