

# GOT ENOUGH IRON?

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

If you feel exhausted all day long for no apparent reason, if your face and palms look as pale as a character in a vampire movie, if you often feel faint, lightheaded and dizzy, especially while working out or climbing stairs - you probably are anaemic.

The signs of iron deficiency anaemia, the most common type of anemia, can often be so mild and vague that it often goes unnoticed. In fact, most people don't really realise that they suffer from mild anaemia until they get a blood test.

"Iron is an important mineral that we need. So if we lack it, our body can't make enough healthy red blood cells that help carrying haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is an iron-rich protein that delivers oxygen from your lungs to the rest of your body's tissues," says Tamanna Chowdhury, Principal Dietician, Department of Dietetics, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka.

Having headaches more often or trouble concentrating and remembering things, numbness or a tingling feeling in your hand and feet - these signs too could signal anaemia. Experts believe that it's always a good idea to know the symptoms of iron-deficiency anaemia, especially since they can often take time to develop. While the condition is very common in our country, especially among women, a lot of people don't even realise that they have iron deficiency anemia. Many of them experience the symptoms for years without ever knowing the cause.

Who can get anaemia? It can occur in both men and women of any age. But some groups like women of childbearing age, pregnant women, people with poor diet, people who frequently donate blood or vegetarians who don't take enough iron-rich food are at greater risk for iron deficiency anaemia.

"In women of childbearing age, heavy menstrual bleeding and blood loss during childbirth are the most common causes of iron deficiency. Even though it is a common condition during pregnancy, if left untreated, women might end up giving birth to premature and low birth weight babies. In our country, women in particular make up the majority of those afflicted by this ailment. In Bangladeshi households, it's often seen that female members have their food after everyone is

fed, so in most cases they have a poor diet in their share. They lack different important minerals in them."

Diets that are rich with iron can help treat or prevent iron deficiency. There are two kinds of dietary iron, heme and nonheme. Heme iron, found only in meat, fish and poultry, is much better absorbed than the nonheme iron found in vegetables, fortified foods and supplements.

Some of the excellent sources of iron rich foods containing Heme Iron are liver, oysters, mussels and some good sources are beef, shrimp, sardines and turkey. On the other hand, some iron rich foods containing Non-Heme Iron are enriched breakfast cereals, cooked beans and

lentils, pumpkin seeds, blackstrap molasses and good sources are canned beans, baked potato with skin, enriched pasta and canned asparagus.

