

Divergent Election Mandate In Jammu & Kashmir

Needs Introspection to retain the Unity of Jammu & Kashmir

The 21st ASEAN-India Summit concluded with the adoption of a joint statement outlining the key outcomes and commitments made by the leaders. The statement emphasized the importance of a rules-based international order and the need for cooperative mechanisms to address regional and global challenges.



National conference manifesto says, "We advocate Indo-Pak dialogue as the best method to resolve ongoing conflicts. It means that India should talk to Pakistan about Kashmir; if at all it is an issue with Pakistan. Does the National Conference agree J & K as a separate country involved in turmoil between India and Pakistan? The other point of their manifesto is about the changing the names of the most sacred religious places of Kashmiri Hindus in Kashmir: the Shankaracharya in to 'Takt-e-Suleman'.

■ **DR. ANANYA AWASTHI**

This September, India celebrated 7th Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2024, a month dedicated to nutrition awareness and action, a crucial aspect that demands our collective focus is Complementary Feeding. This practice of transitioning infants from exclusive breastfeeding to a diet that includes solid and semi-solid foods is fundamental to addressing the persistent issue of malnutrition in India. Complementary Feeding is not just about food; it is about ensuring that children receive the right nutrients at the right time, laying the groundwork for a healthy and productive life. Since milk alone cannot meet the nutritional needs of a growing child, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods at 6 months of age together with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond. Complementary Feeding is crucial for the vital role it plays in brain function, physical growth and immunity development. Scientific evidence on brain development reveals that within two years of birth, brain volume increases by more than 100%, driven primarily by the development of grey matter. Similarly, during the first year, a baby's birth weight almost triples. Hence, complementary feeding is not only essential for brain development but also for its role in deterring child undernutrition-a condition that affects nearly one-third of children under five years of age in India. Undernutrition in children encompassing stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height) and underweight (low weight for age), can have significant implications for the physical and mental development of the growing child. For example, research shows that stunted children are more likely to have lower test scores, poor cognitive outcomes, and even reduced economic productivity later in life. Moreover, complementary feeding is essential in building a strong immune system. It helps reduce the incidence of infections such as diarrhoea, respiratory illnesses and food allergies, which are common in young children. Evidently, the first two years of a child's life, is a critical window of opportunity where adequate nutrition can significantly enhance physical growth, cognition and immunity of our future generations. It is a critical period where a balanced diet full of vitamin-rich fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, eggs and dairy products can have long-lasting effects on a child's health. Despite its significance, prevalence of complementary feeding in India remains alarmingly

BJP has drawn a blank in Kashmir and the Congress a virtual blank in Jammu. There is thus a clear and sharp political divide between the two regions, which will be a challenge for the new democratic Government to overcome both politically and administratively. If such acts of divide and rule by the politicians is allowed to continue it may be disastrous for the unity of adherence as for as the existence of Jammu and Kashmir as a single unit is concerned. Ladakh is already separated from Jammu and Kashmir; a big cost having been paid by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a revelation in this regard. Let it stop somewhere before a big void is generated between the Jammu and Kashmir, which will be disastrous for both the regions. Let no more divisions occur to Jammu and Kashmir. In the valley, the deep ideological questions of restoration of statehood and the restoration of Article 370, as per the NC and the Peoples Democratic Party is a prime factor of this election for these political parties. In Jammu, the act of the abrogation of Article 370 evoked a very minimal response, when there was no question of its restoration even among people who argued that it had not benefited them to the extent imagined. Probably they are least bothered about it. In fact they may be even happy with it, feeling that Jammu and Kashmir is now a full-fledged part of India. Jammu actually saw a more consolidated election campaign, on the plank of the development by Modi government, when the contest became fully bipolar, due to the issues contested by the NC and the other regional parties of Kashmir; which had more tendencies of polarization rather than having healing discourses. This is bound to create a vertical wedge between Jammu and Kashmir. The new government has to perform beyond regional considerations and shall have to carry on the work done during the Lieutenant Governor's rule, which was fully development oriented, equally for both the regions of Kashmir and Jammu. There was no discrimination with Jammu as was being done in the past during democratic governments. Because of the majority mandate from Kashmir; when the proper representation to Jammu may be skipped, Jammu should not be again discriminated as was done in the past by similar political set ups from the valley. Jammu has always been discriminated in all respects of its development during all those times of rules dominated by politicians from Kashmir. By an approximate estimation the region

