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WE COULD HAVE SCORED MORE: FARUKH CHOUDHARY 12 SPORTS



BABA SIDDIQUE ASSASSINATION AFTERMATH

Now political bullets fired

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The assassination of Baba Siddique has shaken Maharashtra's political landscape when the State is preparing to go for Assembly elections. With the Opposition uniting against the ruling party and demanding accountability, the implications of this murder in the financial Capital of the country is certainly to resonate in the election campaign which has already begun. Political analysts suggest that the incident may significantly influence voter sentiment, as safety and security are paramount concerns for citizens of Mumbai. The Uddhav Thackeray-Sharad Pawar and Congress combine Opposition is likely to capitalise on the incident terming it as complete breakdown of the law and order of the Eknath Shinde-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime in the State. Opposition parties, including the Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction) which is part of the ruling coalition, and Congress which in Opposition have condemned the assassination since Congress is Siddique's parent party where he began his political career, while Ajit Pawar's faction was his current party. Deputy Chief Minister



Security personnel outside the residence of Baba Siddique where his body is kept, in Mumbai, Sunday

Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the position of Home Minister has come in for severe criticism and his resignation has been sought citing a failure to ensure public safety. Siddique had moved from Congress to NCP's Ajit faction recently, and he enjoyed a good rapport in all the political parties of Maharashtra which includes two breakaway factions of the Shiv Sena and NCP. The Mumbai police arrested two persons in connection with the brutal murder of the three-time MLA Baba Siddique on Saturday, even as Maharashtra deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

hit out at NCP chief Sharad Pawar for demanding his resignation over Siddique's murder. Identifying the two arrested persons as Gurmail Baljit Singh, a native of Haryana and Dharamraj Kashyap from Uttar Pradesh, the police said that the third suspect Shiv Kumar, was on the run "We are on the lookout for the third accused," a senior police officer said. Meanwhile, mothers of both accused have said that they were not aware of what their sons were up to and had not been in contact with them. Gurmail Singh's family said that it disowned him 11 years ago and it called for

exemplary punishment for his actions. Meanwhile, under flak from the Opposition parties over Siddique's murder, Fadnavis - who holds the State Home portfolio - slammed Sharad Pawar for demanding his resignation. "I think he (Sharad Pawar) only wants power. Even after such a serious incident, there is a lust for power in his eyes while we are only concerned about Maharashtra. We want to look at Maharashtra. Progress is to be achieved and Maharashtra is to be kept safe. They want to look at the power only and talk."

Navratri ends, nightmares begin

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NOIDA

On the eve of Vijaydashami, when the National Capital worshipped the Goddess Durga, and celebrated the divine femininity vanquishing evil, this reporter who had gone to cover the festivities, faced hooliganism and harassment by drunks in Uttar Pradesh's Noida Sector 75. The incident that took place near a dense well guarded residential area on Saturday night, was a sign that hooligans who consider festivals an excuse to drink and drive are back on the roads after a nine-day Navratri break. The streets were bustling with people who were out enjoying Ramlilas and Ravan Dahan the effigies of Ravan are set ablaze to symbolise the triumph of truth. Suddenly, a white Hyundai I-20 sports car (UP15CD6004) came speeding down the road. The driver was racing his car and swerving dangerously down the streets, at around 10 pm. They were driving as if they were heavily drunk. At first, they nearly drove inside a shop on the side of the street risking the lives of many standing there. My friend Utkarsh, and I were there too as we had stopped to buy snacks from a street vendor after returning from a Dusshera mela I had gone to cover. When I was on the left side of the road, trying to cross it along with my friend, the car came speeding towards me. He

Numbers that shame

Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) has alarmingly high rates of violence and harassment against women, and most cases remain unreported. From September 2022 to August 2023, Faridabad registered 2,666 complaints, Gurgaon had a 12 per cent increase in reported cases. Delhi recorded the highest crime rate against women in the country at 144.4 per 100,000, Noida had a 21 per cent decrease in such crimes.

pulled me to the side just in time. Else I would have been mowed down or getting hit by the racing car. For a second, the car stopped and swayed again in an abrupt manner. While my friend shouted at the car driver, and I stood shaking, worried with what was a near death experience, two bystanders, who were also drinking on the side of the road, started abusing him. They yelled slurs and told him to not shout at the drivers. Worried over what could turn into an ugly fight and potential risk to life, I took my friend to the other side by which time the car driver must have heard people asking for police to arrive at the location and take action against them. They raced their car back into a nearby housing society. Upon calling the police on 112,

the officers responded by asking if we will file a report on the same in an unsympathetic manner. A police van with two officers arrived at the location after about 20 minutes of the incident. However, when the police came, they again asked us to file a police complaint at a station while we requested them to take action immediately so that our safety was ensured. "We saw them racing in the society right here. At least try to find out if the guards know if the car belongs to any of the flat," we told the police. The police officers asked some questions in a half-hearted manner to the guard, and we were again told to go to the nearby sector-113 police station in Noida. We were in shock, but decided to go to the police station and filed a complaint. The police assured us that action will be taken, however, none has been taken by Sunday. However, as a single working woman in this city whose job does not have fixed hours, one cannot imagine the safety concerns even filing a complaint brings about. "What if they find me alone and attack me? They must have seen my face while I remain unknown of their identity" looms over the head of a woman in a country when gang rapes and murder are an everyday affair with accused living unhinged," were some of the thoughts rushing in my head.

Waqf Joint Committee has received 1.2 crore email responses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The head priest of a Nashik temple, three advocates and representatives of a Muslim organisation are among those who will share their views on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, before a Parliamentary panel on Monday. The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill meeting is scheduled on Monday and Tuesday to hear representatives of Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind, Delhi, and Goa-based Sanatan Sanstha. The panel headed by Bharatiya Janata Party's Jagdambika Pal will also hear Mahant Sudhirdas Maharaj, the head priest of Nashik's Shri Kalaram temple. Advocates Ashwini Upadhyay, Vishu Shankar Jain and Amita Sachdeva will also share their views on the bill before the panel. Sachdeva represents the Hindu Janagruhi Samiti, Goa. Former chairperson of the Karnataka State Minorities Commission, Anwar Manipadi, is also listed to share his opinions on the Draft Bill. The Joint Committee of the two Houses has received a staggering 1.2 crore email responses amid campaigns launched by rival groups to ratchet up support for their respective viewpoints regarding the draft law.

Ayodhya readies for Diwali



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

As Ayodhya gears up for Diwali, also known as Deepotsav, the city is undergoing a substantial beautification process. A key part of this effort is the installation of solar-powered smart lights at prominent locations, managed by the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) with a budget of Rs 300 crore. Upon completion, these solar lights will illuminate the Ayodhya Bypass and the road leading to the Maharshi Valmiki International Airport. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has long envisioned turning Ayodhya into a "solar city". Various solar energy projects, including rooftop solar installations, are already in progress, and many parks and roads in Ayodhya are now lit by solar lights. UPNEDA is expediting the installation of these smart

solar lights, with 60 planned for the area around the airport to attract tourists and pilgrims. In addition, UPNEDA is installing 58 smart solar lights along both sides of the Ayodhya Bypass and in other strategic spots. Sixteen lights are being placed near the Divisional Commissioner's residence, ten in a park near Dharmapath, and six at Mukti Dham. UPNEDA Project Officer Praveen Kumar Pandey confirmed that the project is moving swiftly, aiming for completion by Diwali to ensure that key sites are brightly illuminated for the festivities. Simultaneously, the construction of the 161-foot-high spire atop the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is progressing rapidly. The first layer of the spire has been completed, and the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has shared images of the progress on social media. The temple structure's height from its foundation up to the third floor is 76 feet. The spire will rise above this structure and add considerable grandeur to the temple. The spire will reach 85 feet in height and consist of 29 layers, each around three feet high. Approximately 300 skilled artisans are working on the project, completing each layer in about a week. After the spire is finished, a 44-foot Dharma Dhvaj (religious flagpole) will be installed atop it, with a six-foot religious flag. This will bring the total height of the temple, including the spire, to roughly 211 feet. The spire's construction is expected to be completed by February 2025.

