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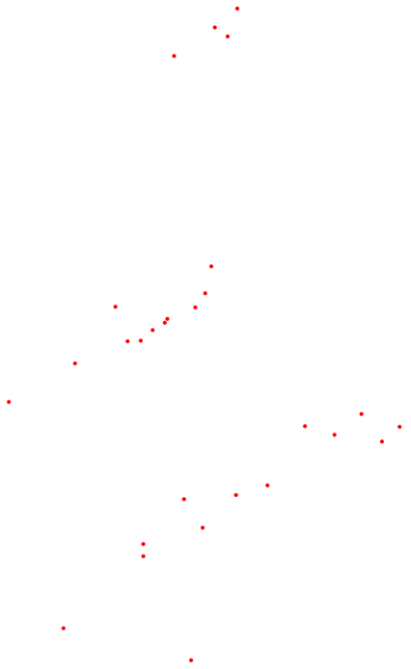


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TULSI GABBARD ON TIES
'America first doesn't mean America alone'
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Sensex up 1.5% as auto banks rise on global cues
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Dystopian side of Insta-commerce
Startup founders quietly oppose emerging rights frameworks
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TOP PRIORITY
Shreyas eyes maiden IPL title for Kings
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INSIDE



Pakistan should vacate occupied territories: MEA

NEW DELHI
A day after Pakistan accused India of 'fomenting terrorism', Ministry of External Affairs on Tuesday asked Pakistan to 'vacate' Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. > PAGE 6

Telangana to hike SC quota after next Census

HYDERABAD
Telangana government has announced its resolve to enhance the reservation for Scheduled Caste communities after the data of the next Census is released. > PAGE 3

EC to hear pleas to upload booth-wise turnout

Supreme Court Bench directs petitioners to make representation before poll panel in 10 days; they have sought authenticated, scanned, legible account of votes after each phase of polling; a petitioner had alleged inordinate delay in publishing turnout details followed by a spike in figures from the initial percentages in the 2024 LS election

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Election Commission to upload booth-wise turnout data followed by a spike in figures from the initial percentages in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The bench, headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna directed petitioners to make their representation before the EC in 10 days. The panel's willingness to do so signalled a melow-

Case file
The demand for EC to publish booth-wise voter turnout data follows other attempts to make the poll process more transparent. Here are the two sides:
Petitioners' case:
• Delay in publishing voter turnout data followed by a sharp spike in figures from polling percentages in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.
• 'Wide discrepancy' between the count of votes at poll booths and the voter turnout published later on the EC website.
• Suspicions of switching of electronic voting machines.
EC officials' reply:
• There was no 'legal mandate' to provide the data to any other than candidates or their polling agents.
• Form 17C to be shared only with candidates and their agents.
• Turnout to be published through a voter turnout app, website, and press releases.

EC begins steps to link voter ID with Aadhaar
NEW DELHI
The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday set the ball rolling for linking Aadhaar with voter photo identity card (EPIC) numbers. The commission said that it would soon begin technical consultations with the UIDAI on the issue. The decision was made after a high-level meeting led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. > PAGE 5

representing Ms. Moitra, submitted that the EC's reluctance to divulge the total voter turnout data from all polling booths may be "to avoid a macro picture for analysis and disclosure".
'Wide discrepancy'
"Citizens have a right to know. The Supreme Court had intervened in other cases to ensure that citizens knew the criminal antecedents of candidates... In a democracy, we need to know, that's all," Mr. Bhushan emphasised.
Mr. Singhal said there was a "wide discrepancy" between the count of voters at poll booths and the voter turnout published later on.
The EC had argued that the "mandate" required Form 17C to be shared only with candi-

Israeli air strikes across Gaza Strip kill over 400 Palestinians

Associated Press
DEIR AL-BALAH
Israel launched air strikes across the Gaza Strip early on Tuesday, killing at least 400 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to local health officials. The surprise bombardment, the deadliest in Gaza since the start of the 17-month war, shattered a ceasefire in place since January.
Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions.
The Israeli military ordered people to evacuate eastern Gaza, including much of the northern town

of Beit Hanoun and other communities further south, and head toward the centre of the territory, indicating that Israel could soon launch renewed ground operations.
"Israel will, from now on, act against Hamas with military strength," Mr. Netanyahu's office said.
Fate of hostages
The attack during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan could signal the full resumption of a war that has already killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and caused widespread destruction across Gaza. It also raised concerns about the fate of the roughly two dozen Israeli hostages held by Hamas who are believed to still be alive.
A senior Hamas official said Mr. Netanyahu's decision to return to war amounts to a "death sen-

tence" for the remaining hostages.
Hamas's Izzat al-Risheq accused Mr. Netanyahu of launching the strikes to try and save his far-right governing coalition and called on mediators to "reveal facts" on who broke the truce. Hamas said at least four senior officials were killed in Tuesday's strikes.
"There were no reports of any attacks by Hamas several hours after the nonbombardment, indicating it still hoped to restore the truce."
The strikes came as Mr. Netanyahu comes under mounting domestic pressure, with mass protests planned over his handling of the hostage crisis and his decision to fire the head of Israel's internal security agency.



All Israel: A woman cries on the rubble of her house destroyed in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday. AP

SC to consider if Lokpal has jurisdiction over judges

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI
A Bench of the Supreme Court's senior-most judges headed by Justice B.R. Gavai on Tuesday decided to examine in detail if judges of constitutional courts come within the jurisdiction of the country's top ombudsman, Lokpal, as public functionaries including the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and members of Parliament.
The court was hearing a suo motu case initiated after Lokpal, through a January 27 order, assumed jurisdiction to investigate complaints against serving High Court judges.
FULL REPORT ON
> PAGE 4

Curfew in Nagpur after spate of arson, rioting

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
Abhinav Deshpande
MUMBAI
Nagpur remained tense on Tuesday, a day after violence erupted over rumours that a holy book was burned during a protest by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district of Maharashtra.
Curfew was imposed in the jurisdiction of H of the 33 police stations in the city.
"Mobs threw stones and set vehicles on fire on Monday. As many as 37 persons were injured."
The police carried out route marches across the affected areas, even as 8,500 personnel of the Nagpur Police, Quick Response Team and State Reserve Police Force were de-



Tensions flare: The police deployed in the Chitnis Park area in Nagpur on Tuesday. PTI

ployed in sensitive areas. "The police have taken more than 50 persons into custody and registered five FIRs at various police stations," Ravindra said.
Nagpur Police Commissioner, told The Hindu.
Of the injured, 34 were police personnel and three were civilians. A senior police official was attacked by with an axe, and another by a rod, the police said. "The police had to 'shell' a 'substantial number' of tear gas capsules to quell the rioting mobs on Monday night," top officials said. They also resorted to a lathi charge.
Conspiracy alleged
Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis called the attack "planned and pre-meditat-

ed", while Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde asked how petrol bombs were readily available to the rioters and how several vehicles were missing from their usual parking spot on the day of the riot.
The Mahal area, the epicentre of the unrest, remains heavily guarded by police, with authorities conducting route marches in the evening to deter "anti-social elements". The police have cordoned off the entire area, checking all vehicles and restricting entry to outsiders in an effort to maintain order.
Sunit Peshne, a farmer residing in Chitnis Park, Mahal, described the chaos that unfolded near his home. "The stone-throwing started near my house, and my vehicle was burnt. Police officers, who were also under heavy attack, took shelter in my

Putin agrees to pause strikes on Ukraine energy targets

Associated Press
WASHINGTON
Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a 30-day halt to strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure following a call with U.S. counterpart Donald Trump, the Kremlin said on Tuesday. But Mr. Putin said that for a wider truce to work, Ukraine must not be allowed to rearm and must halt mandatory mobilisation.
The U.S. and Russian leaders spoke for more than an hour and a half and both expressed hopes for repairing relations between the countries.
The Kremlin said the two leaders had a "detailed frank exchange of views". Mr. Putin outlined a number of conditions for

Russian President listed terms for possible ceasefire in detailed call with Trump, says Kremlin
The White House said separately that the leaders agreed that the movement to peace will begin with an energy and infrastructure ceasefire.
Russia and Ukraine will also swap 175 prisoners each on Wednesday, the Kremlin said.
Mr. Putin said the Ukraine conflict could only be resolved long-term if the West halted military and intelligence support for Ukraine.
"The key condition for preventing an escalation of the conflict and working towards its resolution through political and diplomatic means should be a complete cessation of foreign military assistance and the provision of intelligence support to Kyiv," the Kremlin said.



Rajya Sabha felicitates Ilayaraja for composing symphony

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha has felicitated musician and nominated member of the Upper House, Ilayaraja, for becoming the first Indian to compose, record, and perform live a full English classical symphony. The renowned composer performed the symphony titled *Valiant* in London with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on March 8.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said Mr. Ilayaraja composed the symphony in 34 days, which is a unique achievement. The whole nation and the people are proud of his work. The achievement is yet another testament to his enduring brilliance and global appeal, Mr. Dhankhar said in the Rajya Sabha amid applause by members.

He added that the legendary musician has composed over 8,600 songs, besides being the only composer in the world to have composed music for 1,522 feature films in over nine languages.

