

“Even a soul submerged in sleep is hard at work and helps make something of the world.”

Heraclitus

EDITORIAL

Animal rights!

Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha said that students, teachers and the members of every government and private institution should be made more aware of rabies (hydrophobia) and other various accidents. He also said that students and the public should also be made aware of the behaviour of stray dogs and other animals, as well as the preventive measures and the first aid to prevent the spread of various diseases through them. “The state government is making arrangements to rescue stray animals and keep them in suitable shelter houses.

The CM also said that the state government has taken various initiatives in this regard so that no accidents happen to these stray animals. While addressing a meeting organized by the Animal Resources Development Department of stray dogs and other stray animals, the Chief Minister said All these humane feelings upon the helpless animals. He also laid special emphasis on the vaccination of domestic animals to prevent various diseases. He inquired about the construction of shelter houses for stray animals in 20 Nagar Panchayat areas, including the construction of Animal Birth Control Centres in the Agartala Municipal Corporation.

Almost eight districts, too, have come under his scrutiny at the same time. He directed that people should be informed about the programme before starting the management programme of stray animals. He also inquired about the total number of stray animals kept in the state, Animal Birth Control Centres at different places and work done so far in the management of stray animals. Dr. Saha asked that initiatives be taken to arrange training for the workers involved in the management of stray dogs and other animals. It is quite satisfactory to have the details of the stray animals of the state.

Spiritual Umbrella

Waves of love turn the circling heavens

Revered Sufi Saints have consistently celebrated the divine message of love, often wrapped in the warp and weft of music and poetry. Divine love passes through the hearts of the faithful to raise their consciousness to the glory of the Almighty.

For centuries, it was common for Sufi saints and their disciples to wear long shirts made of wool that would reflect their inner asceticism and renunciation, and also enhance their physical suffering. The wearing of the wool was metaphorical. It carried the messaging that the Sufis constantly endeavoured to stay away from the nafs, or inferior desires.

Saadi Shirazi, one of the greatest poets of the classical literary tradition, wrote of how the deliberate renunciation of the luxuries of the material world further spurred the Sufis on their journey towards the Almighty. “The lovers of God hold strange state. May they sustain wound or salve, it is equal to them. They are such people who hate worldly kingship: They are patient with their poverty in the quest of Him. They drink wine of grief, bear worldly trails, still they remain silent,” wrote Shirazi.

In the modern world with its fast-paced life, there are ascetic individuals who may not outwardly wear the traditional clothing of a Sufi, but their inner pursuit remains the same. Ibrahim W. Gamard, a Sufi writer and member of the Mevlevi Order, a 730-year-old Sufi order that originated with Rumi, studied Sufism for over 35 years and is known for his work on classical Persian Sufi poetry. Gamard noted that the constant quest of the Sufis is to “seek to attain deeper levels of understanding of the wisdom of the Revelation and to have ‘tastes’ of Paradise in this lifetime”.

The teachings of the Holy Quran form the basis of Sufi writings and have mystified seekers for centuries. The Saints have spoken of an insatiable yearn to unite with God and an encompassing message of loving kindness that marks their journey.

For the Sufi, the significance of the “mystic Quest” is an integral part of his seeking. From region to region, and from time to time, the means of the journey may have differed, but the ultimate goal has always been oneness with God.

In the Indian sub-continent, the cultural, linguistic, musical and spiritual tradition of Sufism has flourished for centuries.

MESSAGE

“Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency. The removal of substantial unfreedoms, it is argued here, is constitutive of development.”

Amartya Sen

Baha'is facing crisis in Iran  
Baha'is in Iran face scapegoating and incitement to hatred in midst of national crisis

GENEVA—5 February 2026—At a time when the calls of the Iranian people for justice and for the betterment of their country have been met with violence, repression and widespread loss of life, the Baha'i International Community (BIC) is alarmed by an increasing effort by the Iranian government to use Baha'is as a scapegoat in a moment of national crisis.



consistent with its long-standing pattern, in state media and through increasing persecution. During every previous period of national crisis since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, whether social, economic, or political, the Iranian authorities have consistently and systematically scapegoated the Baha'is through false allegations and coordinated disinformation and hate campaigns. This time has been no different.

