

## 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 Prophecy

Indian politics is filled with speeches, slogans, and dramatic predictions, but only a handful survive the test of time. Among them, an old remark attributed to veteran Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar in 1997 has resurfaced, prompting a renewed discussion about whether what was dismissed as a joke ultimately became one of the most accurate forecasts in West Bengal's political history. At a time when the Indian National Congress still believed it could reclaim lost ground in West Bengal, the emergence of a new regional force appeared unlikely. Yet, political developments over the next two decades would transform the state's landscape in ways few anticipated. Today, as analysts revisit the origins of the All India Trinamool Congress, many point to that seemingly light-hearted observation as a striking example of political foresight hidden beneath humour. West Bengal in the Late 1990s: A Different Political Universe In 1997, West Bengal remained firmly under the control of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front, which had already governed the state for two decades. The Congress organization was fragmented, struggling with internal rivalries and declining public influence. Few believed that any opposition force could seriously challenge the Left's dominance. Against this backdrop, Mamata Banerjee was increasingly at odds with the Congress leadership. Her aggressive street politics and independent style generated both admiration and concern within the party. Many senior Congress leaders reportedly viewed her ambitions with skepticism, considering them politically risky. The Split That Changed Bengal Politics Forever Only months later, Mamata Banerjee broke away from Congress and established the Trinamool Congress, creating a new regional political platform that promised direct confrontation with the Left Front. Initially, numerous observers dismissed the move as politically unsustainable. Without the organizational machinery and national reach of Congress, critics believed the new party would struggle to survive. However, the Trinamool Congress rapidly built support among urban voters, rural communities, youth activists, and anti-Left constituencies, gradually emerging as the principal opposition force. What began as an uncertain experiment soon evolved into one of India's most successful regional political movements. When a 'Joke' Started Looking Like a Prediction Political anecdotes surrounding Mani Shankar Aiyar have often reflected his sharp wit and unconventional style. Over the years, several comments initially interpreted as sarcasm or humour have later attracted renewed attention because of subsequent political developments. The 1997 remark associated with the emergence of a separate political force in West Bengal has similarly gained retrospective significance. Although many at the time reportedly laughed it off, later events encouraged commentators to reinterpret it as an unexpectedly perceptive reading of the state's evolving political dynamics rather than mere political banter. The Rise of Trinamool Congress The party steadily expanded through local elections, parliamentary contests, and grassroots mobilization before achieving its defining breakthrough.

# India Breaks Diplomatic Tradition First-Ever Non-Muslim Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Signals a New Era Strategic Relations

In a landmark diplomatic development, India has appointed a non-Muslim ambassador to Saudi Arabia for the first time since the establishment of formal bilateral relations, marking a significant shift in the country's diplomatic approach and highlighting the evolving nature of India-Saudi ties. The decision has attracted widespread attention among foreign policy experts, diplomats, and political observers, many of whom see the appointment as a reflection of India's emphasis on professional merit, strategic cooperation, and modern diplomacy over traditional conventions. For decades, appointments to Saudi Arabia—a nation regarded as the spiritual center of Islam due to its custodianship of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina—were often viewed through the lens of religious familiarity and cultural understanding. While there has never been a formal requirement that India's ambassador to Saudi Arabia be Muslim, previous appointments frequently involved diplomats with expertise in Middle Eastern affairs or cultural connections to the region. The latest appointment appears to underline a changing diplomatic philosophy in New Delhi, where experience, administrative capability, and strategic expertise are increasingly taking precedence over symbolic considerations. A Relationship That Has Transformed India and Saudi Arabia have witnessed remarkable growth in bilateral relations over the past decade. What was once a relationship centered primarily on energy imports has evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership encompassing trade, investment, security cooperation, defense, technology, renewable energy, infrastructure, and counterterrorism initiatives. Saudi Arabia remains one of India's largest suppliers of crude oil and an increasingly important investment partner. At the same time, millions of Indian expatriates living and working in the Kingdom contribute significantly to both economies through their professional expertise and remittances. As the relationship expands into new sectors, diplomatic representation is also adapting to meet broader strategic objectives. Merit Over Symbolism Foreign policy analysts argue that the appointment reflects India's confidence that diplomatic effectiveness depends on professional competence rather than religious identity. Modern diplomacy increasingly focuses on negotiation skills, economic engagement, geopolitical understanding, and the ability to build long-term partnerships. From this perspective, the ambassador's background in international relations and statecraft may be considered more significant than personal religious affiliation. Observers note that many countries appoint ambassadors based solely on career credentials, regardless of cultural or religious considerations, particularly when bilateral relations are driven by strategic interests. Saudi Arabia's Own Transformation The appointment also

comes at a time when Saudi Arabia itself is undergoing profound economic and social transformation under its ambitious modernization agenda. The Kingdom has been seeking to diversify its economy beyond oil through investments in tourism, technology, manufacturing, entertainment, renewable energy, and global finance. These reforms have encouraged stronger international engagement and broader diplomatic cooperation with major economies such as India. As Saudi Arabia expands its global partnerships, bilateral relations are increasingly defined by mutual economic interests, investment opportunities, and regional stability rather than traditional diplomatic norms. Strengthening Strategic Cooperation India and Saudi Arabia have enhanced cooperation across multiple sectors in recent years, including maritime security, intelligence sharing, energy security, fintech, dig-



ital infrastructure, healthcare, education, and defense manufacturing. The Gulf region has become strategically important for India's energy security and overseas workforce, while Saudi Arabia views India as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies and an attractive destination for long-term investment. The appointment of a seasoned diplomat capable of managing these diverse areas of cooperation may therefore be viewed as a practical decision aligned with evolving geopolitical realities. Domestic and International Reactions The announcement has generated discussion across diplomatic circles and social media, with supporters describing it as evidence of India's confidence in its secular administrative institutions and merit-based foreign service. Some commentators believe the move symbolizes the maturity of India-Saudi relations, suggesting that the partnership has reached a stage where strategic interests outweigh historical conventions or symbolic expectations. Others have cautioned against overinterpreting the appointment, noting that ambassadorial selections have traditionally