Telangana promises to hike SC quota after next Census

Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy says the State government is committed to ensuring that reservation to the Scheduled Caste communities is provided proportionate to their population

M. Rajeev
HYDERABAD

Telangana government has announced its resolve to enhance the reservation for Scheduled Caste (SC) communities after the data of the next Census is made public.

Based on the 2011 Census, the State government has fixed the reservation for SCs at 19% and will enhance it once the population status of the Scheduled Caste communities is revealed by the Census 2026. "The present reservation is fixed on the basis of Census 2011. There is likely to be a 2-3% rise in the population in the past 15 years and the actual fi-



The present reservation is fixed on the basis of Census 2011. There is likely to be 2-3% rise in the population in the last 15 years and the actual figure will be known only after Census 2026

N. UTTAM KUMAR REDDY
Irrigation Minister

gure would be known only after Census 2026. We have decided to enhance the quota on the basis of the Census data," said Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, who headed the Cabinet sub-committee of categorisation of SC quota.

He said there were demands for enhancement of

SC quota from different sections and the government was committed to ensuring that reservation was provided to them proportionate to their population. Mr. Uttam Kumar Reddy participated in the discussion ahead of categorisation of SC quota.

He said there were demands for enhancement of

Karnataka Assembly tables Bill to provide 4% quota for Muslims in public contracts

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday to introduce 4% reservation for Muslims in public contracts.

On March 14, the State Cabinet approved an amendment to the Karnataka Transparency in Pu-

blic Procurement (KTPP) Act, reserving 4% of contracts for Muslims in civil works valued up to ₹2 crore, and goods and services contracts up to ₹1 crore.

Amend KTPP Act Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs H.K. Patil tabled the Bill, which is likely to come up for discussion on Wednesday. The Bill proposes to

amend the KTPP Act, 1999, to implement the proposal outlined in the 2025-26 Budget.

The proposal was announced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Budget speech on March 7. At present, Karnataka provides a 24% reservation in civil works contracts for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), 15% for Other Backward Classes (OBC) Category 1,

and 15% for OBC Category 2A. There had been demands to include Muslims under Category 2B of the OBCs with a 4% quota.

The proposal was announced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Budget speech on March 7. At present, Karnataka provides a 24% reservation in civil works contracts for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), 15% for Other Backward Classes (OBC) Category 1,

Youth found dead after killing brother of ex-classmate

The Hindu Bureau
KOLLAM

A degree student was killed in what the police described as a "crime of passion" in Kollam late on Monday. Fabin Gomas, 21, a student of Fatima Mata College, Kollam, was allegedly stabbed to death by Tejas Raj, 24, on Monday night. Hours later, Tejas Raj's body was found on the railway tracks near Chemmannurkka, around 3 km from the crime scene.

On Tuesday, the police said Tejas Raj, the accused in the Kollam murder-suicide case, had come with the intention to kill the entire family. The victim's sister and Tejas Raj were classmates and, reportedly, both the families had discussed marriage. Though both attended bank coaching classes, only the girl could clear the exam. Subsequently, there were disagreements between the girl and Tejas Raj, who was a dominant character led to the breakup of the relationship.

The girl's marriage was fixed with someone else. Tejas Raj had gone to the girl's house on Monday with the intention of killing the entire family. He first attacked the girl's father and then stabbed Gomas in the chest. Though Gomas was taken to the hospital, his life could not be saved. His father is undergoing treatment.

To overcome suicidal thoughts, contact DSSA at 1056 or 0471-2552056.

'Right to development a priority under fundamental rights'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court set aside, in separate judgments on Monday, a National Green Tribunal (NGT) order and a Madras High Court decision to halt development activities at Auroville. The decision cited lack of environmental clearance while outlining the need for sustainable development which strike a "good balance" between the rights to development and clean environment.

"Though it is true that the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle are part of the environmental law of the country, it is equally true that while the right to clean environment is a guaranteed fundamental right under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, the right to development through industrialisation and urbanisation equally claims priority under fundamental rights, particularly under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution," a Bench of Justices Bela M. Trivedi and P. B. Varale observed in their judgment.

Bench of Justices Trivedi and Varale set aside the April 2022 order of the NGT, Chennai, which directed the Auroville Foundation not to proceed with further construction in its township project until environmental clearance was obtained.

Setting aside the NGT verdict of 2022, Justice Trivedi concluded that the Tribunal had "committed a gross error in assuming the



The members of Auroville Foundation gather around the Matrimandir. FILE PHOTO

jurisdiction and giving directions unworkable in law". The court, in a second judgment also delivered on March 17, upheld a separate appeal filed by The Auroville Foundation against a March 2024 order of the High Court.

In the judgment concerning the NGT order, the apex court explained that the grievance raised by the respondents was with regard to the construction of roads as mentioned in the Master Plan by the Foundation.

Justice Trivedi noted the Master Plan had been approved by the Foundation and by the Minister of Human Resource Development back in 2001 and published in the official gazette in 2003.

The argument raised in the Tribunal against the construction was that it would destroy an area called the Darkland forest.

The Foundation had sought approval for the construction which did not require environmental clearance mandated under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Awareness drive



Warning act: Students of a college perform mime in Kozhikode on Tuesday to create awareness against narcotic drugs. The event was jointly organised by the Kasaba Janamaitri police and the Janajagratha Samithi of Palayam. R. ANWISH

Standing stones of Mudumal in Telangana on tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Serish Nandisetti
HYDERABAD

The *menhirs* or the standing stones of Mudumal in Narayanpet in Telangana have made it to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The application was forwarded by the Centre to the world body.

Mudumal, on the banks of the Krishna that separates the State from Karnataka, has been a well-known *menhir* site.



The *menhirs* in Mudumal in Narayanpet of Telangana.

Nearly 1,200 large sized stones standing vertically map the skies as it extends 3,000 years ago. From them, we know the date and positions of the constellations of Leo, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Virgo, Taurus etc.," says conservation architect Surya Narayan Murthy who helped

prepare the application for the Mudumal site in collaboration with IITAM and a Canadian Heritage Academy Trust.

Karnataka surveys process to recover land encroached by Kumaraswamy near Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Deputy Commissioner, along with Revenue officials and the police, visited the farm land of Union Minister for Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy at Kethaganahalli in Ramnagara district of Karnataka. They initiated the process to recover over 14 acres of government land, which has allegedly been encroached upon by the Janata Secular Party.

Heavy machinery, including JCBs and tractors, carrying survey stones to mark the recovered land has been moved into the farm land amid tight security.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Yashwanth Gururak, Deputy Commissioner, Ramnagara, was at the spot to supervise the recovery operation.

As per orders of the High Court of Karnataka, any government land encroached up to survey numbers 7 to 8 will be taken into government possession. Approximately 14 acres of encroachment has been identified. We will submit the details to the court," Mr. Gururak said. Earlier, the HC had expressed displeasure over the inaction by the Revenue Department in recovering encroached land. The court directed the authorities concerned to submit a report.

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHICODE

Even as the Kerala government is drawing flak for its rehabilitation package for the survivors of the Munnakkal-Chooramala landslides in Wayanad district, a group of trade unions have decided to launch a protest against the government's plan to evict workers of the Palpara division of Elstone Estate in Kappeta municipality. Earlier, the HC had expressed displeasure over the inaction by the Revenue Department in recovering encroached land. The court directed the authorities concerned to submit a report.

Elstone Estate workers to oppose Kerala govt's plan to evict them

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHICODE

All workers of Elstone Estate will be part of a to-be-protest on March 22. If the issue remained unresolved, their family members would join them in laying siege to the Collectorate in the second stage. The third stage of the protest would be to lay their claim on the land in question, the leaders said.

The protest fund share of the employees as well as the employers since 2014 had not been remitted in their provident fund accounts. Aroana retired employees had not been paid their gratuity. They were also eligible for other benefits.

The union leaders welcomed the government move to rehabilitate the survivors of the landslides on the estate. But they demanded that the issue of 300-odd workers on the estate be addressed too.

Kannur district takes a step for inclusivity with Braille editions of literary classics

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

In a significant step towards inclusive reading, the Kannur district panchayat has launched Braille editions of 10 Malayalam literary classics, making timeless works accessible to the visually challenged.

The initiative, carried out in collaboration with the Kerala Federation of the Blind, features nine novels and a poetry collection. District panchayat president K.K. Ratnakumari released the books on Tuesday, highlighting the initiative as part of the district's disability-friendly efforts. "Such projects are cru-



District panchayat president K.K. Ratnakumari releases the Braille version of the classics in Kannur on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cial in empowering the visually challenged by ensuring their participation in literary and cultural discussions," she said. The works released include *Khasakinte Ithiha-*

by M. Mukundan, *Ayusshate Pusthakam* by C.V. Balakrishnan, *Aadurevitham* by K.R. Meera.

The poetry collection includes works of Kumarasan, Vallathol, Vayalunji, N.N. Kurup, Sugathakumari, and Balachandran Chullikkad.

Combined effort The books, printed at an estimated cost of ₹45,631 under the district panchayat's 2023-24 innovative plan, will be distributed to libraries with visually challenged members in coordination with the Library Council. The project is being overseen by the district animal justice officer.