Over the past week, programmes have been broadcast on Channel 2 state television spreading false accusations against the Baha'is community, including clearly forced confessions by Baha'is taken under coercion. This has been accompanied by reports of an increase in the arrest and detention of Baha'is across the country. On 1 February, the so-called “confessions” of two Baha'is, relating to the protests—confessions that are manifestly obtained under pressure and coercion—were broadcast by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the regime's principal state media outlet. Human rights organizations have for many years documented the practice of forced confessions in Iranian prisons, where detainees are pressured, threatened

and even tortured into giving false confessions against themselves, and broadcasting such forced confessions on state television is a major escalation in the Iranian government's campaign against the Baha'is community. For decades, the Iranian authorities have sought to justify the persecution of the Baha'is through hate speech and scapegoating. Yet Iranians and the international community increasingly recognize the baseless nature of these accusations, as the authorities have never produced even a shred of evidence to substantiate their claims. “This is another attempt by the Iranian government to falsify the truth and present falsehoods to its own public. But this attempt is a new threadbare and its baselessness is proven. During every period of national crisis, whether social, economic, or political, the Iranian authorities consistently and systematically scapegoated the Baha'is,” said Ms. Fahandej, BIC Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. “The Baha'is community is often among the first to be accused of false

allegations, scapegoated, and targeted through coordinated disinformation and hate campaigns. This is a repeated pattern and we are seeing it again,” she said. “The Baha'is in Iran, despite the false accusations and cruel persecutions they have faced, have only acted with resilience and service to their country and have never responded with violence,” Ms. Fahandej added. “Based on the principles of their Faith, the Baha'is in Iran have utterly rejected violence throughout the decades of intolerable persecution. They have declined to resort to the hateful and unjust tactics of their persecutors. Their record of refusing to deny their beliefs in return for every worldly benefit shows their commitment to their principles and above all to the principle of truthfulness. Their desire for their rights is so that they can contribute to the welfare of their country in a land they hold sacred.” During the recent UN Special Session on Iran at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the BIC noted that, alongside the Baha'is community's decades-long experience of persecution, many more people in Iran are now

facing injustices. The BIC expressed its sympathy in response to reports of loss of life across the country. “All Iranians across the country, from every religion, ethnicity and background, deserve to play a decisive role in the shaping of their country. This is an inherent human right that cannot be taken away by any government,” Ms. Fahandej said. “The Baha'is in Iran have endured injustice and persecution for four decades and have been committed to their nation out of their love for their country and their desire to work for its progress and well-being,” she added. “The BIC calls on the international community to unequivocally condemn the scapegoating and persecution of the Baha'is and to raise the call for justice for all the people of Iran.”

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WIDE-ANGLE

Wildlife conservation initiatives significant for Tripura

SUBHASHIS MITTRA

Tripura is home to over 100 wildlife species, all vital to maintaining ecological balance. Against the backdrop of rising human-elephant conflict in various states and UTs, including Tripura, the Centre's initiatives for conservation of wildlife assumes special significance. Emphasising the need to reduce conflict and safeguard elephant movement, Tripura Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma recently suggested constructing underpasses in areas where elephant corridors intersect, particularly in the Atharamura hill range. The corridors have historical significance, once extending to Chittagong in Bangladesh, and offering a vast, uninterrupted forest for elephants to roam freely. Debbarma expressed concern over the impact of barbed wire fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border, which has severely restricted elephant movement. As a result, these pachyderms are confined to smaller territories, leading them to wander into human settlements in search of food. This often results in human-elephant conflicts. The expansion of railway and national highway networks through forested areas has further fragmented elephant habitats, creating difficulties for herds to move between ranges. Debbarma has proposed enhancing food sources within forest areas to discourage elephants from entering villages. The state plans to undertake large-scale planting of banana trees and bamboo to provide reliable fodder for the herds.

Wild Life Act  
The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for conservation, protection and management of

wildlife. The Act regulates hunting of wild animals, provides for declaration of Sanctuaries, National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves and also for penalties for violation of the provisions of the Act. The Centre provides the financial assistance to States and Union Territories under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, of ‘Development of Wildlife Habitats’ and ‘Project Tiger and Elephant’ which aims at conservation and protection of wildlife and improvement of its habitats. These schemes launched by the Environment, Forest and Climate Change support activities like removal of invasive species, creation of water holes, grassland management, maintenance of fire lines, soil and moisture conservation works, establishment and maintenance of anti-poaching camps, patrolling squads, improved wireless communication, wildlife veterinary care, use of technology like camera traps, drones, e-surveillance etc. for monitoring of wild animals, detecting illegal intrusions, early warning system in relaying information to quick reaction teams in the field for managing human wildlife conflict, eco-development activities involving communities. Conservation of flagship species such as Tiger, Elephant, Dolphin etc are implemented in ‘project mode’ like Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Lion, Project Snow Leopard, Project Dolphin. Under a species specific component ‘Recovery programme for saving critically endangered species and habitats’, States and Union Territories are