FAREWELL MAA DURGA



Women apply vermilion on each other as they participate in 'Sindoor Khela' at a 'puja pandal', to mark the end of the Durga Puja festival celebrations

Ola must put consumer first: CCPA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has directed ride-hailing platform Ola to implement consumer-friendly changes, including offering refund options and providing receipts for auto rides, the regulator said on Sunday. The CCPA, led by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare, observed that Ola's no-questions-asked refund policy only provided coupon codes for future rides, without giving consumers a choice for bank account refunds. "This (practice) violates consumer rights," the CCPA said in a statement. "The no-questions-asked refund policy cannot mean that the company incentivises people to simply use this facility for taking another ride." The regulator also mandated Ola to issue bills or invoices for all auto rides booked through its platform, citing the absence of such documentation as an "unfair trade practice" under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Following the CCPA's intervention, Ola has implemented several changes, including displaying contact details of grievance and nodal officers on its website, clearly mentioning cancellation policies and fees at the time of booking, adding more options for ride cancellation reasons, and publicizing fare component breakdowns. The other changes implemented were showing address of both pickup and drop locations to drivers and revised payment cycles for drivers for swift payment. The CCPA reported 2,061 complaints against Ola from January to October 2024, with top issues including overcharging, refund delays and driver-related problems. "Through its regulatory intervention, the CCPA has been steadfast in ensuring that Ola adheres to the legal framework established to secure the rights of consumers," the regulator stated. The move comes as the CCPA increases scrutiny of digital platforms to protect consumer interests in the rapidly growing e-commerce and ride-hailing sectors.

When aged buses collapse, traffic jams in mourning

Dozens of large public vehicles stall on the roads regularly, causing jams, diversions

BY RAJESH KUMAR

It is now common to come across social media posts by the Delhi Traffic Police urging people to steer clear of certain roads because of jams created by the breakdown of a bus in the National Capital. However, these reported incidents are a mere fraction of the actual number of daily breakdown of buses. Breakdown of buses and Medium Goods Vehicles (MGVs) has become a major cause of traffic snarls during peak hours in Delhi. Sources in the transport department said that dozens of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and clusters scheme buses stall on the roads every day. The consequences of a bus breakdown are complex. It not only causes inconveniences to daily commuters who are stranded on the road but it also results in traffic congestion with the slow down and idling vehicles.

Traffic was affected on Najafgarh-Bahadurgarh Road due to the breakdown of a Bus near Najafgarh Depot on Sunday. As per Delhi traffic police social media post, traffic was affected on Bahadurgarh Najafgarh Road due to accident and fire in Hyva Truck near Anaj Mandi, Najafgarh. On Saturday, traffic police posted two advisories on the breakdown of buses. The first breakdown took place on Najafgarh Road in the carriageway from Dholi Piao towards Dwarka Mor due to breakdown of a bus at Uttam Nagar Chowk, which led to slow down of movement. In the second incident, traffic was affected on Rohtak Road in the carriageway from Tikri border towards Peeragarhi due to breakdown of a Bus near metro pillar No 530. According to traffic police social media posts on Friday, five incidents of breakdown of vehicles reported in the peak hours. Traffic was affected on Mathura Road in the carriageway

from Ashram towards Badarpur due to breakdown of a Cluster bus near Sarita Vihar flyover. This is one of the busiest roads in Delhi that connects Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. In the second instance, traffic is affected on MGM (Ring Road) in the carriageway from AIIMS towards Moti Bagh due to breakdown of a truck at Raj Nagar Flyover. The third stretch was affected on MGM (Ring Road) near IG Stadium in the carriageway from Raighat towards Sarai Kale Khan due to breakdown of an MGW at IP Flyover. In the fourth incident, traffic was affected on Mathura Road in the carriageway from Sarita Vihar towards Badarpur due to breakdown of a truck near Aali Village bus stand. In the fifth incident, traffic was affected on Ring Road in the carriageway from Ashram Chowk towards Moolchand Underpass due to breakdown of an MGW at Moolchand Underpass. This



stretch of Ring Road is considered one of the busiest in Delhi. Similarly, four incidents of breakdown of vehicles was reported on traffic police social media posts on Thursday. The traffic was affected on Ring Road

in the carriageway from Raja Garden towards Delhi Cantt Metro Station due to breakdown of an MGW on Naraina Flyover. The traffic was affected on Mathura Road in the carriageway from Okhla towards CRRI due to

PM's surprise visit

A surprise visit to Bharat Mandapam by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday led to traffic snarls in the heart of the national Capital. Commuters trying to go from Central to South Delhi were inconvenienced, as the arterial roads remained choked for the VIP movement. Security protocols were in place around Bharat Mandapam for hours in the afternoon and evening, and commuters had to wait for long hours in their vehicles, for the all clear.

Detailed story on page 5

descending Akshardham flyover. This is one of the busiest roads in Delhi that connects Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. There were among 50 breakdowns that disrupted traffic since last Friday, going by the Traffic Police's social media posts. There were dozens of incidents of breakdown of buses which were not reported by the transport department and traffic police. According to a traffic police official, it typically took around one hour to rectify the situation arising from a bus breakdown. In some instances, the resolution time exceeds two-three hours. Removing the broken down bus is a tedious task since they have hydraulic brake setups that can only be opened by expert mechanics. Since buses ply on long routes, the depots are generally at some distance from the breakdown spot and the arrival of the required mechanical personnel also takes time.



Table with columns for prize amounts and winning numbers. Includes '1st Prize Amount (10)Rs.10,000/-', '2nd Prize Amount (10)Rs.2000/-', etc.

COURT NOTICE
IN THE COURT OF SH. SIMRANDEEP SINGH SOHI
Judicial Magistrate-Ist Class
Ludhiana

Next Date, Purpose of case, Orders and Judgments as well as other Case information is available on http://ecourts.gov.in

Whereas it has proved to the satisfaction of this court that You, the above named accused / accused persons can't be served in the ordinary way of service.

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IN THE COURT OF SH. SIMRANDEEP SINGH SOHI
Judicial Magistrate-Ist Class
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संबन्धितक सूचना
श्री अशोक शर्मा की मृत्यु के बाद उनके पुत्रों के बीच विवादित संपत्ति का बंटवारा किया जा रहा है।

Office of the Market Committee, Bhattu Kalan (Fatehabad)
Public Notice
It is informed to all the General Public and concerned persons that our office has received an application with concerned documents to submit the entry of Shop No. 143, Situated at Anji Mandi, Bhattu Kalan, Tehsil & Distt. Fatehabad.

Lost Notice
I, Amarbir Singh S/O Indrajit Singh S/O Pirithal Singh R/O Jeevanot Hospital, Peerhkhana Road, Khanna, District Ludhiana

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Darshan Singh F/O Service No. 15341402X Rank Hav , Name Harmel Singh R/O Rori Kapura, Rorikapura, Faridkot, Punjab

I, Keshav Datt Pandey is Father of JC-405543K Sub Manoj Pandey, Serving in unit 4 Guards (1 Rajput) C/o 56 APO have changed my name from Keshav Dutt Pandey to Keshav Datt Pandey.

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Judicial Magistrate-Ist Class
Ludhiana

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PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Lakhbir Kaur Basra W/o Surinder Singh Basra R/o Village Mehli, Tehsil Banga, District Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, hereby inform that I have purchased a plot of land measuring area Mehli, Tehsil Banga bearing the name Voucher No. 2642 of which the Registry Name is Verification in my name has been lost. Which I looked for but could not find.

COURT NOTICE
IN THE COURT OF SH. SIMRANDEEP SINGH SOHI
Judicial Magistrate-Ist Class
Ludhiana

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Ludhiana

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PM GatiShakti revolutionises infrastructure development efforts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan has emerged as a transformative initiative aimed at revolutionising India's infrastructure and is driving faster and more efficient development across sectors. PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) was launched on October 13, 2021 for providing multi-modal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones. PM GatiShakti is a transformative approach for economic growth and sustainable development

which is driven by seven engines - railway, roads, ports, waterways, airports, mass transport and logistics infrastructure. In a social media post, Modi said, "PM GatiShakti National Master Plan has emerged as a transformative initiative aimed at revolutionising India's infrastructure. It has significantly enhanced multimodal connectivity, driving faster and more efficient development across sectors." The seamless integration of various stakeholders has led to boosting logistics, reducing delays and creating new opportunities for several people, Modi said. "Thanks to



GatiShakti, India is adding speed to fulfil our vision of a Viksit Bharat. It will encourage progress, entrepreneurship and innovation," the prime minister said.

Modi tagged Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal's post in which he had lauded the GatiShakti initiative on completion of three years. "Today marks 3 years since the launch of the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan for Multimodal Connectivity by PM Narendra Modi ji. By streamlining logistics and advancing connectivity, this path-breaking initiative ensures faster and more efficient project implementation," Goyal said. It continues to play a pivotal role in developing a modern, interconnected infrastructure network, strengthening the vision of building a Viksit Bharat, he said.

Israel PM mourns passing of Ratan Tata

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has condoled the death of industrialist Ratan Tata and said he was a champion of friendship between Israel and India. Ratan Tata passed away in Mumbai on Wednesday last at the age of 86. In a social media post addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Netanyahu highlighted Ratan Tata's contributions to fostering Israel-India ties. In the statement, Netanyahu said, "To my friend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I and many in Israel mourn the loss of Ratan Naval Tata, a

proud son of India and a champion of the friendship between our two countries. Please convey my condolences to Ratan's family." Prime minister Modi praised Ratan Tata in a post mourning his demise, calling Tata "a visionary business leader, a compassionate soul and an extraordinary human being." The final rites of the eminent industrialist were conducted

with full state honours in Worli crematorium. On Thursday, Singapore's prime minister Lawrence Wong paid tribute to Ratan Tata, calling him a true friend of the country. French president Emmanuel Macron also praised Ratan Tata's contributions to innovation and knowledge, adding that "France has lost a dear friend from India. Microsoft founder Bill Gates also lauded Ratan Tata's achievements and his importance for India and the world. He said, "Ratan Tata was a visionary leader whose dedication to improving lives left an indelible mark on India-and the world.