Should still the people of Jammu remain calm and continue to suffer, under the new dispensation of democratic governance. Probably they will not. Let the new ruling political powers in Jammu and Kashmir, feel the political pulse of the people of Jammu now and rectify all previous acts of hypocritical discriminations against them and ensure that Jammu gets its due in all the areas of development sectors. In the alternative Jammu will probably refuse to be a part of the Jammu & Kashmir for obvious reasons of discrimination. Once bitten twice shy. In that case and situation, why shouldn't Jammu be a separate entity and suffer for the problems of Kashmir, which can be geo-political and strategically loaded with other security considerations?

(The author of this article is a chartered consultant civil engineer).

Why Complementary Feeding is Most Critical Agenda for Child Malnutrition?

Second, the use of cultural platforms for scientific messaging can be a key strategy in promoting largescale social and behavioural change. Interestingly, WHO's recommended timing for initiating complementary feeding after six months of birth, matches perfectly well with the age-old practice of 'Annaprashan', an important milestone in the Indian cultural context. Recognizing the importance of complementary feeding, MoWCD promotes the celebration of Annaprashan Divas as a community-based event organized by Anganwadi Workers across the country to counsel mothers and local communities about the importance of introducing diverse and nutrient-rich foods to children's diet. Utilizing traditional wisdom and socio-cultural practices for scientific messaging thus emerges as a best practice for promoting the acceptance and uptake of evidence-based infant and young child feeding practices. Third, to ensure that all young children, regardless of socio-economic back-

Conclusively, Complementary feeding was a critical component of 7th Poshan Maah 2024, addressing one of the most overlooked aspects of maternal and child nutrition. By promoting evidence-based practices, leveraging cultural traditions like Annaprashan, disseminating affordable and locally available food recipes and protecting children from unhealthy foods, India can make significant strides in addressing its priority agenda for eliminating malnutrition. The Government's efforts, combined with "Jan Andolan" or mass mobilization, can ensure that all children receive the nutrition they need to thrive, setting the foundation for a healthier future for the nation.

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World Mental Health Day: Embrace joy in life, and let go of stress

■ **SURJIT SINGH FLORA**

The Day offers a platform for all parties involved in mental health to discuss their efforts and explore what further actions are necessary to ensure mental health care becomes a reality for individuals around the globe. Mental health remains overlooked by society, often regarded as a taboo subject. Conversations around it are scarce, and individuals facing mental health challenges frequently encounter stigma and discrimination, leading to inadequate treatment and support. There remains a persistent stigma surrounding mental health in society. There remains a lack of sensitivity surrounding mental well-being, and it frequently does not receive the attention it deserves. Therefore, we observe world mental health day annually to address these challenges and eliminate the taboo and stigma surrounding mental health through education and awareness. This day highlights the significance of mental health, ensuring that those who are struggling feel acknowledged and supported. While Mental health issues are becoming increasingly serious worldwide. The most alarming trend is the rising prevalence of depression and anxiety among young people. According to data from the World Health Organization, an estimated 3.8 percent of the world's population suffers from stress, including 5 percent of adults (4 percent of men and 6 percent of women) and 5.7 percent of adults over 60 years of age. Worldwide, more than 10 percent of pregnant women and women who have just given birth suffer from stress. Every year, over 720,000 individuals lose their lives to suicide. Suicide ranks as the third most common cause of death for individuals aged 15 to 29. Although there are effective treatments

for mental health, more than 75 percent of people in low- and middle-income countries do not receive adequate care.

