



**I'M LOOKING FOR A  
GAME CHANGER FRIDAY:  
HIMESH RESHAMMIYA**  
pg 08

**INVEST SOCIAL CAPITAL AND  
THE RESULTS WILL BE GOOD**

04

**I DON'T WANT TO MAKE  
PREDICTABLE CHOICES: ALAYA**

pg 08



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Regularization to be considered automatically on completion of 8 years of service

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 FEB:**

Regularisation of the services of temporary employees of the State Government has stayed in the news for some years now, gaining momentum around election cycles and becoming assurances in the interim. Major regularization drives have also been undertaken in the past and now, a fresh set of rules and commitments have arrived in the form of a notification issued by the Department of Personnel. Services of temp employees will qualify for regularization automatically on completion of eight years [as on 31 December] of service every year.

The notification announces that the State Government has extend-

ed the "benefit of regularization scheme" to all temporary employees "working under Work-charged, Muster Roll, Adhoc, Consolidated pay belonging to Group C and Group D category including Home Guards [Male and Female] and drawing salaries from the consolidated fund of the State Government..."

The notification announces that services of all temporary employees who have served continuously for eight years or more as on 31 Dec of every calendar year "may be" considered for regularization in their respective departments subject to availability of vacancies.

Since Home Guards do not usually deliver "continuous" service, their cases will come up

for regularization once they complete eight years of cumulative service as on 31 Dec of every calendar year.

The regularized employees will be placed in Level-1, Level-2 and Level-3 of the Pay Matrix prescribed for category of post.

The original pay structure prescribed for the post held by such category of government employees will be restored on completion of five years of service after regularization, the notification adds.

Since the earlier regularization process was already working on cases of temp employees who had completed five years of service as of 31 Dec 2018, their cases will be considered as a one-time

exercise [since the new system requires eight years of service] "in respect of only those temporary employees otherwise who are eligible but left out in the earlier exercise."

The regularization process will be unencumbered by the roster point/ reservation rules, the notification adds even as they shall be strictly as per provisions of relevant rules governing appointment and other conditions of service prevalent in the State.

The regularization process will be held in accordance with verification guidelines covered in a Department of Personnel circular of 2014.

The regularization of services of temporary labourers employed in

government farms and worksites by technical and works departments shall be dealt with separately, the notification informs.

As for PSUs, autonomous organizations, societies and boards under the State Government, the Notification states that they can adopt the regularization scheme provided they are in a position to fund it from their own resources without seeking extra funds from the Government. Grants provided by the State Government to such bodies cannot be utilized for regularization, the Notification stresses. Prior concurrence of the Finance Department has been mandatory before consideration of regularization proposals by such bodies.

## Governor attends Banaras Chaurasia Samaj event



**SUMMIT REPORT  
VARANASI, 09 FEB:**

Governor Ganga Prasad attended the 8th Samellan, Parichay Samaroh and Samuhik Vivah held at Chaukaghat, Varanasi, by Banaras Chaurasia Samaj today, a press release from Raj Bhawan informs.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor congratulated Banaras Chaurasia Samaj for or-

ganizing the remarkable Samuhik Vivah [mass wedding].

The Governor pitched for unity and teamwork for the development of society.

He said, "Unity and teamwork are very important for the development of society and nation. It is important for all of us to unite when it comes to development of the nation."

He remembered the leaders of India and mentioned their struggles and dedication in bringing progress and development to the country.

The programme was attended by former legislators of Uttar Pradesh Assembly, journalist Deepak Chaurasia, members of Banaras Chaurasia Samaj and local gentry.

## Inclined bench-press championship held in Majhitar

**SAGAR CHETTRI  
GANGTOK, 09 FEB:**

White Hall, Gangtok, and Phoenix Gym, Tadong, lifted the overall team championships of the 1st Sikkim Open Inclined Bench Press Championship in men's and women's categories respectively here today at Sundar Hotel and Resort, Majhitar, East Sikkim.

The daylong championship was organized by Majhitar-based Body Craft Fitness Studio.