Supreme Court to hear Boinpally's bail plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday the bail plea of Hyderabad-based businessman Abhishek Boinpally in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. As per the cause list, a bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Aravind Kumar is likely to take up the matter. The top court had on August 13 extended the interim bail granted to Boinpally. On March 20, the top court noted that the businessman had been in custody for 18 months and directed his release on interim bail for five weeks. Since then, Boinpally's interim bail has been extended from time to time by the apex court. While granting him interim bail, the top court had asked Boinpally to surrender his passport and directed him not to leave the National Capital Region except for a visit to Hyderabad. The businessman has challenged a July 3, 2023,



order of the Delhi High Court that dismissed his petition questioning the legality of his arrest in 2022. The businessman had contested his arrest before the high court on the grounds of non-compliance with section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) which deals with the procedure for arrests. Section 19 of the PMLA empowers authorised officials of the ED to arrest people based on the material in their possession, providing a reasonable basis to suspect that an individual has committed an offence punishable under the law. The Delhi government implemented the excise policy for 2021-22 on November 17, 2021, but scrapped it at the end

of September 2022 amid allegations of corruption. According to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the ED, irregularities were committed while modifying the excise policy and undue favours extended to the licence holders. The money-laundering case stems from a CBI FIR that was lodged after Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena recommended a probe into the alleged irregularities in the implementation of the excise policy. It has been claimed that Boinpally was part of clandestine meetings and involved in a conspiracy to launder money along with another accused Sameer Mahendru, a businessman dealing in liquor.

BJP is a party of terrorists says Mallikarjun Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Slamming Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's BJP is a "party of terrorists" remark, former Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi alleged on Sunday that the Congress is selling hatred in its "shop of love". Naqvi said the opposition party has become a "multinational distribution centre" of "certificates" labelling nationalists as terrorists and anti-nationalists as nationalists. Kharge alleged on Saturday that the BJP is a "party of terrorists", as he hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent remarks that the Congress is being run by a "gang of urban Naxals". Kharge also accused those in the saffron party of "lynching and beating" people, and committing



atrocities against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Talking to reporters, Naqvi said in its "depression of defeat", the Congress has become "hostage to hopelessness" due to its "habit of hate". The "dynasty's animosity and hostility" towards Prime

Minister Narendra Modi is becoming a "political disaster" for the grand old party, the senior BJP leader said. The Congress is trying to portray the "political danger to dynasty" as a "danger to democracy", which shows its arrogance and not wisdom, he added.

Instead of "introspection", the Congress is still engaged in "smugness" as it blames electronic voting machines (EVMs) for its internal conflict, Naqvi said, adding that it is like "a bad workman blaming his tools". Asked about the Congress criticising a recent statement of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, the BJP leader accused the opposition party of harbouring a "prejudiced political mindset" and said Bhagwat gave an effective nationalist message of "Constitution, culture, harmony, social security and inclusivity". Communal political statements made by some champions of pseudo-secularism even on a message of national unity and integrity is like "empty vessels making noise", he said. The Congress is selling hatred in its "mohabbat ki dukaan", Naqvi alleged.

Two Indian ships arrive at Port of Manama

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of further strengthening bilateral defence ties with Bahrain, two Indian ships arrived at Port of Manama there on Saturday while one ship arrived in UAE, navy said here on Sunday. Giving details, officials said continuing with the long range training deployment in the Persian Gulf, INS Tir and ICGS Veera of First Training Squadron (ITS) arrived at the Port of Manama, Bahrain on October 12. Aimed at enhancing Naval cooperation and augmenting interoperability, Indian Navy is set to engage with the Royal Bahrain Naval Forces (RBNF) on various domains of maritime ops and best shared practices.

Over 47,000 complaints filed by scheduled caste since 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 47,000 complaints have been received by the National Commission for Scheduled Caste in the last four years, according to official data, with atrocities against Dalits, and disputes related to land and governments jobs being the main issues. As per information shared by the NCSC in response to an RTI filed by PTI, 11,917 complaints were received in 2020-21, 13,964 complaints registered in 2021-22, 12,402 in 2022-23 and 9,550 complaints so far in 2024. Speaking to PTI about the data, NCSC chairperson Kishor Makwana said the most common complaints received by the commission are related to atrocities against the Scheduled Castes community, followed by land disputes and issues related to services in the government sector. "In a bid to address the complaints speedily, from next month, me or my members would be visiting the state offices and looking into the issues faced by the people there," he said. Makwana added that he is holding hearings four times a week to meet people and listen



to their problems. "Since I have taken charge, I have ensured that my office remains open to meet people," he said. A senior NCSC official said the highest number of complaints have been filed from Uttar Pradesh among all states. The commission receives 200-300 complaints every day and many of them get resolved within days, so the data seen here is mostly of the complaints that are in the process of getting their resolution, the official said. "There is not a single complaint that has been left unattended. They all are under consideration," he said.

According to the data from the national helpline on atrocities against people from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 6,02,177 calls were received. Out of these, the total number of grievances stood at 5,843, of which 1,784 have been resolved. More than half of calls have been received from Uttar Pradesh at 3,10,623. This helpline is monitored by the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry. According to the latest government report under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the majority of atrocities against

Scheduled Caste were concentrated in 13 states, which reported 97.7 per cent of all cases in 2022. Of 51,656 cases registered under the law in 2022, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 23.78 per cent of the total cases with 12,287, followed by Rajasthan at 8,651 (16.75 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh at 7,732 (14.97 per cent). Other states with a significant number of cases of caste atrocities were Bihar with 6,799 (13.16 per cent), Odisha with 3,576 (6.93 per cent), and Maharashtra with 2,706 (5.24 per cent). These six states accounted for nearly 81 per cent of the total cases.



Devotees carry the palanquin of the deities to participate in the International Kullu Dussehra festival in Kullu on Sunday. PTI

Professional interactions, cross ship visits, joint training sessions, yoga sessions, band concerts, friendly sports fixtures, social interactions and community welfare activities are planned during the port call. The sea trainees of Indian Navy will be visiting various training facilities and establishments of RBNF. A coordination meeting between the operational teams of both the Navies towards planning and conduct of a Maritime Partnership Exercise is also scheduled. Training interaction with the partners of CMF as part of cooperative engagement and reaffirming maritime security in the region will also feature during the visit. In another port visit, INS Shardul of ITS entered Port Rashid, Dubai at UAE. The ship was received by the Defence Attaché at the Embassy of India and officials of the UAE Navy. During the visit, the ship will engage with the UAE Navy on multiple training activities and harbour interactions. The deployment of ITS to Bahrain and UAE is aimed not only at exposing the sea trainees towards various Naval training activities but also endeavours to further the socio-political, military and maritime linkages. The visit is indicative of growing defence relations of India with Bahrain and UAE while boosting maritime security cooperation and enhanced synergy amongst the Navies.

Kharge's son withdraws request for five acre land

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The chairperson of Siddhartha Vihar Trust, Rahul M Kharge, has withdrawn his request for the allotment of five acres of civic amenity site in Bengaluru to set up a 'Multi-Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre'. The move by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's son Rahul Kharge comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to Mysuru Urban Development Authority after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law. Mallikarjun Kharge's younger son Priyank Kharge, who is a minister in the Karnataka government, shared the information with the scanned copies of

the letter on his 'X' handle. In a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Karnataka Industrial Development Board (KIADB) on September 20, Rahul Kharge wrote, "Withdrawal of our request for Civic Amenity site to set up Multi Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and a Research Centre." He said the objective of the Siddhartha Vihar Trust was to create more employable opportunities through skill development in emerging technologies for students and unemployed youth. "The proposed Multi-Skill Development Centre aimed primarily to serve youngsters to make them more employable and industry ready with skills and future skills. It was also designed to help students who were unable to pursue college education," Rahul Kharge said. The trust preferred a site within the



KIADB industrial area because of its proximity to high-growth industries as it would provide invaluable exposure and

opportunities for young people, he said. "Siddhartha Vihar Trust is a public educational, cultural, and charitable trust

and not a private or family-run trust. All institutions established under its aegis are 'Not For Profit'," he explained.