'Right to development a priority under fundamental rights'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court set aside, in separate judgments on Monday, a National Green Tribunal (NGT) order and a Madras High Court decision to halt development activities at Auroville. The decision cited lack of environmental clearance while outlining the need for sustainable development which strike a "golden balance" between the rights to development and clean environment.

"Though it is true that the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle are part of the environmental law of the country, it is equally true that while the right to clean environment is a guaranteed fundamental right under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, the right to development through industrialisation equally claims priority under fundamental rights, particularly under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution," a Bench of Justices Bela M. Trivedi and P. B. Varale observed in their judgment.

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The members of Auroville Foundation gather around the Matrimandir. FILE PHOTO

jurisdiction and giving directions untenable in law". The court, in a second judgment also delivered on March 17, upheld a separate appeal filed by The Auroville Foundation against a March 2024 order of the High Court.

In the judgment concerning the NGT order, the apex court explained that the grievance raised by the respondents was with regard to the construction of roads as mentioned in the Master Plan by the Foundation.

Justice Trivedi noted the Master Plan had been approved by the the Foundation and by the Minister of Human Resource Development back in 2001 and published in the official gazette in 2010.

The argument raised in the Tribunal against the construction was that it would destroy an area called the Darkali forest.

The Foundation had countered that areas cannot be treated as a forest. They contended that it was a man-made plantation which did not require environmental clearance mandated under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.



The **Supreme Court** set aside orders from the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** and the **Madras High Court**, which had halted **development activities in Auroville** due to environmental concerns.

The ruling emphasized the **need for a “golden balance”** between the right to development and environmental protection.



Right to Development vs. Right to Clean Environment

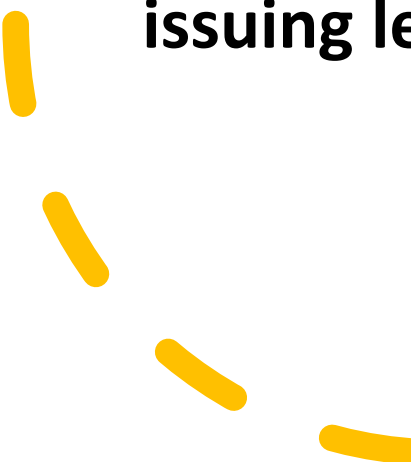
The judgment stated that **both rights—clean environment and development—are fundamental under the Constitution.**

Industrialization and urban development are equally prioritized under Articles 14, 19, and 21.

While environmental laws, including the **precautionary principle** and **polluter-pays principle**, are valid, they **cannot override the right to development.**

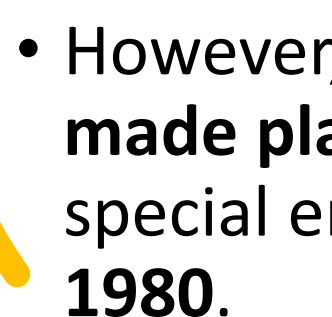


Setting Aside NGT Orders

- The Supreme Court **quashed the April 2022 NGT order**, which had **stalled township construction in Auroville** until environmental clearance was obtained.
 - The court **criticized the NGT for overstepping its jurisdiction and issuing legally untenable directions.**
- 



Roads & Darkali Forest Dispute

- The grievance in the case was **related to road construction under Auroville's Master Plan.**
 - **The NGT had claimed that the construction would damage the Darkali forest.**
 - However, the **Auroville Foundation argued that Darkali is a man-made plantation, not a natural forest,** and thus did not require special environmental clearance under the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980.**
- 

4. Master Plan Approval

The Supreme Court noted that the **Auroville Master Plan was approved in 2001** by both the **Foundation and the Minister of Human Resource Development**.

It was **formally published in the official gazette in 2010**, making it legally valid.

Aspect	Details
Name	Auroville (City of Dawn)
Location	Tamil Nadu, India (near Puducherry)
Founded By	Mirra Alfassa (The Mother)
Founded On	28 February 1968
Inspiration	Sri Aurobindo's vision of human unity and spiritual progress
Purpose	A universal township for human unity, beyond religion, politics, and nationality
Population	Around 3,000 residents from over 60 countries
Governance	Governed by Auroville Foundation, under the Ministry of Education, Government of India
Main Attraction	Matrimandir – a spiritual meditation center with a golden dome
Languages	English, Tamil, French, and other languages
Economy	Based on self-sustainability, eco-friendly industries, and donations
Education	Alternative education system with focus on creativity and self-learning
Sustainability	Promotes organic farming, renewable energy, and environmental conservation
Tourism	Visitors allowed, but long-term residence requires commitment to Auroville's philosophy
Official Website	www.auroville.org

www.auroville.org

Standing stones of Mudumal in Telangana on tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Serish Nanisetti

HYDERABAD

The *menhirs* or the standing stones of Mudumal in Narayanpet in Telangana have made it to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The application was forwarded by the Centre to the world body.

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“Nearly 1,200 large sized stones standing vertically map the skies as it existed 3,000 years ago. From them, we know the date and positions of the



The *menhirs* in Mudumal in Narayanpet of Telangana.


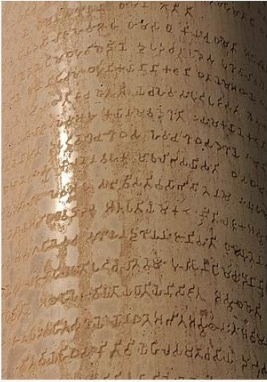

constellations of Leo, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Virgo, Taurus etc.,” says conservation architect Surya Narayan Murthy who helped

prepare the application for the Mudumal site in collaboration with DAM and Decan Heritage Academy Trust.






Location of World Heritage Sites in India:

- Green dots indicate the seven clusters in the Western Ghats
- Blue dots are the Hill Forts of Rajasthan
- Yellow dots are the Great Living Chola Temples
- Orange dots are the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
- Pink dots indicate the Mountain Railways of India
- Turquoise dots indicate cities with multiple sites. Delhi and Mumbai have three sites each, Agra and Jaipur have two sites each.

<p>Kanger Valley National Park</p>		<p>Chhattisgarh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>vii, viii, x (natural)</p>	<p>The national park covers the Kanger River valley. Its varying topography and the multitude of geological features contribute to the park's natural beauty and scientific importance. As an untouched forest area, it also contains diverse wildlife, including various threatened species.^[114]</p>
<p>Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs</p>		<p>Telangana</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>v, vi (cultural)</p>	<p>The menhirs date back 3500–4000 years and are arranged to align with celestial events. They reflect the ancient cultures' understanding of celestial phenomena and have influenced local religious beliefs.^[115]</p>
<p>Serial nomination for Ashokan Edict sites along the Mauryan Routes</p>		<p>Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>iii, iv, v (cultural)</p>	<p>This nomination comprises thirty-five rock and pillar edicts, as well as cave inscriptions (segment of the Lauriya Araraj pillar pictured).^[116]</p>
<p>Serial nomination of Chausath Yogini Temples</p>		<p>Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>iii, iv (cultural)</p>	<p>This nomination comprises thirteen temples of yoginis (female yoga practitioners), each with 64 images or statues of yoginis (temple in Mitaoli pictured).^[117]</p>

List of World Heritage Sites in India is located in India

<p>Serial nomination of Chausath Yogini Temples</p>		<p>Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>iii, iv (cultural)</p>	<p>This nomination comprises thirteen temples of yoginis (female yoga practitioners), each with 64 images or statues of yoginis (temple in Mitaoli pictured).^[117]</p>
<p>Serial nomination of Gupta Temples in North India</p>		<p>Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>i, iii (cultural)</p>	<p>This nomination comprises twenty temples of the Gupta dynasty.^[118]</p>
<p>The Palace-Fortresses of the Bundelas</p>		<p>Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>ii, iv (cultural)</p>	<p>This nomination comprises six fortresses of the Bundelkhand region (Raja Mahal pictured).^[119]</p>

Opposition leader not allowed to speak in 'new India': Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Tuesday said that by the "democratic structure", he should have been allowed to speak in the House, but permission was not given as it was a "new India".

Mr. Gandhi's comment came after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla declined a request from the Opposition benches to allow the Congress leader to speak after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on the Maha Kumbh.

Speaking to presspersons outside Parliament, Mr. Gandhi said he wanted to speak in the House on the issue, and that Modi should have paid homage to those who lost their lives in the January 29 stampede at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

"I wanted to support what he was saying. Kumbh is our tradition, history and culture. There was also a complaint that I did not pay homage to those who lost their lives [in the stampede in the Maha Kumbh]," the Opposition leader said. "The other thing I wanted to say is that the youth that went to the Kumbh need another

Congress leader says he wanted to speak after PM's statement on the Maha Kumbh

thing from the Prime Minister — they need employment. The Prime Minister should speak on employment."

"We are not allowed to speak. According to the democratic structure, the LoP should be permitted to speak, but it is not given permission, but this is new India," he said.

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the Opposition should have been allowed to speak in the House. "Opposition also has its sentiments on it, and the government should not have had any objection to them [the Opposition] airing their views," she said.