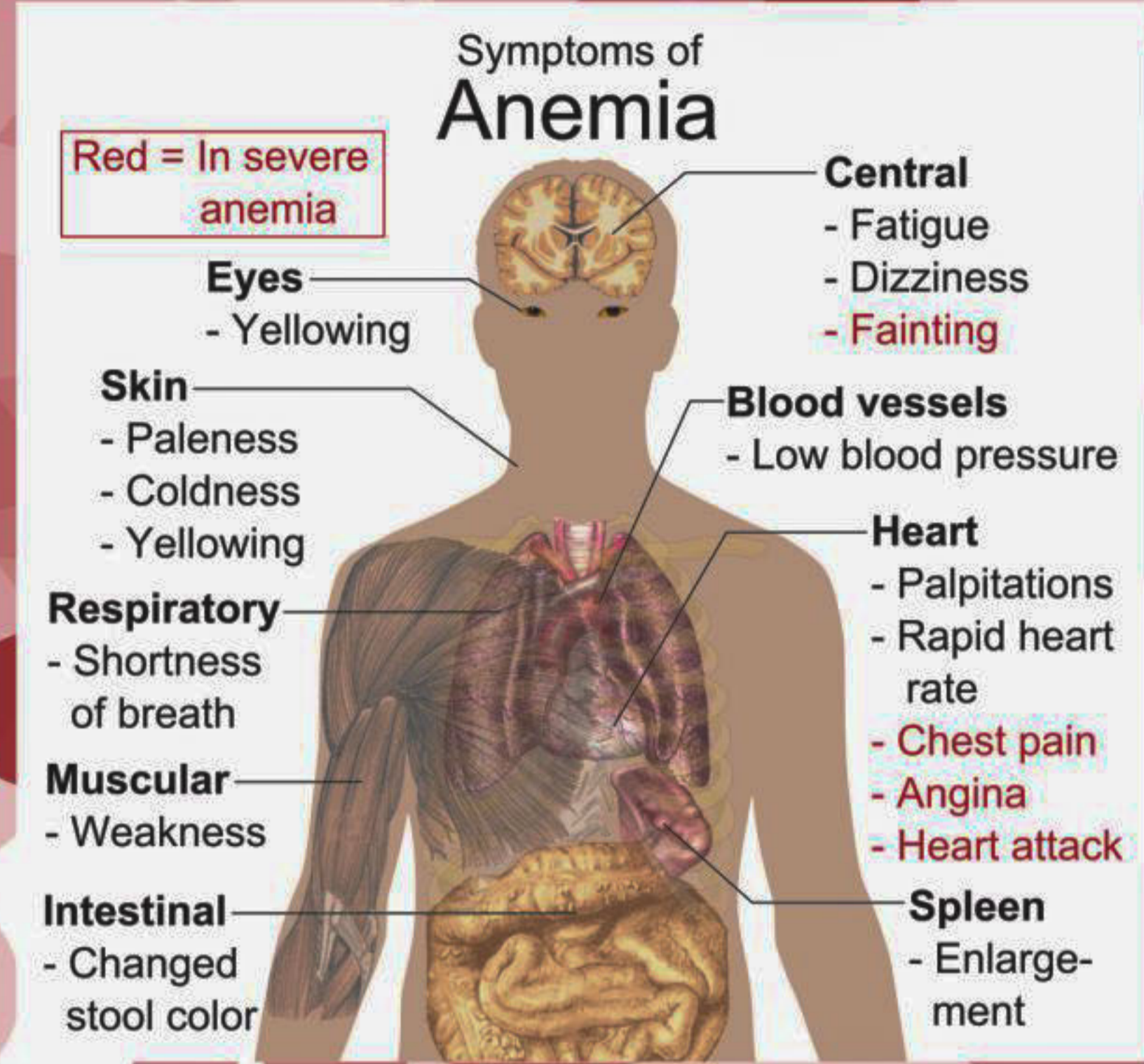
While some food items like meat, fish, poultry, fruits like orange, strawberries and vegetables like broccoli, brussels sprouts, tomato, tomato juice, potato, green and red peppers can help iron absorption enhance. Again some food-like coffee and tea, vegetables like spinach, chard, beet greens can inhibit or interfere in iron absorption. During times of rapid growth and overall body's development, pregnant women and young children may need even more iron-rich foods in their diet.

Depending on your condition, your doctor may also recommend a daily multivitamin and an iron supplement. "But before having any supplements, it's

important to talk to your doctor," Tamanna says. "Taking excessive amounts of supplemental iron will end up causing iron overload that can damage internal organs and may increase the risk of diabetes, heart attack and cancer, particularly in older people."

As Tamanna says, if you think you have the symptoms of iron-deficiency anaemia, go see your doctor immediately and find out the root cause of it. Because other than knowing you have it and treating it accordingly, it is also important to know why you have it.

HEALTH



HERITAGE



# BENGAL'S OWN PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

APURBA JAHANGIR

In the year 1965, a popular children's magazine named Shandesh published a story written by Satyajit Ray. This story produced a protagonist from Rajani Sen Road, Kolkata, who was a sharp young man of around 27, with a tall (6 feet to be precise) athletic physique, and had superb analytical abilities and observation skills (which Ray called Magajastra). The story was a detective fiction and was well received by the audience. Nobody then knew that this character would go on to become a cult classic for Bangali youngsters and adults all over. Even after 50 years, the character Prodosh C Mitter aka Felu Mitter or Feluda as we all know and love, still mesmerises and holds a special place in all Bangalis' hearts.

Satyajit Ray gave life to our Bangali detective through 'Feludar Goyendagiri', which was the first novel of this series. Ray had deep interest in crime fiction and children content which resulted into Felu Mitter.