assisted for focused conservation action on identified 24 critically endangered species. The population assessment of wild animals is carried out by the respective States and Union Territories from time to time. The population assessment of the identified flagship species are carried out at National level. The first ever scientific assessment of the snow leopards and river dolphin have indicated a population of 718 snow leopards and 6,327 river dolphins in the country. The tiger population has shown increase as per the All India Tiger Estimation done in 2022, with an estimated number of 3,682 (range 3,167-3,925) as compared to the 2018 estimation of 2,967 (range 2,603-3,346). Further, as per ‘Status of Leopards in India-2022’ report, leopard population in country is estimated at 13,874 (Range: 12,616-15,132) individuals, in comparison to 12,852 (12,172-13,535) individuals as per 2018 report. Further, with a view to protecting, propagating and developing wildlife a network of Protected Areas have been created in the country. The number of Protected Areas have increased from 981 in 2020 to 1,134 in 2025. Similarly, the Tiger Reserves have increased from 50 to 58 and Elephant Reserves have increased from 30 to 33 during the same period. In addition, for maintaining the ecological connectivity, 32 tiger corridors and 150 Elephant corridors have been identified. The Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) exercise for the National Parks, Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserves and Elephant Reserves, have also been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of management.

ASTROTODAY

**Aries :-** Consider making some plans for a vacation or short getaway, Aries. Looking forward to something fun can make even the toughest of days far easier to handle. You'll be amazed how much you can manage when there's an end in plain sight. Your entire attitude can lighten. So take the bull by the horns and create an incentive for yourself. Do something special to reward the hard work you do day after day.

**Taurus :-** Don't judge someone if he or she has a different lifestyle than what you consider to be OK, Taurus. You probably lean toward the traditional, yet not everyone feels this way about relationships, working, or lifestyle. While it may seem impossible to understand and even frighten you, try not to be too harsh on those you deem odd. You'd be better off using that energy to keep your own life on track.

**Gemini :-** Friends seeking advice or a shoulder to cry on could be plentiful today, Gemini. You're one of best people to give them the support and care they need. Just be sure that you don't give so much to others that you don't have anything left for yourself. True friendship is about sharing and the exchange of problems and help. Running yourself down will leave you in a place where you aren't going to be much help to anyone.

**Cancer :-** Getting through today shouldn't pose too big a problem for you, Cancer. You may feel a huge second wind that can give you the drive and determination to see your chores and projects through. Make some plans for this evening, such as getting together with friends or taking in an event that really intrigues you. Until then, go about your tasks bit by bit. You'll get things finished before you know it.

**Leo :-** Working within boundaries and restrictions could really get to you today, Leo. Yours is an independent spirit and your best achievements are often born of doing things your own way. Yet like it or not, we all have to follow guidelines and rules. Do your best to follow suit and finish what needs to be done. Afterward, you may find more freedom to act independently without consequences. Exercise patience and diligence as needed today.

**Virgo :-** Chances are that you'll feel upbeat and positive today, Virgo. Consider sharing this energy with those around you who are feeling less than content. Your attitude can have a profound effect on friends, partners, spouses, and children. Even neighbors and extended family can pick up on your spirit without you even realizing it. Share your optimism with everyone you can today. If you see someone hurt or angry, tell him or her that everything will eventually work out and to keep trying.

**Libra :-** Don't discount your ability to be extremely resourceful if you need to be, Libra. If you don't have everything you need or all of the required information, take time to think. Who can you ask? What places can you access? Who might know where you can find what you need? Rather than panic because the pieces aren't all there, instead make a list of contacts and go for it. Trust in yourself.

**Scorpio :-** Try not to let today's blues get you down, Scorpio. While it's true that some days can seem to drag on, the busier you are the faster time will pass. Get down to finishing any work still before you and then make plans for tonight. If there's a light at the end of the tunnel, not only will things seem to speed up but you'll feel better knowing it's coming.

**Sagittarius :-** Dare to be different, Sagittarius. It can be so easy to fall into a drill. Sleeping at the same time, eating at the same time, wearing the same style, and going about work the same way day after day. Before you know it, you feel like you're in a rut. The only way to get away from this is to make a decision to break free by doing something unique. Try a new haircut. Wear colors that are unusual for you. If the need is there, consider a new career. Pursue expansion.

**Capricorn :-** If your lifestyle is considerably different than that of others, resist feeling self-conscious about it today, Capricorn. Try to remember that you chose the life you have for specific reasons. Even if you've come to a point where you're considering a change, there's no need to feel badly, ashamed, or embarrassed about where you are now. Everyone has to make his or her own way. If this conforms to the norm, that's fine. If it doesn't, that's fine, too.

**Aquarius :-** An enhanced feeling of determination could motivate you today, Aquarius. Finish the things that aren't complete and make some plans for this evening. Don't hesitate to take on something that feels complicated or big. Chances are you'll be able to handle most anything and it will feel great when it's finished. Enjoy your day by making the most of opportunity.

**Pisces :-** Feeling the effects of today's energies, Pisces? Take heart if this is the case, because the end of the tunnel isn't as far away as it seems. Do your best to take things one step at a time and see about making some plans for a little fun this evening. Get together with friends or take in a movie. Help yourself feel better by staying busy and focused and follow up with some recreation. Before you know it, the aspect will pass and you'll be back to normal.

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