The influence of social media

Kenya's future hinges on its young people. The pressure from school to job is growing harder for young people to handle. Social media, online activities, and information spread have complicated matters. No longer is mental health a personal problem. Given its extensive influence, we need to take action. First, find and investigate the problem's root causes. Experts believe that social media plays a significant role in mental health illnesses. Many feel inferior when they see others' lifestyles. Trolling, cybercrime, and unwanted information can hurt emotionally. Social media addiction disrupts routine. Competition and a lack of education and work options are hurting the youth. Numerous students struggle to achieve their educational and career goals while away from their family.

Symptoms

A person suffering from stress feels depressed, irritated, and empty. They may experience a lack of joy or interest in activities. In addition to this, symptoms of stress may include a lack of concentration, self-doubt, thoughts of death or suicide, sleep disturbances, changes in appetite or weight, extreme fatigue, or a lack of energy.

Treatment and prevention

Although provision for mental health counseling and support is increasing, it is still not universally available. Detecting a physical or mental problem early and initiating counseling can simplify the solution. Many studies have found that even after realizing a problem, people are reluctant to seek medical help or psychological counseling. The main reason for this is social bias. We must liberate ourselves from it. Young people should not hesitate to seek help. When-

a person experiences stress, it's crucial to discuss their issues with others. Try to continue the activities that you used to enjoy. Stay connected with friends and family.

Get expert advice.

Exercise regularly, even if it's just a short walk. Stick to regular eating and sleeping habits as much as possible. Avoid or reduce alcohol and do not use illegal drugs, which can exacerbate depression. Talk to someone you trust about your feelings and seek the advice of a health professional. Remember that you are not alone; many people have gone through this hardship. Find whatever is positive in life and be proud of it. If someone around us seems to be suffering from stress, then help him and help him get out of the stressful situation. There is no stress in life; always give place to happiness.

Taking time for mental health is crucial and can significantly contribute to overall well-being. Taking a day for mental health means stepping away from work or other obligations to concentrate on self-care and emphasize emotional and mental wellness. Here's why they matter:

1. Rest and Recovery: Days dedicated to mental well-being offer a chance to relax and rejuvenate. Just as our bodies need physical rest, our minds also need time to recuperate from stress, burnout, and the pressures of everyday life. Stepping away for a moment can alleviate fatigue and enhance overall mental strength.

2. Alleviating Tension: Ongoing stress can negatively impact mental well-being. A mental health day provides an opportunity for stress relief and can aid in preventing or easing feelings of burnout, anxiety, and depression. It offers an opportunity to participate in activities that encourage relaxation, self-care, and methods for managing stress.

3. Emotional Well-being: Focusing on mental health days enables individuals to take care of their emotional health. This allows for the exploration of feelings, consideration of individual desires and aspirations, and participation in pursuits that offer happiness and satisfaction. This can improve emotional strength, self-understanding, and general joy.

4. Enhanced Efficiency and Concentration: Regularly taking mental health days can lead to better efficiency and concentration over time. By focusing on mental well-being and alleviating pressure, people can approach their duties with fresh vigor, clear insight, and innovative thinking. Taking a break from work can offer a new outlook and help avoid exhaustion, resulting in enhanced efficiency upon returning to tasks.

5. Self-Care and Prevention: Taking time for mental health encourages a mindset of self-nurturing and proactive management of mental well-being. By acknowledging the significance of stepping back to focus on mental well-being, individuals can avert the worsening of mental health issues and incorporate self-care as a regular part of their lives. The availability and acceptance of mental health days can differ based on personal situations, workplace environment, and regional regulations. Being aware of the specific guidelines or requirements established by employers or educational institutions concerning time off is crucial. If you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or emotionally strained, it might be helpful to talk about your needs with a trusted supervisor, human resources department, or healthcare professional. They can offer insights on effective strategies to tackle your mental health issues and help you manage the process of taking a day for your well-being.

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