Though Ray in several interviews admitted that Conan Doyal's Sherlock Holmes was one of his major inspirations for Feluda, Felu Mitter developed his own personality over the years as an icon. Other than his good looks, he is presented as a very well behaved and well read character—'Bhodro' in every Bangali sense. Yet he is equally at ease doing a kung fu stunt or eating exotic foods in Hong Kong. He might be pensive but never impolite; a person who still uses public transport and lives at his uncle's. Other than his regular Charminar (the cigarette brand of his choice) Feluda is never seen drinking or doing drugs. He reflects the ideal image of a middle class Bangali which is one of the major reasons why this character stood out then any other fictional detective icons.

Through 1965 to 1992 Satyajit Ray wrote more than 30 novels and short stories and directed two movies on Feluda. The success of Feluda wasn't just because of Felu Mitter alone. When we say Feluda it's not just one person but three that comes to mind. Without Feluda's cousin, who is also his side kick Tapeshe Ranjan Mitra aka Topshe as Feluda dearly calls him and the famous Lalmohan Babu aka Jatayu; Feluda would never be able to accomplish his missions. The stories written by Ray were all narratives from Topshe. The teenage boy pushes his cousin to take the weird cases and helps him side by side in a very Bangali Watson way. Feluda's first case was because of Topshe's eve's dropping in 'Feludar Goyendagiri' and it is safe to say that without Topshe urging him to take up cases maybe Feluda would never be the private investigator he became.

Interestingly enough, Felu Mitter is not the only most loved character of the

Feluda universe. This title can also go to the short, stocky, witty and talented Lalmohan Babu. This character was first introduced in the novel 'Shonar Kella' and from then on he accompanies Feluda and Topshe on all their major adventures. Other than writing crime stories Lalmohan is seen having a knack for collecting weird weaponry which can fight side by side with Felu Mitter's 32 Colt revolver. His use of Boomerang in Bakshya Rahashya or the 'Jap Jantra' in 'Joto Kando Kathmundo te' was sheer genius. It is for this dash of swagger, that readers can say that no other sidekicks can match the man from Gorpar in North Kolkata. Another favourite character is Sidhu Jatha - a living encyclopaedia who helps Feluda and the gang from time to time when they are stuck in dead end—the Mycroft Holmes of the Feluda series.

If we look for the elements for Feluda's popularity we have to include the role of the vicious antagonists. This is where Feluda readers face a big dilemma—do we love them or hate them! These dacoits as Lalmohan Babu puts it, challenge Feluda on a regular basis. Villains such as Maghal Laal Meghraj, Mondar Bose, Pakrashi are all unique in their own way. Ray created them in such a way that it is very hard to not be intimidated.

Though they are amazing crime thrillers; the Feluda novels can also be considered as great travelogue. The grand narration on the deserts of Rajasthan in Shonar Kella or the exquisite details of Kanshi in Joy Baba Felunath can only be written by a maestro like Satyajit Ray. The cases which were based on Kolkata also give a wonderful picture of the streets of New Market, Park Street, Rajani Sen etc.



Other than the sketches by Satyajit, whenever readers try to imagine Felu Mitter, the face that pops out is of famous actor Soumitra Chatterjee. When Ray gave life to Feluda on celluloid Soumitra had the honour to portray the Bangali investigator. It is needless to say that he did an outstanding job but the actor who won everyone's heart was Santash Dutta, portraying Lalmohan. In an interview director Sandip Ray, son of Satyajit Ray stated that Santash Dutta did so well, Satyajit later changed the illustration of Lalmohan and made it look like Santosh. Sandip Ray later casted Sabyasachi Chakrabarti as Feluda and Robi Ghosh as

Lalmohan which later changed to Bibhu Bhattacharya after Ghosh died. Pages after pages can be written on Felu Mitter and the gang. Topics such as why Felu Mitter never got married, his love for food, Topshe's age being always the same can come up in various debates. Yet the main question remains—why Feluda still dictates the Bangali detective fiction scene. It is because he is one of us, and we can be like him too. He is very much real. Whenever we hear about Feluda, we treat him like he is the living next door, some character of a book. For all these reasons Feluda and the gang will forever be in our Magojastra. ■