Rijiju rejects charge
Rejecting the charge, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju blamed the Opposition for creating chaos in the Lok Sabha. "In the House, the Opposition demands debates and discussions. Inside, they disrupt, create chaos and do a thing I wanted to say that the youth that went to the Kumbh need another

Kumbh showcased India's grandeur to world: Modi

With PM making no mention in Lok Sabha of the deaths due to stampede at the event in UP and at New Delhi Railway Station, Opposition members stage protest over 'sidestepping' these issues

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Big praise: Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. SANJAY TV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday lauded the recently concluded Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh to India's historic milestones such as the 1857 uprising and the 'Dandi March' led by Mahatma Gandhi.

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Modi said the Maha Kumbh effectively addressed doubts and apprehensions held by some regarding the nation's capabilities.

He said today's youth were embracing their traditions, faith, and beliefs with pride, reflecting a strong connection to India's cultural heritage.

The Prime Minister, however, did not make any mention of the deaths due to a stampede at Prayagraj and at the New Delhi Railway Station in his statement in the House.

Shortly after the Prime Minister spoke, Opposition members rose in protest and demanded the inclusion of the stampede in the statement. The Speaker pointed out that the statement by the Prime Minister was made under a parliamen-

tary rule, which allows any Minister to make a statement without any subsequence discussion.

Mr. Modi, in his statement, noted that the Maha Kumbh showcased India's grandeur to the world. "Maha Kumbh is a manifestation of the collective resolve, devotion, and dedication of the people, inspired by their unwavering faith," he added.

Reflecting on India's historic milestones that awakened the nation and provided a new direction, Mr. Modi cited the spiritual resurgence during the Swa-

ter Om Birla to allow the Opposition members to speak.

'Stormed the Well'
Members of the Congress, the Trinamool Congress and other Opposition parties then stormed the Well, raising slogans, while the Samajwadi Party members staged a walkout in protest.

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Drugs valued at ₹11.31 crore seized in five seizures, LS told

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that drugs valued at over ₹11 crore were seized in 19 instances from seaports across the country in the past five years.

Responding to a question by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Minister of State for Home Nitayanand Rai said in a written reply that from 2020 to 2024, eight cases were reported from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and two from West Bengal and one case was reported from Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu.

Drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and tramadol were seized.

Dhankhar to hold talks to decide on Opposition demand for EPIC debate

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Jagdeep Dhankhar

On a day the Opposition decided to halt printing in the Rajya Sabha on duplication of elector photo identity card (EPIC) numbers, Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar told the House that he would hold consultations to decide on the Opposition's demand for a debate on the issue.

Mr. Dhankhar said notices moved under Rule 197, which requires 15 days' notice of the day's business to discuss the issue at hand, by Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh on the EPIC matter and BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya on the non-implementation of a Central scheme in West Bengal.

It is not anyone's intention to disrupt this House. We want the House to run. Members have important issues to raise in zero hour, which requires consideration to allow [a short duration] discussion on the issue of duplication of EPIC numbers, which has been raised by several parties," Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party leader in the Rajya Sabha Derek O'Brien said.

He was seconded by Dravidia Munnetra Kazha-

gam floor leader Tiruchi Siva, who supplemented the demand for a similar discussion on the impending delimitation exercise, which Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and party president M.K. Stalin has said would punish the southern States by diminishing their representation in Parliament.

"I will confer with leaders of the parties and come back to the House at the earliest," Mr. Dhankhar said.

Gokhale's demand
The Opposition managed to get a word in on the EPIC duplication issue when Trinamool MP Saket Gokhale spoke during Zero Hour on the demand for conferring the Bharat Ratna posthumously on T.N. Seshan, former Chief Election Commissioner. He

said Mr. Seshan redefined the way the Election Commission functioned. "Mr. Seshan was a fiercely independent Election Commissioner. His famous quote, 'I eat politicians for breakfast,' shows that he worked without fear or favour, and upheld the independence and dignity of the Election Commission," Mr. Gokhale added.

Mr. Seshan would not have approved of the current method of appointment of Election Commissioners, the MP said. "Today, Election Commissioners are appointed directly by the government...without any presence of the Chief Justice of India or the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha. The EC has become a government-appointed body. T.N. Seshan would not approve of it," Mr. Gokhale said.

EC sets ball rolling on linking voter ID cards with Aadhaar

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Plan in motion: Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and other officials during a high-level meeting in Delhi. PTI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday set the ball rolling on linking Aadhaar with elector photo identity card (EPIC) numbers. The poll body said it would soon begin technical consultations with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

The decision was made after a high-level meeting of the full commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, in an official statement said.

Commenting on the EC statement on its intent to link EPIC numbers with Aadhaar, the Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) of the Congress said it would advise the EC must consult all political parties and other stakeholders and assure

them that "there are sufficient safeguards to not deplete a single eligible voter the right to vote".

The Election Commission, however, said linking of EPIC with Aadhaar would only be done under provisions of Article 326, which says voting rights can only be given to citizens. Aadhaar card only establishes the identity of a person.

It further said the linking would also take into effect as per the provisions of Sections 23(4), 23(5) and 23(6) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and in line with the Supreme Court judgment in WP (civil) No. 177/2023.

This in effect means that linkage would be done only in cases where Aadhaar has been submitted voluntarily by the elector.

Will identify BCs by holding a fresh exercise: Bengal to SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The West Bengal government informed the Supreme Court on Tuesday that the State's Backward Classes Commission is embarking on a fresh exercise to identify Socially and Educationally Backward Communities (SEBC) who warranted inclusion in the State's Other Backward Classes (OBC) List.

The State had appealed the court against a Calcutta High Court judgment striking down its policy to let include several castes, largely by Muslim communities, in the OBC list.

The Calcutta High Court had concluded that religion was the "sole criterion for declaring these communities as OBC". It had found the "selection of 77

classes of Muslims as backward an affront to the constitutional commitment as a whole".

The West Bengal Backward Classes Commission is undertaking a fresh exercise to identify communities who require reservation," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the State, addressed a Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai.

The Bench listed the case after three months in July.

The High Court judgment had in the interim impacted five lakh OBC certificates issued since 2010. The High Court had however clarified that its judgment would not impact individuals who had already secured employment using the OBC certificates issued since 2010.

India takes 24th spot in free speech survey

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



A new global survey by the Future of Free Speech, an independent U.S.-based think tank, has ranked India 24th out of the 33 countries surveyed on the question of support for free speech. Its report, titled "The right to free speech," states that "while abstract support for free speech remains strong, commitment to protecting controversial speech is eroding in many parts of the world."

The survey, conducted in October 2024, also revealed that "most democracies have seen declines in free speech support since 2021, with some of the biggest drops occurring in democratic nations like the United States, Israel, and Japan."

Scandinavia dominated the top rankings, with Norway and Denmark finishing at the apex of the FFS 24th, between South Africa (66.5) and Hungary (61.8). At the same time, some authoritarian-leaning nations — such as Turkey (68.5) and Venezuela (61.8) — scored high, "suggesting a disconnect between government restric-

tion and public attitudes".

As regards its findings concerning India, the survey found that the majority of Indians consider it very important to speak freely, and that the government's censorship, support for criticism of government policies, and support for freedom of expression are the highest rated areas among all the countries surveyed.

Public sentiment
To contrast, 3% of the respondents supported this sentiment in the U.K., while only 3% endorsed this sentiment in Germany. In general, nations that are more supportive of free speech tend to enjoy more freedom of expression in

Sonia flags concerns over MGNREGS, seeks hike in wages

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Sonia Gandhi

Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday accused the BJP government of systematically undermining the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), a flagship poverty alleviation scheme introduced by the United Progressive Alliance government led by the late Manmohan Singh.

Speaking during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Ms. Gandhi said the programme had been a "crucial safety net for millions of rural poor." "It is deeply concerning that the present BJP government has systematically undermined the scheme. The budget allocation remains stagnant at ₹66,000 crore — a 10-year low as a percentage of GDP," she said.

Adjusted for inflation, the allocation effectively declined by ₹4,000 crore, she said. "Moreover, estimates suggest that nearly 20% of the allocated funds will be used to clear pending dues from previous years."

She spoke about the challenges brought upon by technological interventions such as the Aadhaar-

based payment system for wages and the National Mobile Monitoring System for recording the attendance of workers.

This, coupled with persistent delays in wage payments and low wage rates, was hindering the programme, she added. On behalf of the Congress, she demanded five reforms to ensure that the MGNREGS continued to provide "guaranteed employment" and "financial security" to the rural poor.

Ms. Gandhi said that adequate financial provision should be made to sustain and expand the scheme; the minimum wage rate should be increased to ₹400 a day; wages should be paid promptly; she pressed for increasing the number of guaranteed work days from 100 to 150.

Cong. holds talks on ways to strengthen district panels

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader Rahul Gandhi met with general secretaries and State leadership on Tuesday to find ways to strengthen the District Congress Committees (DCCs).

Sources said the top brass of the party discussed a report by Mukul Wastnik on empowering the DCCs. Some key suggestions included consulting DCCs on important political developments and five-year terms for DCC presidents, not allowing DCC chiefs to contest elections for three years, and so on. Several senior leaders including K.C. Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Priyanka Gandhi, and others attended the meeting.

When asked whether their ability to speak freely about political matters has improved or worsened over the past year, "Indians and South Africans believe that the U.K. is the most significant progress, although observers note that the situation in India has become worse, if anything," the report noted.