While sharing the information, Priyank Kharge wrote that the trust was fully eligible to apply for and receive an allotment of a CA site for an educational institution. However, any educational institution cannot function effectively while constantly facing malafide, baseless and politically motivated allegations, he said, adding that the trust did not wish to be drawn into long-drawn controversies which would divert attention and efforts from the primary objective of education and social service. "In light of the circumstances, the Trust wrote to the KIADB to withdraw our proposal and withdraw our request for a CA site for establishing a skill development and research centre," the Minister said. The Trust had submitted its proposal to the KIADB on February 12, 2024, and a month later, the proposal was approved.

Vaccines could prevent 500,000 deaths from AMR annually

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underscoring the critical role vaccines could play in addressing rising antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a WHO report has estimated that 44 vaccines targeting 24 pathogens (19 bacteria, 4 viruses, 1 parasite) could prevent over 500,000 deaths from superbugs' infections annually. This strategy not only promises significant healthcare cost savings but could also reduce the reliance on antibiotics by 2.5 billion doses per year, said the report released recently. Currently underutilised vaccines, such as the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine for Streptococcus pneumoniae, alongside those in development for tuberculosis, E. coli, and Klebsiella pneumoniae, hold potential for future AMR

control. The report emphasises the urgent need to integrate these vaccines into global AMR strategies, as vaccination could drastically reduce infections that necessitate antibiotic use. The analysis highlights that existing vaccines could prevent up to 106,000 AMR-related deaths and yield substantial economic benefits, while newer vaccines in late-stage development could further avert 135,000 deaths if introduced swiftly. "The best infection is the one that doesn't occur," said Yvan Hutin, MD, PhD, director of surveillance, protection and control for the WHO's AMR Division, said in a statement. The report also outlines the potential impact of early-stage vaccine candidates, which could prevent up to 408,000 deaths and significantly reduce healthcare costs and productivity losses.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Peacekeepers' peril

India joins 34 other countries contributing troops to the UNIFIL in condemning Israeli military actions that threaten peacekeepers

The ongoing hostilities in the West Asia have drawn global concern, with recent escalations along the Israel-Lebanon border highlighting the risks faced by United Nations peacekeepers. As Israeli airstrikes target Gaza and tensions spill over to southern Lebanon, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) finds itself in the line of fire. India, along with 34 other countries that contribute troops to UNIFIL, has endorsed a joint statement condemning actions that jeopardise the safety of peacekeepers and calling for the protection of UN personnel as per existing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. The situation along the Israel-Lebanon border has become increasingly volatile, with Israeli military operations intensifying in Lebanon. On October 11, two Sri Lankan UN peacekeepers were wounded in an Israeli airstrike near their watchtower in Naqoura, south Lebanon. This was second attack in 48 hours where UNIFIL's main base in the region was subjected to blasts amid the cross-border conflict. UNIFIL is a peacekeeping mission established in 1978 to monitor the cessation of hostilities in the area. It is the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

In the wake of the attack, India has condemned the threat to peacekeepers' safety. The Indian Permanent Mission to the United Nations reaffirmed that the "safety and security of peacekeepers are of paramount importance and must be ensured in accordance with extant UNSC Resolutions." India's stance underscores its long-standing commitment to UN peacekeeping operations, where it has historically been one of the largest contributors of troops. Of the 9532 troops deployed, 895 happen to be Indian. In fact, India happens to be the second largest contributor to the peacekeeping mission next to Indonesia. So far UNIFIL has endured 334 casualties. The UN's efforts aim to bring a halt to hostilities that have resulted in significant casualties and infrastructure damage, exacerbating an already dire situation in the region. The UN Security Council has called for restraint from all parties involved and emphasised the importance of allowing humanitarian aid to reach civilians in Gaza. However, the complexity of the conflict, with multiple factions and external players influencing the dynamics, has made the path to a ceasefire fraught with obstacles. India's response to the recent escalation along the Israel-Lebanon border reflects a pragmatic approach. While it has avoided direct condemnation of either side in the broader conflict, its alignment with the UNIFIL countries signals support for international peacekeeping standards. By calling for the protection of peacekeepers and adherence to UNSC resolutions, India is positioning itself as a responsible stakeholder in upholding international law and maintaining regional stability. The path to a sustainable ceasefire remains uncertain, but with global powers like India endorsing diplomatic initiatives and supporting the UN's peacekeeping mandate, there is a stronger impetus for pursuing non-violent solutions to the ongoing crisis.

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PICTALK



Devotees immerse an idol of Goddess Durga, in Nadia

The steadfast diplomat who crafted India's foreign policy

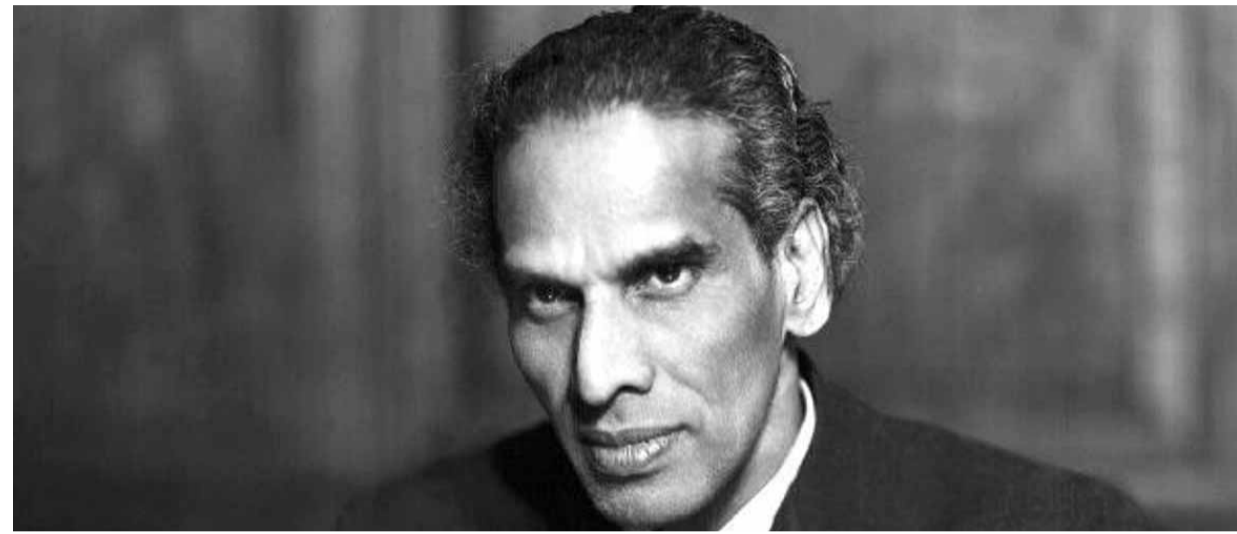


SANTHOSH MATHEW

As India marks the 50th anniversary of V K Krishna Menon's passing, it is a fitting moment to remember a man whose brilliance shaped the nation's global diplomacy

Fifty years since Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon's passing, the significance of his contributions to Indian diplomacy and global politics remains evident. Hailed as one of India's most brilliant yet controversial statesmen, Menon's legacy is inextricably linked with the evolution of the country's foreign policy. Born in Kozhikode, Kerala, his journey from a young boy in South India to a pivotal figure on the world stage was marked by intellectual rigor, steadfastness, and an unyielding commitment to India's sovereignty and values. When he passed away on October 6, 1974, then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi described his departure as "a volcano has been extinguished," aptly capturing the intensity he brought to every role he undertook. His contributions, despite the passage of time, continue to influence India's diplomatic posture.

Menon's early life in Kerala and subsequent education in the United Kingdom set the stage for his distinguished career. His association with Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he befriended while in London, was instrumental in shaping his path. Quickly emerging as a prominent voice in the Indian independence movement abroad, Menon's articulate speeches and sharp intellect earned him recognition. During his time in the UK, he co-founded Penguin Books, which revolutionised the publishing industry by making literature affordable and accessible. However, his foray into publishing was merely the precursor to his true calling: crafting India's foreign policy. It was Menon who proposed the term "Non-Aligned Movement" (NAM), a cornerstone of India's Cold War-era diplomatic stance. He championed neutrality, ensuring that India, as a newly independent nation, did not align itself with either the United States or the Soviet Union. For Menon, non-alignment was more than just a diplomatic position; it was an assertion of India's sovereignty and self-respect. He fiercely defended this stance on various international platforms, particularly at the United Nations, where his eloquence and conviction



made him a formidable figure. As India's representative at the UN, Menon achieved global recognition, notably delivering the longest speech in the forum's history—a marathon eight-hour defence of India's position on Kashmir during the 1957 General Assembly. His unwavering defence of India's claim to Kashmir earned him the title "Hero of Kashmir." Yet, his confrontational style also attracted criticism, especially from Western media, which often portrayed him as the "Indian Rasputin," suggesting he exerted undue influence over Nehru's policies. Menon's relationship with Nehru was undoubtedly significant, with the Prime Minister recognising his brilliance and appointing him to government roles, first as a minister without portfolio and later, in 1957, as Defence Minister. Together, they steered India's post-independence strategies in both foreign relations and defence. The 1962 Sino-Indian War marked a turning point for Menon. As Defence Minister, he was widely blamed for India's crushing defeat by China, with critics accusing him of failing to adequately prepare the military. Western media, particularly 'Time' magazine, infamously depicted him on its cover as a "snake charmer," manipulating Nehru into a disastrous conflict. While Menon's detractors held him