been based on the requirements of foreign policy rather than religious identity. A Message Beyond Diplomacy The historic appointment may also send a broader message about India's approach to international engagement in the twenty-first century. As global diplomacy becomes increasingly focused on economics, technology, climate cooperation, and security partnerships, governments are placing greater emphasis on professional expertise and institutional experience. Whether viewed as a symbolic milestone or simply a routine administrative decision, the appointment represents a notable moment in the history of India-Saudi relations and illustrates the changing character of diplomacy in an interconnected world. As New Delhi and Riyadh continue to deepen cooperation across strategic sectors, this unprecedented appointment may come to be remembered as another indicator of

tional 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 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 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 Gurnani 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 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.

# Global Dominance to Global Doubt: How America's Image as an Unchallenged Superpower Facing New Challenges

## Domestic Divisions and International Perception

The United States has long been regarded as one of the world's most influential nations, shaping global politics, economics, military alliances, and technological innovation for decades. From the end of World War II through the Cold War and into the 21st century, Washington's leadership often appeared unmatched. However, a growing number of analysts argue that recent geopolitical developments have exposed vulnerabilities that have sparked debate over America's global standing. While describing the situation as the "fall of a superpower" remains highly contested, there is little doubt that the international landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Rising powers, shifting alliances, economic competition, and regional conflicts are challenging the traditional balance of power and forcing the United States to adapt to a more multipolar world. A Changing Global Order For decades, the United States maintained unparalleled military capabilities, economic strength, and diplomatic influence. Institutions backed by Washington helped shape international trade, security arrangements, and global governance. Today, however, emerging economies and regional powers are asserting greater independence. Countries are increasingly pursuing strategic autonomy, balancing relations among multiple major powers rather than relying exclusively on American leadership. This shift does not necessarily signal the decline of the United States but rather reflects the emergence of a more competitive international environment. Diplomatic Challenges Across Multiple Fronts Recent years have seen Washington confronted by simultaneous crises in different regions, stretching diplomatic resources and testing long-standing alliances. Conflicts in Eastern Europe, instability in the Middle East, and strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific have required continuous engagement from American policymakers. Critics argue that managing several geopolitical flash-

points at once has complicated decision-making and exposed differences between allies over priorities and strategy. Meanwhile, many developing nations have sought more independent foreign policies, refusing to align completely with either Western powers or their geopolitical rivals. Economic Competition Intensifies Although the United States remains one of the world's largest economies, it faces increasing competition in manufacturing, infrastructure investment, technology, and global supply chains. Countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America are diversifying trade partnerships and investment sources, reducing dependence on any single economic power. New financial mechanisms and regional trade agreements have also contributed to a more decentralized economic system. Despite these developments, the U.S. dollar continues to play a dominant role in global finance, though discussions about alternative payment systems have gained momentum. Military Strength Remains Significant The United States continues to possess one of the world's most advanced military forces, supported by extensive alliances and overseas deployments. However, modern security challenges increasingly involve cyber warfare, unmanned systems, space technology, and economic influence rather than conventional military superiority alone. Strategic competition now extends beyond battlefields into technology, artificial intelligence, semiconductor production, and digital infrastructure. This evolution has required Washington to rethink traditional concepts of deterrence and national security. Domestic Divisions and International Perception Political polarization within the United States has attracted international attention. Sharp partisan disagreements over domestic and foreign policy have sometimes raised questions among allies about long-term policy consistency. Economic inequality, immigration debates, and institutional challenges have also shaped perceptions

abroad. While these internal issues do not diminish America's capabilities, they influence how other nations assess the country's ability to provide stable global leadership. The Rise of Multipolar Diplomacy An increasing number of countries are pursuing flexible partnerships based on national interests rather than ideological alignment. Nations in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are engaging simultaneously with the United States, China, the European Union, India, and other regional powers. This trend reflects



a broader transformation in international relations, where influence is distributed across multiple centers rather than concentrated in a single superpower. Innovation and Enduring Strengths Despite mounting challenges, the United States remains a global leader in higher education, scientific research, technological innovation, entertainment, and companies continue to dominate many sectors of the digital economy, while its universities attract talent from around the world. The country's ability to innovate and adapt remains one of its greatest strategic advantages. Many experts argue that rather than experiencing irreversible decline, the United States is navigating a period of adjustment as global power becomes

more widely shared. Conclusion The narrative that America has "never looked this humiliated" reflects one interpretation of recent geopolitical events but remains a subjective assessment rather than an established fact. What is clear is that the international system is evolving rapidly, with new powers emerging and traditional alliances being reassessed. Whether the coming decades represent the decline of American dominance or the adaptation of a resilient superpower will depend on its ability to

respond to changing global realities, strengthen partnerships, foster innovation, and navigate an increasingly complex multipolar world. 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 industries. Balancing Openness With Security Professional networking platforms play an essential role in economic growth, innovation, and international col-

laboration. 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 policies regarding employee participation in external consultations, conference invitations, and information sharing. The Future Battlefield Is Digital The competition among nations increasingly extends beyond military strength and economic influence into cyberspace and digital ecosystems. Information has become a strategic asset, and professionals across industries are now potential targets for sophisticated intelligence-gathering efforts. For India, strengthening cybersecurity technology is only part of the solution. Building a culture of digital awareness, responsible information sharing, and resilience against social engineering may prove equally important in protecting national interests. As recruitment 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 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.