India takes 24th spot in free speech survey

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A new global survey by the Future of Free Speech, an independent U.S.-based think tank, has ranked India 24th out of the 33 countries surveyed on the question of support for free speech. Its report, titled ‘Who in the world supports free speech?’ states that “while abstract support for free speech remains strong, commitment to protecting controversial speech is eroding in many parts of the world.”

The survey, conducted in October 2024, also revealed that “more countries have seen declines rather than improvements in free speech support since 2021, with some of the biggest drops occurring in democratic nations like the United States, Israel, and Japan”.

Scandinavia dominated



The right to free speech

India, with a score of 62.6, was placed between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8)

- Scandinavia dominated the top rankings, with Norway and Denmark finishing at the apex of the Future of the Free Speech Index
- Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan showed the biggest improvements, though they remained at the lower end of the ranking
- Some authoritarian-leaning nations— such as Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8) — scored high
- The survey found that a majority of Indians consider it very important to speak freely without government censorship, but support for criticism of government policies was below the global average

the top rankings, with Norway and Denmark finishing at the apex of the Future of the Free Speech Index with scores of 87.9 and 87.0.

Disconnect flagged

Indonesia (56.8), Malaysia (55.4), and Pakistan (57.0) showed the biggest improvements, though they

remained at the lower end of the ranking. India, with a score of 62.6, was placed 24th, between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8). At the same time, some authoritarian-leaning nations – such as Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8) – scored high, “suggesting a disconnect between government restric-

tions and public attitudes”.

As regards its findings concerning India, the survey found that while a majority of Indians consider it very important to speak freely without government censorship, support for criticism of government policies was below the global average.

For instance, 37% of Indian respondents supported the statement that “governments should be able to prevent people” from criticising government policies – the highest percentage among all the countries surveyed.

Public sentiment

In contrast, 5% of the respondents supported this statement in the U.K., while only 3% endorsed this sentiment in Denmark.

In general, nations that are more supportive of free speech tend to enjoy more freedom of expression in

practice and vice versa. But India was an exception to this pattern. “The most substantial disconnects from the general pattern are represented by India, Hungary, and Venezuela where the actual protection of free speech is very low compared to the popular support. These are all cases of democratic backsliding in countries that previously demonstrated high levels of respect for political liberties, including freedom of expression,” the report stated.

When asked whether their ability to speak freely about political matters has improved or worsened over the past year, “Indians and South Africans believe that they have undergone the most significant progress, although observers and rankings tend to agree that the situation in India has become worse, if anything,” the report noted.



Key Findings from the Survey

- India ranked **24th out of 33 countries** in a **global free speech survey** conducted by the **Future of Free Speech**, a U.S.-based think tank.
- India's score: **62.6**, placing it between **South Africa (66.9)** and **Lebanon (61.8)**.
- The survey found that while most Indians value **free speech without government censorship**, **support for criticizing government policies** is **below the global average**.

Global Trends

- **Scandinavian countries (Norway & Denmark) ranked highest, with scores of 87.9 and 87.0.**
- **Indonesia (56.8), Malaysia (55.4), and Pakistan (57.0) showed the biggest improvements, though they remained at the lower end of the ranking.**
- **Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8) scored high, suggesting a disconnect between government restrictions and public attitudes.**

India's Standing & Key Observations

- **37% of Indian respondents agreed** that "governments should be able to prevent people" from **criticizing government policies**—the **highest percentage among all surveyed nations**.
- **In contrast:** Only **5% in the U.K.** and **3% in Denmark** supported such restrictions.
- The report flagged a **disconnect between India's popular support for free speech and actual protection of speech**.
- India, **Hungary, and Venezuela** were identified as examples of "**democratic backsliding**" where legal protections for free speech are **weaker than public demand**.

Public Sentiment in India

When asked whether their ability to speak **freely about politics** has improved or worsened:

- **Many Indians and South Africans said the situation has improved.**
- However, global observers **ranked India among countries where free speech has deteriorated.**

Next & context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of Rohingya refugees killed in Bangladesh in 2024

65 Rohingya refugees were killed last year in clashes between rival militant groups competing for influence in Bangladeshi relief camps. Around a million members of the persecuted minority live in Bangladesh, most of whom arrived after fleeing a brutal 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar.

Number of people killed due to Israel's airstrikes in Gaza

413 UN chief Antonio Guterres voiced shock after hundreds were killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza since a fragile ceasefire took effect in January. Israel on Tuesday vowed to continue fighting in the Gaza Strip until the return of all hostages.

Cancer treatments performed under Ayushman Bharat

68 In lakh. Cancer treatments worth over ₹13,000 crore have been performed under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, with 75% of them undertaken in rural areas, Union Health Minister J.P. Noida said. The benefits were given under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Drones seized by the Border Security Force in Punjab in 2024

294 Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said that multiple steps such as putting up anti-drone systems and sharing information received about drones with the BSF, Indian Air Force and the local police station, had been taken to counter drone-based smuggling.

Annual aid received by Colombia from USAID for various programmes

440 In \$ million, for more than 80 programs, making it the largest recipient of the agency's funds in the western hemisphere. The suspension of USAID is shuttering anti-gang programs in Colombia's impoverished places.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What is happening in Balochistan?

Pakistan's domestic politics will broadly define the trajectory of unrest in Balochistan. However, considering the lack of legitimacy and confidence in Pakistan's military and government, serious negotiations between the insurgents and the military-civilian leadership seem to be out of the picture

WORLD INSIGHT

Sanjay Pulipaka

In March 11, militants of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) hijacked a train with approximately 400 passengers in the mountainous region between Quetta and Sibi in Pakistan. After releasing the women and children, the BLA militants demanded the release of their compatriots from prison in exchange for the remaining passengers. The government of Pakistan refused to negotiate and launched a military operation to free the passengers, which lasted for well over 24 hours. Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) official stated that there were 21 civilian fatalities and that four Frontier Corps personnel lost their lives in the operation. However, various media outlets have stated that the Pakistani forces may have incurred further significant losses. Subsequently, Pakistan's security forces came under heavy attack in different parts of Balochistan.

A united insurgency
Before the train hijacking, there were growing concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Balochistan. During a discussion in Pakistan's National Assembly, some members expressed anxiety that parts of Balochistan may secede from Pakistan. However, intelligence agencies failed to detect a large operation in the making.

The train hijack has demonstrated that insurgents have acquired operational capabilities to launch massive attacks on Pakistan's security forces and that they can withstand the firepower of special forces for well over 24 hours. Notably, during the stand-off, the militants also deployed effective social media strategies to convey their narrative to the wider world, which is indicative of the insurgents' increasing tactical sophistication. The episode also shows that there seems to be improved coordination between various Baloch insurgent groups.

As society in Balochistan is structured along tribal loyalties, numerous organisations and armed groups have emerged to articulate the grievances of the Baloch people. While tribal loyalties continue to endure, there seems to be a gradual shift in the composition of armed groups, with middle-class and educated youngsters joining them. The BLA is the most formidable group and has been declared a terrorist organisation by Pakistan and the U.S. While the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) is reportedly more popular among the younger population in southern regions of the province, the Baloch Republican Guards (BRG) is active in areas such as Bolan, Quetta, Sibi, and Nasirabad. A few years ago, these armed groups along with the Sindhuudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) decided to collaborate under the banner of Baloch Raji Anjoi Sangar (BRAS). The objective of the BRAS is to launch coordinated attacks on Pakistan's military infrastructure and its intelligence apparatus with greater ferocity.

Concerns of the Baloch people
The current insurgency in Balochistan is not the first of its kind. In fact, the province has witnessed multiple insurgencies, such as the ones in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and mid-2000s. It is important to note that, alongside armed insurgency, there exists a people's movement advocating for improved



Lingering tensions: Pakistan army soldiers stand at the tunnel where the train was attacked by militants, in Bolan, Balochistan, Pakistan on March 15. REUTERS

access to basic necessities such as drinking water, tackling the rising costs of essential commodities like petrol and medicine, regulating the presence of Chinese fishing trawlers, and ensuring unhindered access to the sea for fishermen. Last year, Balochistan witnessed massive protests led by women who demanded the cessation of custodial killings and fake encounters. The defence forces have often deployed coercive measures such as enforced disappearances (illegal detentions/abductions).

Over the years, the Pakistani government has attempted to portray the discontent in Balochistan as a consequence of power contestations involving a few tribal chieftains in the province. However, there is no denying that Balochistan was subjected to political and socio-economic neglect. Many in Balochistan complain that their province was forcefully incorporated into Pakistan in 1948. Furthermore, the people of Balochistan rarely experienced political empowerment because of decades of military rule and centralised governance. The province has numerous natural resources, such as coal, copper, gold, and natural gas. However, the exploitation of these resources has not improved local people's livelihoods.

To compound such miseries of the local population, massive infrastructure projects (such as the Gwadar Port) as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) were operationalised without adequate stakeholder consultation. The construction of these projects resulted in people migrating to Balochistan from different parts of the country, prompting concerns about demographic shifts that would adversely impact the interests of the local Baloch population.