MENON'S EARLY LIFE IN KERALA AND SUBSEQUENT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM SET THE STAGE FOR HIS DISTINGUISHED CAREER. HIS ASSOCIATION WITH JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, WHOM HE BEFRIENDED WHILE IN LONDON, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING HIS PATH

largely responsible for the debacle, such an assessment does not acknowledge his broader contributions to defence and foreign policy. Menon was a proponent of self-reliance in defence, laying the groundwork for indigenous military production—a policy India pursues to this day. Furthermore, his role in the Goa Liberation movement of 1961, which ended Portuguese colonial rule, reinforced his image as a dedicated patriot. Despite the setback after the Sino-Indian War, Menon's career was not over. In 1971, supported by the left-leaning EMS Namboodiripad, Menon made a comeback to Parliament, representing Thiruvananthapuram. His return was a testament to the enduring respect he commanded among certain segments of Indian society. Even in his later years, Menon remained a formidable presence in politics, unafraid to challenge prevailing norms. Menon's personal life remained relatively private, though his wit and often abrasive style earned him both admirers and detractors. He was viewed by contemporaries such as Bertrand Russell as a man of profound intellect and integrity. Yet, his sharp tongue and uncompromising nature also alienated many, leading to well-publicised rivalries, including with fellow Malayali

diplomats like VP Menon and KPS Menon. These tensions added an element of intrigue to his already controversial career. Reflecting on the 50th anniversary of Menon's passing invites a reevaluation of his towering legacy. His contributions to Indian foreign policy, particularly his advocacy for non-alignment and his defence of India's stance on Kashmir, remain integral to the country's diplomatic strategies. The fact that his UN speech still holds the record as the longest ever delivered underscores his place in the annals of global diplomacy. Menon's influence extended beyond India's borders; his advocacy for global disarmament and his warning, "Either man will abolish war, or war will abolish man," still resonates in international forums. At a time when diplomacy often takes place behind closed doors, Menon's readiness to speak truth to power, regardless of personal cost, set him apart. His passing marked the end of an era, but his ideas—particularly his fierce commitment to Indian sovereignty and global justice—continue to shape the country's foreign policy. The "volcano" that Indira Gandhi referred to still casts a long shadow over Indian diplomacy—a shadow that endures. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BABA SIDDIQUE ASSASSINATED

Madam — The city of Mumbai has recorded another high-profile targeted killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique. The assassination of Siddique by two shooters at the time he is leaving his son's office and sitting in the car is purely calibrated killing attempts. Despite the fact that his son Zeeshan was an elected MLA from Bandra, Mumbai, it is a bit surprising that killing took place in the same areas. However, it's too early to claim the killing was politically motivated before a proper investigation is to be done by the Mumbai police. He is known in the entire of India for the glam glitz Iftar Parties, which attract Bollywood celebrities every year. The investigation will shed light on the actual motive of the killer for his targeted killing. Meanwhile, it is extremely sad to note that killing is such an easy task in our country. If politicians and renowned personalities like Baba Siddique are not safe in our country, how could we expect the safety of the locals?

The policing mechanism has to be active all the time to avoid such uncertainties. Also, there must be a rigorous punishment mechanism for the shooters, and harsh penalties to be put in place so that no such miscreants will dare to take such actions on the charm of few money from the actual culprits.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

TACKLE HUNGER CRISIS

Madam — This refers to the article on the paradox of nutritional status. Though the contour of nutritional status has too many curves based on too many factors like urban, rural, poor, rich, middle class, gender and so on, the overall condition is definitely not encouraging. The rank given by the Global Hunger Index needs no suspicion. The country's nutrition-related programmes organised by the Union and State governments need an uprisal to review the improvement or the otherwise. A national programme with area-specific contents needs to be taken up, involving the youth who can contribute nutrition-

Tennis legend retires



Tennis legend and one of the all-time greatest tennis players, Rafael Nadal, has announced his retirement as a professional tennis player. Nadal remains one of the most decorated sportspersons of all time of the 22 Grand Slam titles he has won, the Spaniard clinched a record 14 French Opens. Nadal also has 36 masters titles as well as an Olympic gold medal. Beyond his clay

court mastery, Nadal has won US Open titles four times and the Australian Open two times. On the grass of Wimbledon, a surface considered challenging for him, he secured two championships. Who could forget the 2008 Wimbledon final between Nadal and Federer? Or 2013 Australian Open final between Nadal and Djokovic? Surely Nadal should have inspired millions of children to start playing tennis across the globe. Nadal remained the world's top player for 209 weeks during his peak years, 2005-2023. After Nadal's retirement, will men's tennis ever have another trio, "Federer, Nadal and Djokovic," who dominated tennis for 20 years? Certainly Nadal's retirement from tennis is the end of an era.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

related knowledge and implement the program with periodical study on the study. There was news in the media about the lack of quality of the distributed stuff also. In slums, poor eating and non-access to nutritional items are issues, and among the rich, overeating of avoidable items is the issue. Unless nutrition is taken up as a priority to implement with all seriousness and with adequate allocation of funds, there may not be a tangible improvement in the status. Expenditure on improving nutritional status is a productive investment as it helps improve the productivity of the individuals as well as the nation, which is imminent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

MASTERING POLITICAL GAMES

Madam — There is no specific Noble Prize for politics. However, many politicians received the Noble Peace Prize for their efforts in promoting peace, resolving conflicts and advancing human rights; examples are Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama, and Mikhail Gorbachev. Political manoeuvring and politics are relat-

ed but distinct. The former involves a variety of tactics aimed at maintaining or gaining power such as politicians changing parties (turn coats), building pre or post poll alliances with other political parties, contesting elections as independent candidate if ticket is denied and after winning getting favours by supporting government forming party or parties, using the fundamental right of freedom of speech to the fullest extent in criticizing the opponents at will, turning from foes to friends and vice versa with ease by being immune to guilt or shame, directing resources for garnering and maintaining vote banks through freebies & unproductive welfare schemes, toppling governments, poaching elected members from opposition parties and defaming own country's government & its policies abroad etc. Indian politicians are 'Mahirs' in the above activities. So, if a Noble Prize is instituted for "political manoeuvring," India will always get it.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Gandhi's philosophy in the age of AI

As we forge ahead into this digital age, embracing Gandhi's philosophy could pave the way for a more humane and equitable future

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping our world, making the relevance of many ancient philosophies seem distant. People may find it difficult to comprehend the hardships our predecessors endured during their lifetimes.

Even people may find it difficult to believe that great philosophers, who have provided us with a wealth of knowledge, once lived on this planet. We will accept only those incidents and individuals whose photographs or videos are accessible. As of now, we are fortunate to have documentary evidence of our nation's father, Mahatma Gandhi. Otherwise, people would have forgotten him. But even in this digital world where AI rules humanity, Gandhiji's philosophy remains profoundly relevant.

The core values that Gandhi stood for—such as non-violence, truth, self-reliance, simplicity and social justice—offer timeless guidance for managing the challenges humanity faces even today. We can



interpret non-violence (Ahimsa) in this digital era as ensuring the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies. Gandhian principles have high relevance today as we start integrating AI into aspects of human life, be it healthcare, economy, agriculture, or warehousing. As we indulge in digital warfare Gandhi's non-violence principle prompts us to develop technologies that prioritise human welfare and minimise harm. Cyberbullying is on the rise, and many people are falling victim. Cyberbullying fundamentally involves the use of words, images, or exclusion on the internet as a means of violence. Unfortunately, even political parties sometimes encourage such behaviour for gain, which

fosters enmity between communities—a divide that can be challenging to bridge.

By embracing ahimsa, individuals can practice empathy and kindness online, refraining from harmful or derogatory comments. Promoting non-violence in digital spaces could lead to reduced aggression and a more supportive online environment. Gandhi's emphasis on truth serves as a powerful antidote to the deceit and falsehoods that often fuel cyberbullying. Many online bullies hide behind anonymous profiles, spreading rumours, lies, or misinformation. Truthfulness can also empower victims to speak out against bullying, creating a culture of transparency and accountability. In the digital age, where people can react instantly and sometimes impulsively, applying self-discipline is crucial. In a world where major tech companies dominate AI development, Gandhi's philosophy of self-reliance (swadeshi) is highly applicable. It encourages nations, especially third-

world countries, to build their own AI capabilities and not rely solely on foreign technology. Fostering digital independence and ensuring the use of AI in ways that benefit local economies and cultures is crucial. One of Gandhi's most enduring legacies was his advocacy for the marginalised. In the AI-dominated world, we must ensure that these technologies do not exacerbate inequalities. We should use AI to promote inclusivity, reduce the digital divide, and provide technology access for all, which is in line with Gandhi's vision of social justice. In essence, Gandhian philosophy, with its moral clarity and human-centred approach, serves as a vital guide for shaping the AI-driven future. Even in a world where technology seems to dominate, Gandhi's philosophy has high relevance for building peace and happiness in the world.