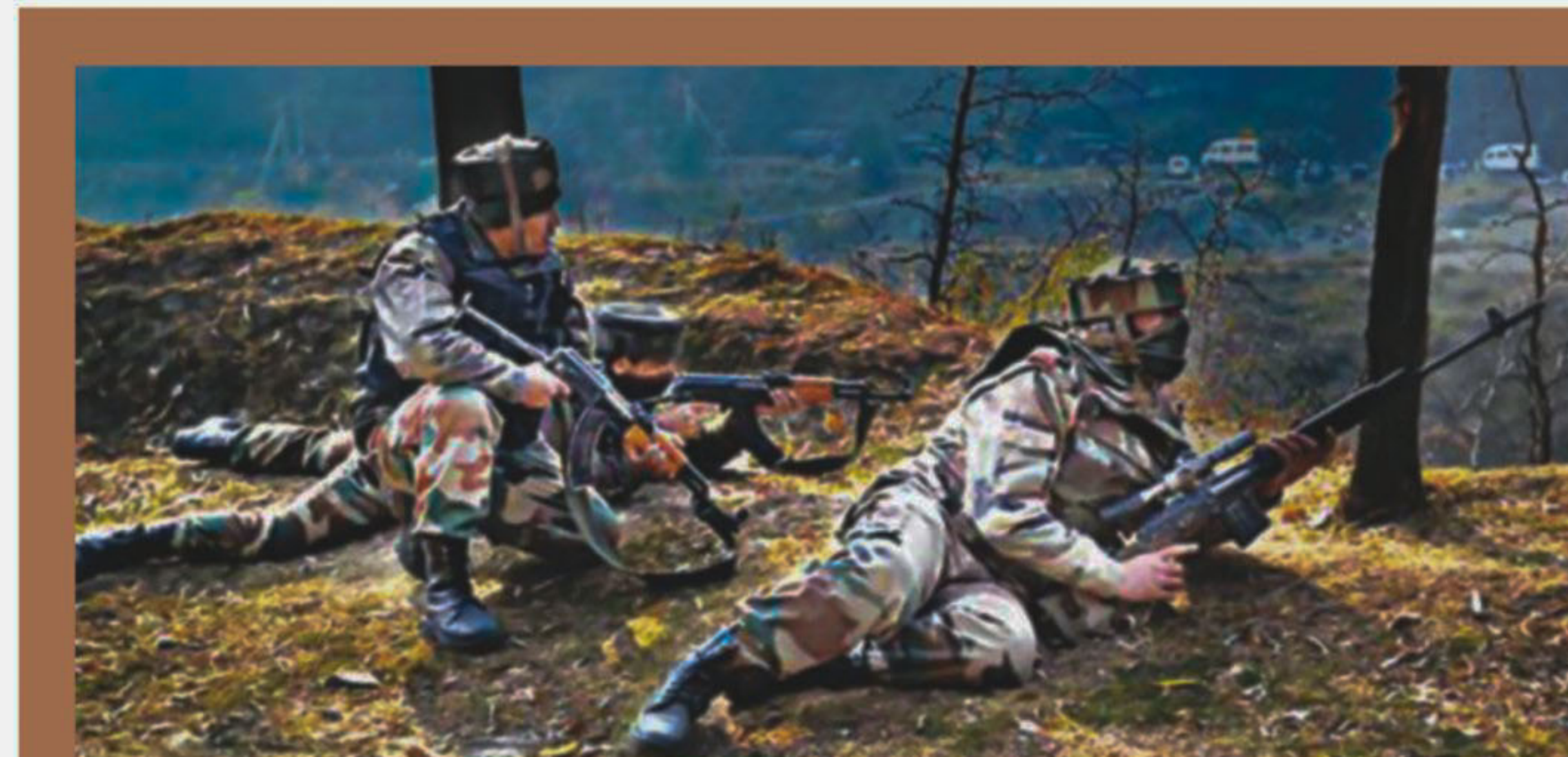


PHOTO: INTERNET

NUMBERS

# 17

The number of Indian soldiers killed by heavily armed militants in one of the most deadly attacks in Kashmir in a quarter-century-old insurgency. Even though India accused Pakistan of being behind the attack, no group has taken any accountability for the attack while Pakistan denied any role.