Insurgent groups have often articulated their protest against the CPEC and have called upon China to withdraw from the province. Sadly, there were instances — such as the suicide bombing at Karachi University and the bombing of a bus near the Dasu hydropower project — in which

Chinese civilians were killed. There is, therefore, growing concern in Beijing about the Pakistan army's ability to provide security to Chinese personnel working on various CPEC projects. There are reports that China may consider a proactive approach, such as deploying private security companies, to protect its civilians and interests. While China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was criticised for pushing countries into debt traps, in Pakistan, which is Beijing's most valued strategic partner, the CPEC, a critical component of the BRI, has come under sustained physical attacks.

Regional complexities
The geopolitical context, thus far, has not been conducive to the success of the Baloch insurgent movement. While the province accounts for 44% of the country's landmass, it has approximately 8% of the country's population. It may be easy for security forces to contain the separatist movement, as they constitute a very small percentage of the population.

Additionally, the Balochistan independence movement has not received significant international support. The province is not geographically contiguous to India, and therefore, India is not in a position to provide material support to Baloch armed groups. Baloch nationalist imagination also incorporates the Sistan province of Iran, which consequently makes Iran reluctant to support the Baloch separatist movement. Further, with the deterioration of the security environment in Pakistan, Tehran is worried that anti-Iranian groups are finding a haven in the neighbouring Balochistan province. Last year, Iran conducted missile and drone strikes targeting 'Iranian terrorists' in Balochistan.

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan brought about significant geopolitical shifts in the region. There is a growing rift between the Taliban and the Pakistan army, with occasional skirmishes at the borders. Taliban representatives have often made statements which suggest that

they would not recognise the Durand line that delineates the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The Taliban has also, despite many demands from the Pakistan Army, refused to contain the presence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). There has been a significant uptick in the activities of TTP in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. Many in Pakistan's security establishment perceive growing coordination between the TTP and the BLA. Pakistan's official statements that "terrorists were in direct communications with Afghanistan-based planners" suggest that all is not well between Pakistan and various armed groups in Afghanistan. The TTP, with its Pashtun cadres and the BLA, with its Baloch cadres, constitute a significant threat on Pakistan's western border. On the other hand, Pakistan has invested considerable security resources on its eastern borders with India. The India-Pakistan bilateral relationship continues to remain cold, and Islamabad's Kashmir policy has yet to factor-in different ground realities. It is unclear how the new Trump administration would respond to the unrest in Pakistan.

Lack of popular support
Pakistan's domestic politics will broadly define the trajectory of unrest in Balochistan. Pakistan's military lost considerable respect because of its crude handling of a popular leader like Imran Khan. The current civilian leadership's hold on power is attributed to its closeness to the military rather than to its popularity among the masses. Given the legitimacy crisis of the military-civilian leadership, it is unlikely they would indulge in serious negotiations. It would be prudent of Pakistan's military-civilian leadership to de-centrally power and share revenues from resource extraction with the people of Balochistan. Otherwise, the turmoil in Balochistan will continue to endure.

Sanjay Pulipaka is the Chairperson of the Politeia Research Foundation. The views expressed here are personal.

THE GIST


The current insurgency in Balochistan is not the first of its kind. In fact, the province has witnessed multiple insurgencies, such as the ones in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and mid-2000s.

Over the years, the Pakistani government has attempted to portray the discontent in Balochistan as a consequence of power contestations involving a few tribal chieftains in the province. However, there is no denying that Balochistan was subjected to political and socio-economic neglect.

The Balochistan independence movement has not received significant international support. The province is not geographically contiguous to India, and therefore, India is not in a position to provide material support to Baloch armed groups.

Cancer treatments performed under Ayushman Bharat

68 In lakh. Cancer treatments worth over ₹13,000 crore have been performed under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, with 75% of them undertaken in rural areas, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda said. The benefits were given under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. PTI

Aspect	Details
Scheme Name	Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)
Launched By	Government of India
Launch Date	23 September 2018
Implemented By	National Health Authority (NHA)
Objective	To provide free healthcare coverage to economically vulnerable sections of society
Target Beneficiaries	Poor and vulnerable families (based on Socio-Economic Caste Census - SECC 2011)
Coverage Amount	Up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization
Beneficiary Eligibility	Rural and urban poor based on predefined criteria (no enrollment required)
Network Hospitals	More than 25,000 empaneled government and private hospitals across India
Treatment Coverage	Covers hospitalization, pre and post-hospitalization expenses, medicines, diagnostics, and follow-ups
Premium Cost	Fully funded by the Government (no premium paid by beneficiaries)
Mode of Identification	Beneficiaries identified through Ayushman Bharat card and Aadhaar-based verification
Technology Use	E-cards, paperless and cashless transactions through the PM-JAY IT system
Portal for Details	https://pmjay.gov.in
Helpline Number	14555 (Toll-Free) 

Neuroscience of Addiction

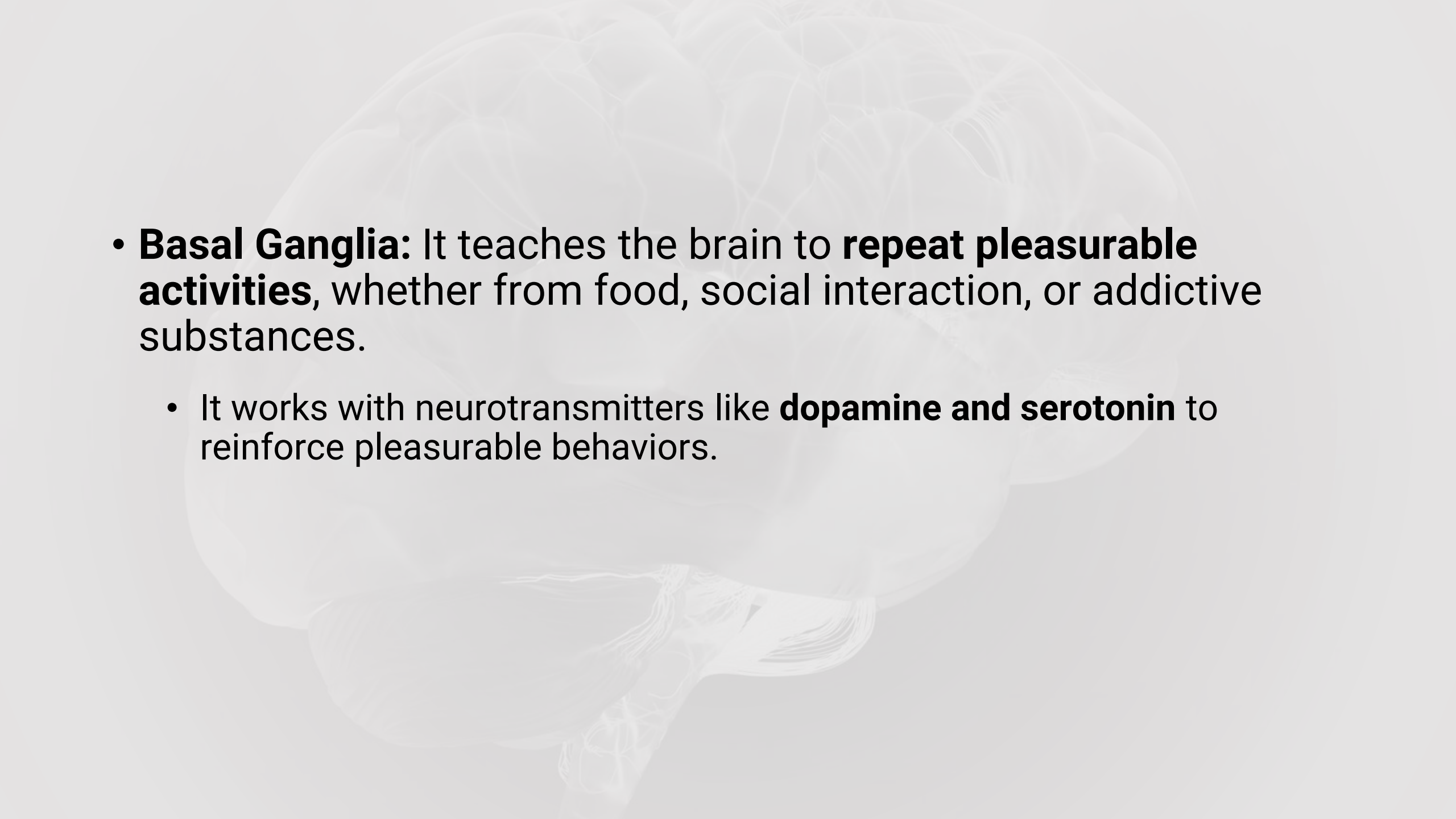


During the **Brain Awareness Week (March 10-16)**, a study revealed that addiction involves a **complex neural circuit** in the brain affecting **craving, emotional regulation, and decision-making**.

It underscores addiction as a **chronic brain condition** rather than a **moral failing**, paving the way for more effective treatment strategies.