(The author is a Dean at Garden City University and an adjunct faculty member at NIAS, Bangalore; views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

EMOJIS SPEAK WHERE TEXTING FALLS SHORT

Emojis transform otherwise bland exchanges into vibrant and meaningful interactions



ASHA IYER KUMAR

I am a huge fan of emoticons, or emojis, as I prefer to call them. In a new, technically robust world that chooses to conduct most of its private and professional business digitally, the existence of emojis is a lot more valuable than what they seem primary. Emojis fill the gap between one's feelings [thoughts] and words; they arch over the space where misunderstandings breed unintentionally. The trouble with texting is it, more often than not, conveys meanings not meant. The true import of the statements is often dispensed with an unsavoury blandness. Words, for all the power they have, are restricted in their ability to convey true emotions. There is no tone or tenor in a conversation that happens over a typed chat. It is here that the emojis take charge to let people know the precise sentiment behind the words. It's fascinating how something as simple as a tiny, colourful image can carry the weight of an entire conversation.

Emojis have become the silent saviours of our digital dialogues, transforming what could be a dry exchange into something vibrant, relatable and meaningful. I have always believed that words, despite their richness, sometimes falter in delivering the exact shade of sentiment we wish to express. How many times have we sent a message and then wondered: Will they get what I mean? Will they feel my warmth, my concern, or my light-heartedness? Emojis step in at this point, like little emotional cue cards, guiding the recipient towards the intended feeling behind our words.

A simple smiley can transform a blunt response into a kind reassurance. It acts as a gentle nudge, hinting to the reader, "Take it easy; this is friendly." Emojis allow us to soften the blows of formality, sprinkle humour on otherwise serious subjects, or underline the gravity of



what would otherwise seem trivial. Consider this: You've sent a message that says, "Let's talk later." Now, depending on the mood of the person on the other side, it could be read as indifferent, abrupt, or even ominous. But if you add a little smiley at the end, the vibe changes entirely. Suddenly, it sounds casual, almost warm. This is the magic of emojis — they are the unseen bridges in our communication, preventing misunderstandings. They fill in the emotional blanks that text leaves behind. In this world where we don't always get the luxury of hearing someone's voice or seeing their expressions, emojis have quietly become the body language of our conversations. They provide a way to infuse our cold, typed words with a cozy connection. That's where their real value lies, and why I, as someone deeply in love with words and their power, have come to appreciate the humble emoji. Moreover, in a globally connected world where language barriers can stand between intent and interpretation, emojis offer a universal code. A thumbs-up or a heart means the same whether you're in Dubai or Delhi, making them incredibly effective in fostering inclusivity and understanding.

As I continue my writing journey, both in traditional and digital spaces, I find myself more often turning to emojis to complement my words, especially when texting or communicating over social media. They are the small, unspoken allies in my digital interactions, helping me stay connected, relatable, and, most importantly, understood. In a time when misunderstandings are as quick as a keystroke, I've come to appreciate emojis as more than just playful symbols. They are, in many ways, the unsung heroes of modern communication, making sure that what we feel and what we say are in sync. And that's a role too important to ignore.

(The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; Views are personal)

The booklet that redefines Mayawati

Mayawati is launching a revival effort to reclaim lost ground; she released a 59-page booklet outlining the party's roadmap, while emphasising her 'Iron Lady' image



BISWAJEET BANERJEE

Facing a steep decline in electoral performance, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), under the leadership of Mayawati, is now pivoting with a new strategy aimed at regaining its lost political ground. The once-formidable party, which made significant strides in the late 1990s and early 2000s by mobilising Dalit and marginalised communities, has been on the back foot in recent elections. With an eye on the upcoming assembly by-elections and the 2027 general elections, the BSP has taken an important step by releasing a 59-page booklet, designed not only to recount its past achievements but also to chart a new course for the future. The release of this booklet is a key part of the BSP's revitalisation plan. It features several statements from Mayawati, emphasising her leadership and vision for the party's future. One of the key aspects of the booklet is Mayawati's self-identification as the "Iron Lady," a term that echoes the strong and uncompromising leadership style often associated with female leaders in global politics, such as former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

By using this title, Mayawati seeks to project an image of resilience, firmness and determination, drawing on her previous tenure as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, where she exercised considerable political influence. Mayawati's attempt to invoke historical symbolism is another notable feature of the booklet. She compares herself to Emperor Ashoka, an ancient Indian ruler known for his governance and promotion of social justice. The parallel is clear: like Ashoka, Mayawati aspires to usher in a new era of social welfare and justice for the marginalised sections of society, particularly Dalits. Through this comparison, she hopes to solidify her image as a leader capable of bringing about meaningful social change, positioning herself as a saviour of the oppressed and aligning her leadership with India's rich historical tradition of justice. The use of such symbolic language is not merely rhetorical; it is a calculated effort to energise the party's traditional voter base, which largely consists of Dalits, while also appealing to other communities. The invocation of Emperor Ashoka, a figure revered for his contributions to governance, inclusiveness and justice, allows Mayawati to appeal to a wider electorate that values strong leadership based on social equity and welfare.

By aligning her vision with that of Ashoka, she is reminding voters that her leadership stands for inclusiveness, fair governance and social justice—values that resonate deeply with her core constituency. One of the most significant components of Mayawati's new political strategy is a renewed focus on social engineering, an electoral strategy that had previously yielded considerable success for the BSP. This approach, which played a crucial role in Mayawati's rise to power in 2007, involves forging electoral alliances across caste lines—specifically between Dalits and Brahmins. By uniting these groups, the BSP was able to create a winning formula that resulted in sweeping electoral victories in the mid-2000s. The booklet highlights the party's intention to revive this strategy, indicating that the BSP aims to once again bring together a broad-based coalition to strengthen its political position. In the booklet, Mayawati makes a strong appeal to Brahmin voters, asserting that their economic and social upliftment can only be achieved under BSP rule. She takes the opportunity to criticise



ONE OF THE PRIMARY OBSTACLES IS THE EROSION OF ITS TRADITIONAL VOTE BANK. THE BSP, WHICH ONCE COMMANDED A SUBSTANTIAL BASE AMONG DALIT VOTERS, HAS SEEN A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THESE VOTES SHIFT TOWARD THE BJP IN RECENT ELECTIONS

rival political parties, including the Samajwadi Party (SP), Congress, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), for neglecting the Brahmin community and failing to address their concerns. By making this overture to Brahmins, Mayawati hopes to recreate the Brahmin-Dalit electoral coalition that had been so successful in the past, particularly in 2007, when this formula helped her ascend to the Chief Minister's office in Uttar Pradesh. This strategy signals that Mayawati is determined to reconstruct a broad-based support structure, aiming to gain a foothold among both upper and lower castes. The outreach to Brahmins is not an entirely new tactic for the BSP.

The party had previously established strong support among Brahmin voters, particularly in the mid-2000s, by emphasising the importance of social cohesion and inclusive governance. In many ways, Mayawati's return to this formula reflects her understanding of the changing political dynamics in Uttar Pradesh. She recognises the importance of rebuilding alliances that cross caste lines, particularly as the political landscape in the state continues to evolve. However, the new strategy does not stop with Brahmins. The booklet also directs sharp critiques at Mayawati's political rivals, particularly Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. She targets Gandhi's recent visit to a shoe repair shop, characterising it as "symbolic politics" that does little to address the real issues faced by marginalised communities. In her view, this gesture perpetuates caste-based stereotypes, reinforcing the notion that certain communities, such as Dalits, should be associated with manual labour, including shoe-making. This critique is

aimed at resonating with her core voter base—Dalits—by emphasising her stance against caste-based occupations and promoting a broader vision of social justice. Mayawati also uses the booklet to revisit past political alliances, notably the failed partnership between the BSP and the Samajwadi Party (SP) ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The alliance, once seen as a formidable force capable of challenging the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, ultimately fell apart. In the booklet, Mayawati attributes the breakdown to a lack of communication from Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who, according to her, stopped answering her calls. This communication breakdown, she claims, forced the BSP to withdraw from the alliance—a move she frames as one made out of self-respect. By bringing up the collapse of the alliance, Mayawati seeks to remind voters of her independence and self-reliance as a leader, further distinguishing herself from her political rivals. Despite Mayawati's efforts to reposition the BSP, the party faces significant challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the erosion of its traditional vote bank. The BSP, which once commanded a substantial base among Dalit voters, has seen a significant portion of these votes shift toward the BJP in recent elections. In a notable shift in strategy, Mayawati has announced that the BSP will contest the upcoming by-elections. Historically, the party has refrained from participating in by-polls, preferring to focus its resources on general elections. However, the recent electoral setbacks and the changing political landscape in

Uttar Pradesh have prompted a reassessment of this approach. By contesting the by-elections, Mayawati hopes to reenergise the party's cadre and send a message to her supporters that the BSP is still in the fight. The by-elections offer the BSP an opportunity to test its new strategies and alliances in a smaller electoral context before the next general elections. By doing so, the party can identify its strengths and weaknesses, allowing it to adjust its tactics in preparation for larger electoral battles. Additionally, Mayawati's decision to contest the by-elections is about more than just winning seats—it's also about reinvigorating the party's organisational strength. In recent years, the BSP's grassroots machinery has weakened, with many party workers becoming disillusioned after a series of electoral defeats. By throwing the party into the by-election fray, Mayawati aims to revive its organisational structure and prepare it for future contests. Mayawati's messaging, as outlined in the newly released booklet, signals her determination to reclaim the BSP's former electoral strength.