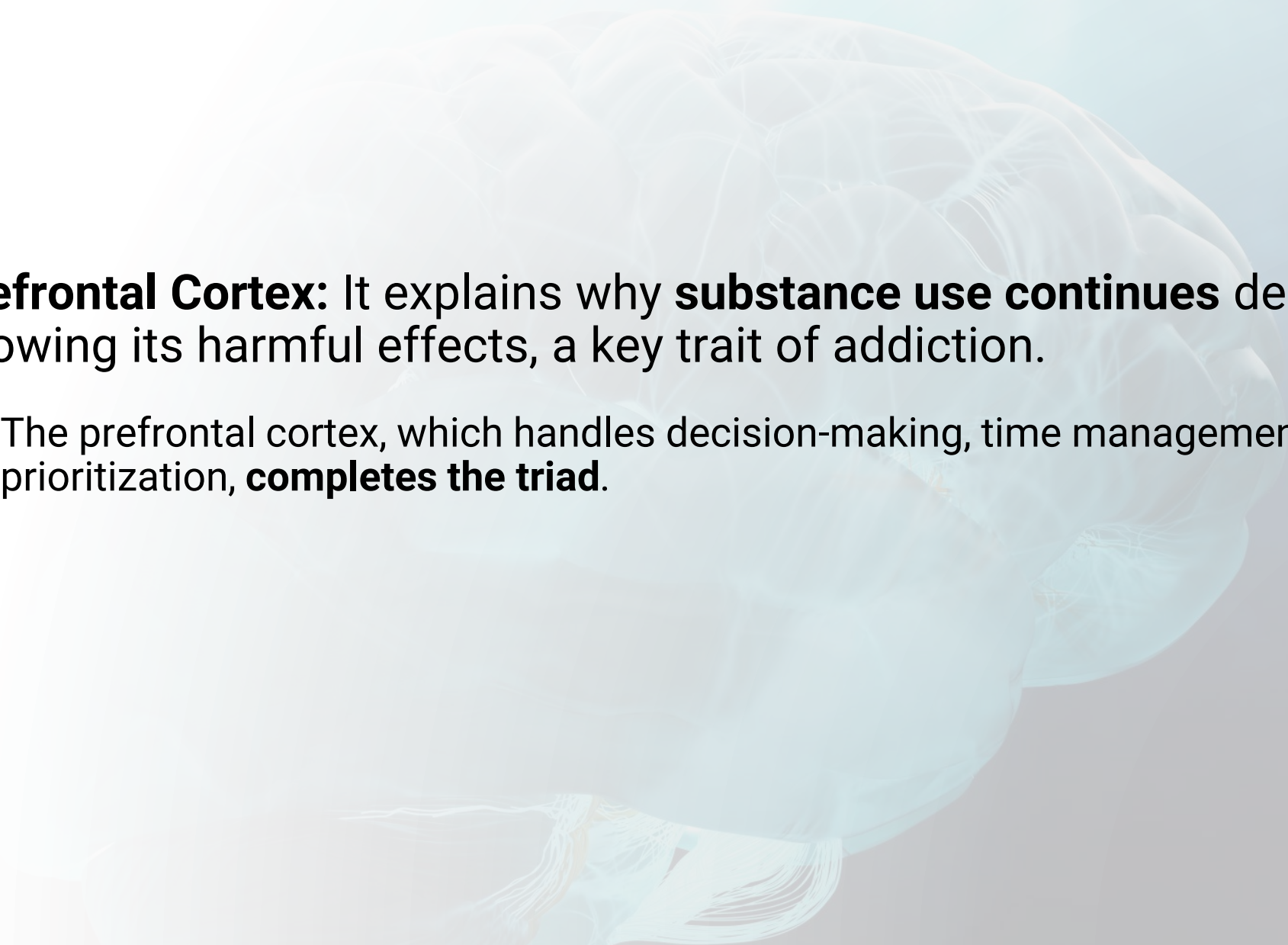
How Does Neuroscience Explain Addiction?

Role of Brain in Addiction: The study highlights 3 key brain regions involved in addiction i.e., basal ganglia, extended amygdala, and prefrontal cortex.

- 
- **Basal Ganglia:** It teaches the brain to **repeat pleasurable activities**, whether from food, social interaction, or addictive substances.
 - It works with neurotransmitters like **dopamine and serotonin** to reinforce pleasurable behaviors.

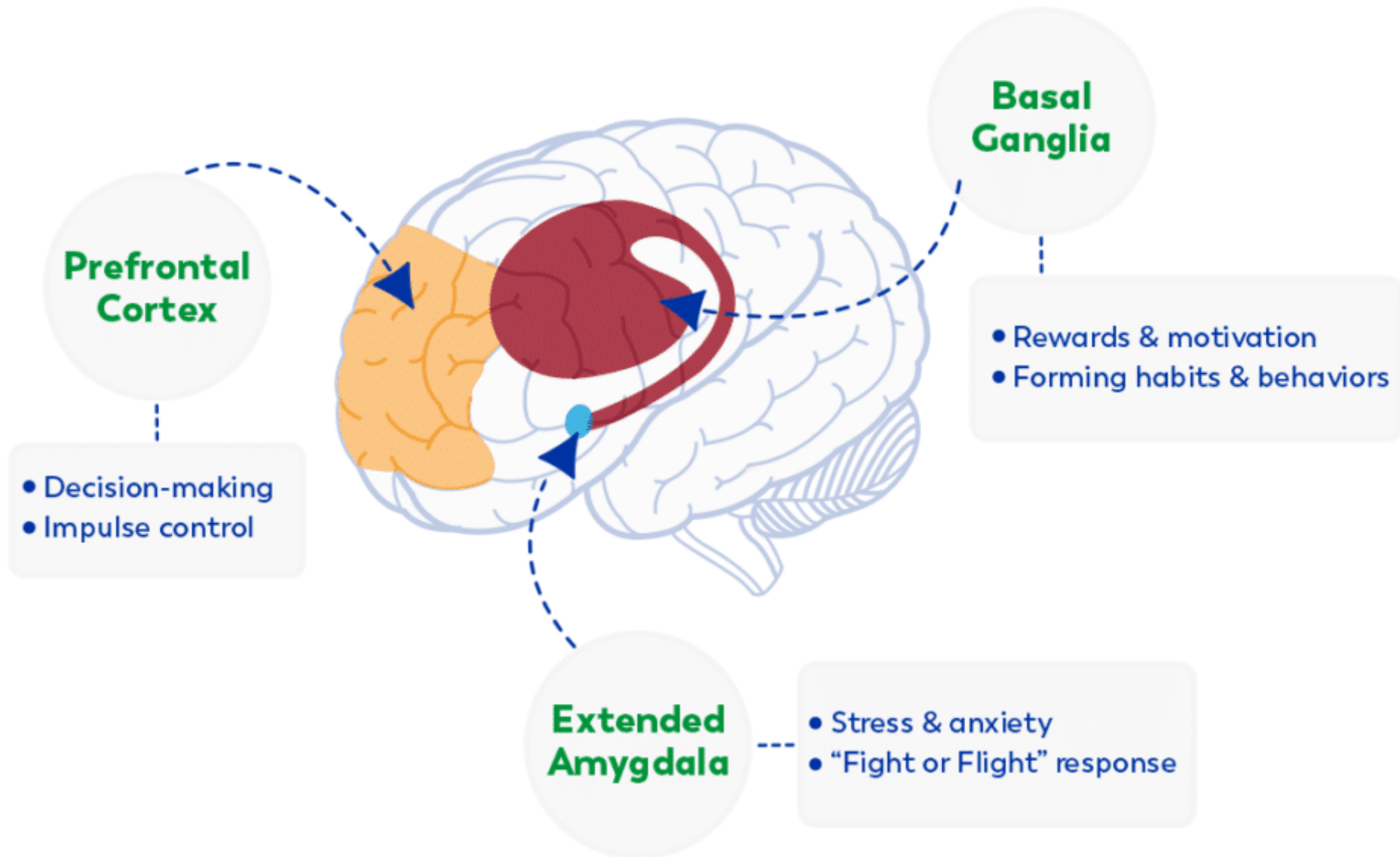
Extended Amygdala:

It triggers anxiety, irritability, and unease when substance use stops, pushing continued use despite harm.

- 
- **Prefrontal Cortex:** It explains why **substance use continues** despite knowing its harmful effects, a key trait of addiction.
 - The prefrontal cortex, which handles decision-making, time management, and prioritization, **completes the triad.**

-

Brain Regions Affected by Addiction



Vulnerability to Adolescents:

Adolescence represents a critical “at-risk period” for substance use because the **brain is still developing**.

- The prefrontal cortex, which controls **impulses and decision-making, matures last**. This makes teens **more vulnerable to addiction**.

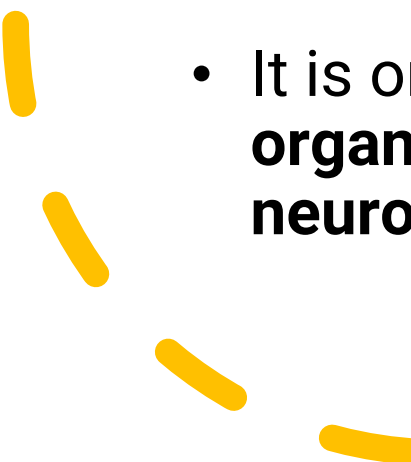
- **Other Reasons of Addiction:**

- **Genetic Predisposition:** Some individuals are **biologically more prone** to addiction.
- **Psychological Factors: Trauma, stress, and mental health disorders** increase vulnerability.
- **Environmental Influences:** Family history, **peer pressure**, and socioeconomic conditions play a significant role.
- **Age of First Use: Earlier exposure** increases the risk of long-term dependency.

-



What is Brain Awareness Week (BAW)?

- **About:** It is celebrated annually in the **third week of March** highlighting the role of brain science in understanding **biology, preventing diseases, and improving healthcare.**
 - It is organised annually by **Dana Foundation**, a **private philanthropic organization** in New York that is dedicated to **advancing neurosciences.**
- 

Journey of Brain Awareness Week

Dana Alliance
initiates Brain
Awareness Week

1995

First Brain
Awareness Week
celebrated

1996

Launch of the
BRAIN Initiative
by US President
Barak Obama

2013

Expansion to 45
countries and 32
U.S. states

2021





First-ever Chhatrapati
Shivaji Maharaj temple in
Bhiwandi

- 
- Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the first grand temple dedicated to **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** in Bhiwandi, Thane.

About temple

- The temple is designed by **architect Vijaykumar Patil** and it spans 2,500 square feet with a 5,000 square foot fort-like boundary.

-



It houses a 6.5-foot statue of Shivaji Maharaj sculpted by Arun Yogiraj who also crafted the Ram temple idol in Ayodhya.

The temple's design incorporates fort elements, including a 42-foot entrance, bastions, and surveillance pathways.

Inside the boundary, 36 sections showcase sculptures of key moments from Shivaji Maharaj's life.





Reinsurance

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has approved the first private reinsurance company, **Valueattics Reinsurance**.

What is Reinsurance?

Definition: Reinsurance is a risk management mechanism where an insurance company transfers a portion of its risk to another insurance company, called a reinsurer.

- 
- This helps insurers mitigate financial losses arising from large claims, such as natural disasters or major accidents.
 - **Regulated by:** IRDAI, under the Insurance Act, 1938 and IRDAI (Re-Insurance) Regulations, 2018.
 - **Significance:** Protects insurers from insolvency due to large payouts, risk diversification & promotes market growth.
- 



Autopen

- Former US President Donald Trump has declared that all pardons signed by President Joe Biden are invalid, alleging they were executed using an autopen.





What is an Autopen?

- An autopen is a mechanical device that replicates a person's signature automatically, without manual effort.

History:

1. Early Origins:

1. The first signature duplication machine, known as the polygraph, was invented by **John Isaac Hawkins in 1803**, using a pantograph mechanism to replicate handwriting.



1. Robot Pen (1930s):

1. Developed in the 1930s, the Robot Pen became the first commercial autopen, mass-producing signature templates stored on record-like devices.

2. Commercial Success:

1. The first commercially successful autopen was created by **Robert M. De Shazo Jr. in 1942.**

Word of the day

Shenanigan:

the use of tricks to deceive someone (usually to extract money from them); reckless or malicious behaviour that causes discomfort or annoyance in others

Synonyms: devilry, mischief, roguishness, guile, trickery, wile

Usage: *He needs to stop these shenanigans and be more mature.*

Pronunciation: [newsth.live/shenaniganpro](https://www.newsth.live/shenaniganpro)

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ʃə'næɪ.nɪ.gən/



10 MCQ from the session

What was the key reason the Supreme Court set aside the NGT's order on Auroville's township construction?

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने औरोविले के टाउनशिप निर्माण पर एनजीटी के आदेश को क्यों खारिज कर दिया?

- **A. The project had already received environmental clearance / परियोजना को पहले ही पर्यावरण मंजूरी मिल चुकी थी**
- B. The NGT overstepped its jurisdiction / एनजीटी ने अपने अधिकार क्षेत्र से बाहर जाकर आदेश दिया**
- C. The construction was halted by the local government, not NGT / निर्माण को स्थानीय सरकार ने रोका था, एनजीटी ने नहीं**
- D. The case was dismissed due to lack of evidence / मामले को सबूतों की कमी के कारण खारिज कर दिया गया**

What was the main argument of the Auroville Foundation regarding the Darkali forest?

अरोविले फाउंडेशन का डारकाली जंगल के बारे में मुख्य तर्क क्या था?

- **A. It is a protected national forest under Indian law / यह भारतीय कानून के तहत संरक्षित राष्ट्रीय वन है**
- B. It is a man-made plantation, not a natural forest / यह एक मानव-निर्मित वृक्षारोपण है, प्राकृतिक वन नहीं**
- C. It is an ancient ecological site that cannot be disturbed / यह एक प्राचीन पारिस्थितिक स्थल है जिसे नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाया जा सकता**
- D. It falls under UNESCO's heritage conservation list / यह यूनेस्को की विरासत संरक्षण सूची में शामिल है**

What was India's rank in the "Future of Free Speech" survey conducted by a U.S.-based think tank?

एक अमेरिकी थिंक टैंक द्वारा किए गए "फ्यूचर ऑफ फ्री स्पीच" सर्वेक्षण में भारत की रैंक क्या थी?

- **A. 10th**
- B. 18th**
- C. 24th**
- D. 30th**

Which countries ranked the highest in the global free speech survey?

वैश्विक मुक्त भाषण सर्वेक्षण में कौन से देश सर्वोच्च स्थान पर रहे?

- **A. United States and Canada / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका और कनाडा**
- B. Norway and Denmark / नॉर्वे और डेनमार्क**
- C. Germany and Sweden / जर्मनी और स्वीडन**
- D. Japan and South Korea / जापान और दक्षिण कोरिया**

Which part of the brain is primarily responsible for addiction?

मस्तिष्क का कौन सा भाग मुख्य रूप से नशे के लिए जिम्मेदार है?

- **A. Cerebellum / सेरिबेलम**
- B. Prefrontal Cortex / प्रीफ्रंटल कॉर्टेक्स**
- C. Basal Ganglia / बेसल गैंग्लिया**
- D. Hippocampus / हिप्पोकैम्पस**

What is Brain Awareness Week (BAW) mainly focused on?

ब्रेन अवेयरनेस वीक (BAW) मुख्य रूप से किस पर केंद्रित है?

- **A. Promoting brain-computer interfaces / ब्रेन-कंप्यूटर इंटरफेस को बढ़ावा देना**
- B. Understanding neuroscience and brain health / न्यूरोसाइंस और मस्तिष्क स्वास्थ्य को समझना**
- C. Developing AI-powered neural networks / एआई-आधारित न्यूरल नेटवर्क विकसित करना**
- D. Exploring space and its effects on the brain / अंतरिक्ष और उसके मस्तिष्क पर प्रभाव का अध्ययन करना**

Who organizes Brain Awareness Week annually?

ब्रेन अवेयरनेस वीक का वार्षिक आयोजन कौन करता है?

- **A. World Health Organization (WHO) / विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO)**
- B. Dana Foundation / डाना फाउंडेशन**
- C. American Psychological Association (APA) / अमेरिकन साइकोलॉजिकल एसोसिएशन (APA)**
- D. National Institutes of Health (NIH) / नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ हेल्थ (NIH)**

Which city in Maharashtra saw the inauguration of the first-ever Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj temple?

महाराष्ट्र के किस शहर में पहला छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज मंदिर उद्घाटित हुआ?

- A. Pune / पुणे
- B. Mumbai / मुंबई
- C. Bhiwandi / भिवंडी
- D. Aurangabad / औरंगाबाद

What is the primary purpose of reinsurance?

पुनर्बीमा (Reinsurance) का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?

- **A. To provide low-cost insurance to the public / जनता को कम लागत वाली बीमा सेवा प्रदान करना**
- B. To allow insurers to manage risks from large claims / बीमा कंपनियों को बड़े दावों से जुड़े जोखिमों को प्रबंधित करने की अनुमति देना**
- C. To increase profits of insurance companies / बीमा कंपनियों के मुनाफे को बढ़ाना**
- D. To eliminate the need for government-backed insurance / सरकारी समर्थन वाली बीमा की आवश्यकता समाप्त करना**

What is an Autopen?

ऑटोपेन क्या है?

- **A. A robotic system that scans and verifies signatures / एक रोबोटिक प्रणाली जो हस्ताक्षरों को स्कैन और सत्यापित करती है**
- B. A mechanical device that replicates a person's signature automatically / एक यांत्रिक उपकरण जो स्वचालित रूप से किसी व्यक्ति के हस्ताक्षर की नकल करता है**
- C. A biometric scanner used for digital signatures / एक बायोमेट्रिक स्कैनर जो डिजिटल हस्ताक्षरों के लिए उपयोग किया जाता है**
- D. A type of 3D printing pen used for artistic designs / कलात्मक डिजाइनों के लिए उपयोग किया जाने वाला 3डी प्रिंटिंग पेन**

Word of the day

Chicane:

a bridge hand that is void of trumps; a movable barrier used in motor racing; sometimes placed before a dangerous corner to reduce speed as cars pass in single file; the use of tricks to deceive someone (usually to extract money from them); defeat someone through trickery or deceit; raise trivial objections

Synonyms: guile, shenanigan, trickery, wile, cheat

Usage: *That man's car flew out of control and spun across the chicane.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/chicanepro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ʃi'keɪn/, /tʃi'keɪn/

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