Through a combination of symbolic language, critiques of her rivals, and a recalibrated strategy, she hopes to reposition the BSP as a force to be reckoned with in Uttar Pradesh politics. The upcoming by-elections will serve as a crucial test for the party's new approach and could determine whether Mayawati is successful in her efforts to revitalise her support base and counter growing competition from both established and emerging political players.

(The writer is an Associate Editor, of The Pioneer; views are personal)

Haryana's election lesson: Why Tejashwi and Akhilesh must shun caste politics

To secure long-term success, they must cater to broader social sentiments as voters increasingly reject traditional caste-based power structures

The recent election results in Haryana have overturned pre-poll predictions and ground reports by YouTubers, sending a clear message for future elections, particularly in key states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. For leaders such as Tejashwi Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav, who belong to the dominant Yadav caste, the outcome holds lessons. Their political scenario mirrors the situation of the Jats in Haryana, where social dynamics are shifting away from dominant caste politics. In this evolving landscape, they face the challenge of addressing broader social sentiments and responding to the concerns of marginalised groups who feel overlooked or disadvantaged in the traditional caste power structures.



AKHILESH SUMAN

In Haryana, the Jats, a politically influential community, faced a consolidation of other social groups against them, as seen in the election results. This trend is significant for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where the dominant OBC groups, particularly the Yadavs, have held power for decades but are now struggling to maintain their influence. The once-powerful Yadav-led governments lost their grip on

power partly because of growing resentment from other communities who felt sidelined.

The political history of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh is marked by the rise of leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav, who gained initial popularity by championing anti-Congress sentiment and social justice. Their "M-Y equation" (Muslim-Yadav alliance) was a powerful electoral strategy that secured their dominance, but it also instilled fear in other communities. The consolidation of their caste base came at the cost of alienating non-Yadav OBCs, Dalits, and upper castes, creating a sense of marginalisation. Over time, their politics of exclusion backfired, as disillusioned voters began to

seek alternatives, leading to the emergence of leaders like Nitish Kumar in Bihar and the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, who promised clean governance and development for all.

The memories of the 1990s and early 2000s, when the Yadav-led administrations were perceived as using caste power to consolidate authority, still linger. While the Yadavs continue to be an important electoral bloc, the rest of society—especially the non-Yadav OBCs, Dalits, and upper castes—often recalls those years as an era of exclusion. The BJP, with its "subaltern Hindutva" narrative, has effectively capitalised on this sentiment, attracting marginalised groups by offering a sense of inclusion and an alternative to Yadav-centric



politics. Akhilesh Yadav, upon coming to power, made efforts to bridge the gap between his caste and others. He distanced himself from the old guard, symbolised by his uncle Shivpal Yadav, who represented the traditional power dynamics of the Samajwadi Party. However, incidents involving unruly behaviour

by some of his caste members toward other communities made it difficult for him to secure a second term. His attempts to modernise and adapt the party's image were undermined by persistent social tensions. Similarly, Tejashwi Yadav faces challenges in Bihar, where his efforts to step out of his father Lalu's shadow have been hampered by his own caste groups' oppressive behaviour toward Dalits and upper castes. His political journey involves grappling with the legacy of Yadav dominance, which is often perceived as being dismissive of other communities' aspirations. To succeed in the future, Tejashwi must navigate these entrenched social dynamics with greater inclusivity. The lesson from Haryana is

clear: caste dominance can become a liability if it alienates other social groups. The Jat experience shows that when other communities consolidate against a dominant caste, it can significantly alter the political landscape. For Akhilesh and Tejashwi, this means urging their caste members to adopt a more accommodative stance, rather than projecting dominance. Effective leadership in this context involves advocating for social harmony and cooperation across different segments. Both Tejashwi and Akhilesh must understand that lasting political success cannot be achieved by relying solely on their traditional caste bases. They need to expand their appeal beyond the Yadavs and reach out to other communi-

ties that have felt marginalised. Their strategy should involve building broader alliances that include marginalised communities, addressing their socio-economic needs, and promoting an inclusive vision of governance. The political landscape in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh is undergoing a shift. The BJP's ability to attract non-Yadav OBCs and other marginalised groups has weakened the impact of traditional Yadav-centric politics. Leaders like Tejashwi and Akhilesh must shed the image of their parties as "Yadav-centric" and instead emphasise inclusive governance that addresses the aspirations of all communities.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



SIGNIFICANCE OF GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is necessary for good mental and physical health says **DR CHIRAG GUPTA**

In today's hectic environment, sleep is frequently taken for granted. People regularly give up sleep due to the continual pressures of job, social commitments, technology, and the desire to remain productive. But getting enough sleep is more than just a luxury—it's necessary for good mental and physical health as well as general well-being. The body and brain may heal, renew, and reenergise themselves through sleep, which is a natural restorative process. Every night, the body goes through several cycles of sleep, with light, deep, and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep being the stages of each cycle. The circadian rhythm, the body's internal clock, regulates sleep and is impacted by temperature and light. The body receives the necessary rest thanks to this clock, which indicates when it is time to sleep and wake up. Poor sleep quality and health problems can result from circadian rhythm disruptions, which include inconsistent sleep schedules and exposure to artificial light at night. The ideal quantity of sleep differs depending on one's age, demands, and lifestyle. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that individuals get between seven and nine hours of sleep every night. Due to their unique developmental demands, teenagers and older adults may need significantly less sleep than

infants or older people, but getting good sleep is crucial for everyone. Finding a sleep balance that suits your body is crucial since getting too little or too much sleep can both be harmful to your health. Getting less sleep than your body requires on a regular basis is known as chronic sleep deprivation, and it can have both short- and long-term consequences for your health and well-being. Sleep deprivation significantly affects cognitive performance. Lack of sleep impairs concentration, decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity. It also diminishes alertness and reaction time, increasing the risk of accidents and errors. Sleep is essential for memory consolidation. Without enough sleep, it becomes difficult to retain new information and recall it when needed. Poor sleep can make people more emotionally reactive and less capable of handling stress. Over time, chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to mood disorders such as anxiety and depression. Sleep plays a vital role in maintaining the immune system. When you don't get enough rest, your body becomes more vulnerable to infections and illnesses. Studies have shown that individuals who don't get adequate sleep are more likely to catch colds and recover more slowly. Long-term sleep deprivation is linked to serious health conditions

“ THE IDEAL QUANTITY OF SLEEP DIFFERS DEPENDING ON ONE'S AGE, DEMANDS, AND LIFESTYLE. THE NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION RECOMMENDS THAT INDIVIDUALS GET BETWEEN SEVEN AND NINE HOURS OF SLEEP EVERY NIGHT ”

such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke. Insufficient sleep can also lead to weight gain due to the disruption of hunger-regulating hormones. Athletes and physically active individuals need adequate sleep for muscle recovery, energy restoration, and coordination. Lack of sleep diminishes endurance, strength, and reaction time, directly affecting physical performance. People who sleep too much may be at a higher risk of obesity and heart disease, similar to those who sleep too little. Long sleep durations can result in physical inactivity, contributing to these issues. Paradoxically, sleeping too much can leave you feeling groggy and less energized. This phenomenon, known as sleep inertia, can make it difficult to wake up and start your day. Tips for achieving better sleep: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Consistency reinforces your body's circadian rhythm, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally. Engage in calming activities before bed, such as reading, meditating, or taking a warm bath. Avoid activities

like watching electronic devices, as the blue light emitted by screens can interfere with sleep. Ensure your bedroom is conducive to sleep by keeping it dark, quiet, and cool. A comfortable mattress and pillows also play a critical role in improving sleep quality. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and large meals close to bedtime. Physical activity can promote better sleep, but avoid exercising too close to bedtime, as it may energise you and make falling asleep harder. High stress levels can negatively affect sleep. Practice stress-relieving techniques, such as mindfulness, deep breathing, or yoga, to help calm your mind before bed. Sleep is an integral component of health, and achieving the right balance is key to living a productive and healthy life. Whether it's ensuring you get enough sleep or avoiding oversleeping, understanding your body's needs is crucial. By prioritising quality sleep and adopting healthy habits, you can enhance your mental, physical, and emotional well-being, ensuring long-term vitality and success. *The author is the Senior Consultant Neurology in Fortis Hospital, Greater Noida.*



EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF REGENERATIVE MEDICINE: HEALING FROM WITHIN

BY RISHI TANDULWADKAR

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, regenerative medicine stands as a beacon of hope and innovation. Unlike traditional treatments that focus on symptom management, regenerative medicine targets the root cause, restoring function by leveraging the body's innate ability to repair itself. This revolutionary approach not only enhances recovery but also improves overall well-being and quality of life. **THE SCIENCE BEHIND REGENERATIVE MEDICINE** Regenerative medicine encompasses a range of therapies designed to restore and reestablish normal function in diseased or injured tissues. This field integrates multiple disciplines, including biology, chemistry, engineering, and medicine, to develop innovative treatments. The core concept is to harness the body's natural healing processes and amplify them to treat various conditions. Key components of regenerative medicine include: **Stem Cell Therapy:** Stem cell therapy involves using undifferentiated cells that have the potential to develop into specialised cell types to repair and regenerate damaged tissues. These cells can be derived from various sources, such as bone marrow, adipose (fat) tissue, or even laboratory-cultured induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs). The therapy has shown promise in treating conditions like joint injuries, heart disease, neurological disorders, and diabetes. **Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy:** PRP therapy involves concentrating platelets from the patient's blood and injecting them into injured areas. Platelets contain growth factors that promote healing and tissue regeneration. This therapy is commonly used in orthopedics, sports medicine, and dermatology to accelerate recovery and reduce inflammation. **Tissue Engineering:** Tissue engineering combines scaffolds (natural or synthetic structures) with cells to create biological substitutes that restore, maintain, or improve tissue function. This technique is used for applications such as skin grafts for burns and other complex reconstructive procedures. **Gene Therapy:** By altering or correcting defective genes within an individual's cells, gene therapy treats genetic disorders at their source. This approach has shown promise in treating conditions like certain cancers, cystic fibrosis, and muscular dystrophy.

damaged by heart attacks, improving heart function and potentially reducing the need for invasive interventions like heart transplants. **Neurology:** Regenerative medicine offers hope for treating neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, and spinal cord injuries. Stem cells have the potential to replace damaged neural tissues, leading to improvements in mobility and function. **Wound Healing and Dermatology:** Tissue-engineered skin grafts and PRP therapy are being used to enhance wound healing, particularly in chronic wounds, burns, and certain skin conditions. **Ophthalmology:** Regenerative approaches are being explored to treat eye conditions like macular degeneration and corneal injuries, with the potential to restore vision. **Diabetes (Type 2):** Research is underway to regenerate insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas using stem cell therapy, offering a potential therapeutic solution for managing diabetes. **THE FUTURE OF REGENERATIVE MEDICINE** Regenerative medicine is a rapidly growing field, with ongoing research and clinical trials focused on refining and expanding its applications. Key areas of focus include: **Improving Efficacy and Safety:** Refining protocols to ensure the consistency and safety of regenerative therapies while minimising risks. **Expanding Sources of Cells:** Investigating alternative sources for therapeutic cells, including induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) derived from adult cells, which can be reprogrammed to an embryonic-like state. Other sources, such as umbilical cord blood and donor-derived stem cells, are also being explored for their regenerative potential. **Integrating Technology:** Leveraging advancements in biotechnology, such as CRISPR for gene editing and 3D bioprinting for tissue engineering, to develop more sophisticated and effective treatments. **Personalised Medicine:** Tailoring regenerative therapies to individual patients, ensuring more precise and effective outcomes based on unique genetic and health profiles. Regenerative medicine represents a paradigm shift in how we approach health and wellness. By harnessing the body's natural healing capabilities, it is possible to address the root causes of various conditions and promote long-term well-being. With its immense potential, regenerative medicine is poised to redefine the future of healthcare, providing solutions that not only alleviate symptoms but cure diseases and repair injuries fundamentally. As research progresses and these therapies become more accessible, we can look forward to a future where the remarkable capabilities of regenerative medicine lead the way to healthier lives. *The author is the Founder of ALIV - Regenerative Wellness*

“The Vital Relationship Between Nutrition and Mental Health”

BY DR WAJIHA MEHTAB

In recent years, the focus on mental health has grown significantly, and for good reason. Mental well-being is vital to living a balanced, fulfilling life. But while therapy and medication are common approaches to treating mental health disorders, one often overlooked factor is nutrition. The food we eat plays a key role in influencing mood, cognitive function, and overall mental well-being.

HOW NUTRITION AFFECTS THE BRAIN

The brain is one of the most metabolically active organs in the body, requiring a constant supply of energy and nutrients to function properly. Nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, and antioxidants are essential for brain health. These nutrients support neurotransmitter function, protect the brain from oxidative stress, and help regulate mood and cognition. For example, omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish like salmon and walnuts, are critical for maintaining the structural integrity of brain cells. Studies have shown that diets high in omega-3s are associated with lower levels of depression and improved cognitive function. B vitamins, especially B6, B12, and folate, help in the production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which regulate mood and behavior. A deficiency in these vitamins can lead to irritability, fatigue, and feelings of depression. Foods like leafy greens, beans, and eggs are excellent sources of these essential nutrients.

THE ROLE OF GUT HEALTH

Recent research has highlighted the importance of the gut-brain connection, often referred to as the "gut-brain axis." The gut, often called the "second brain," houses trillions of bacteria that play a significant role in producing neurotransmitters and regulating mood. These bacteria, also known as the gut microbiome, are directly influenced by the food we eat. A diet high in fiber, probiotics, and prebiotics promotes the growth of healthy gut bacteria, which can positively influence mental health. Fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, and sauerkraut are rich in probiotics, while fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains support a healthy gut environment. On the other hand, a diet high in processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy fats can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria, contributing

to inflammation and negatively impacting mental health. In fact, research has shown a link between poor gut health and conditions like anxiety, depression, and even cognitive decline.

SUGAR AND MENTAL HEALTH

One of the most common dietary pitfalls for mental health is the overconsumption of sugar. While sugary foods may provide a quick boost of energy, they are often followed by a crash that can leave individuals feeling fatigued and irritable. These rapid fluctuations in blood sugar can contribute to mood swings and worsen symptoms of anxiety and depression. Moreover, diets high in added sugars have been linked to inflammation, which is increasingly being recognised as a contributor to mental health disorders. Chronic inflammation in the body can affect brain function and increase the risk of developing depression and other mental health conditions.

THE IMPACT OF NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCIES ON MENTAL HEALTH

Deficiencies in key nutrients can significantly affect mental well-being. Low levels of vitamin D, for instance, have been linked to depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD). This vitamin, commonly referred to as the "sunshine vitamin," plays an important role in regulating mood. Spending time in the sun and consuming foods like fatty fish, egg yolks, and fortified dairy products can help maintain adequate vitamin D levels.

Iron deficiency, often associated with anemia, can lead to feelings of fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and even depression. Foods like organ meats, nuts, oilseeds, leafy

vegetables, oatmeal, and legumes are excellent sources of iron. Magnesium, another critical nutrient, is involved in stress regulation and mood stabilisation. Low magnesium levels have been linked to anxiety and depression. Nuts, seeds, and dark leafy greens are rich in this mineral.

FOODS THAT BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

There are several foods known to support brain health and enhance mood. Some of these include:

- Fatty fish: Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which support cognitive function and mood regulation.
- Dark chocolate: Contains antioxidants and compounds that stimulate the release of serotonin, improving mood.
- Leafy greens: Packed with B vitamins that help in neurotransmitter production and brain function.
- Berries: Full of antioxidants that protect the brain from oxidative stress and improve cognitive function.
- Nuts and seeds: Provide healthy fats, magnesium, and B vitamins that support mental well-being.
- Fermented foods: Rich in probiotics, which help maintain a healthy gut and improve mood.

In conclusion, mental health and nutrition are inextricably linked. The food choices we make can have a profound impact on our mood, brain function, and mental resilience. As awareness grows, it is clear that a well-balanced diet is an important part of any mental health care plan, complementing therapy, exercise, and other treatment methods. Prioritising good nutrition is an investment in both physical and mental health, helping individuals lead more balanced, healthy, and happy lives.