More than 70 participants from different gyms of the State participated in Junior Men and Women, Senior men and women and Master's men and women categories. The championship was held under the technical guidance of Sikkim Strength Lifting Association chief coach, Pema Dorjee Bhutia.

Sonam Ongmu Bhutia of Phoenix Gym was adjudged the best disciplined player of the championship.

Similarly, winners in different categories are Homnath Siwakoti



of Pema's Gym & Health Club, Martam in master's men, Kunzang Chodak Bhutia of Pema's Gym & Health Club, Martam in junior men and Bhawane Mukhiya of Body Craft Fitness Studio in junior women and Anjali Sharma of Phoenix Gym, Tadong in senior women and Ashok Rai of White Hall Gym, Gangtok in senior women.

Body Craft Fitness Studio has been affiliated to Sikkim Strength Lifting Association since 2016 and has al-

ready produced national and international level strength-lifters from.

Recently, six members from the Body Craft Fitness Studio, who were the part of the State team, had won 4 gold medals, 1 silver and 2 bronze medals for the State in the senior nationals and two of its lifters, Kishore Dungalmai Rai and Madhu Mahal Majhi have qualified to represent the country in the 8th International Strength Lifting & Inclined Bench Press Championship 2020 to

be held from 13 to 17 February at Bangkok in Thailand.

Body Craft Fitness Studio chief trainer, Palden Tamang, informs that the main objective of the championship was to provide a platform to youngsters of the State and encourage them towards sporting and productive activities.

He believes that such healthy activities help keep the younger generation away from drugs and unhealthy activities and thus create a healthy society.

"We are very happy that we have been able to produce national and international level strength-lifters from the area in a short span of time so this championship is also an opportunity for the people to know about lifters from our area," he said.

Mr Tamang added that Body Craft Fitness Studio had organized the championship for the first time and would now try to make it an annual event on getting the support from the people. He also shared his commitment to bring out more national and international lifters from Majhitar.

"Sports is the only medium which keeps the young fit and healthy and away from drugs and unhealthy activities," he said.

Mr Tamang, who joined Body Craft Fitness Studio as a trainer in 2015, is a former Mr Darjeeling [2006] and Mr Eastern Indian [2015] and also won a silver medal for the State in the senior national strength championship 2019.

## Delhi polls: AAP irked as EC delays announcing voter turnout, Kejriwal says 'absolutely shocking'

**NEW DELHI, 09 FEB:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday expressed shock at the delay in the Election Commission's announcement of the final voter turnout for the elections held in the national Capital on Saturday. Most exit polls on Saturday predicted the Aam Aadmi Party's win with a sweeping majority.

"Absolutely shocking," Kejriwal tweeted. "What is EC [Election Commission] doing? Why are they not releasing poll turnout figures, several hours after polling?" Voting for the Assembly

elections ended at 6 pm on Saturday but the poll body is yet to proclaim the exact number that showed up to vote.

The information is usually made public soon after voting ends. However, the election body had released a provisional figure of 61.43% at the end of the day. This figure is significantly lower than the turnout during the 2015 elections, recorded at 67.13%.

"I think this is the first time in the history of elections in India...even after Lok Sabha elections, the figures are released on the same day,"

said AAP leader Sanjay Singh. "This is the first time in 70 years of our history that the poll body is not ready to divulge the exact voter turnout figures. This means that something is going on...some kind of game is going on."

Singh highlighted that it was an easy task to declare the figures as there are only 70 constituencies in Delhi. "Why has there been no official statement [from the Election Commission]?" he asked.

In the last Assembly elections in 2015, the AAP won 67 of 70 seats

in an unprecedented sweep.

According to exit polls announced on Saturday evening, the Times Now-IPSOS survey predicted 44 seats for the Arvind Kejriwal-led party while the Bharatiya Janata Party was predicted to improve its 2015 tally and win 26 constituencies. According to ABP News-C Voter, the AAP may win 49 to 63 seats while the BJP may get anything between five to 19 seats. Republic TV-Jan Ki Baat survey gave the ruling party 48 to 61 seats, and the BJP nine to 21 constituencies. The

TV9 Bharatvarsh-Cicero poll predicted 54 seats for Kejriwal's party, and 15 for the saffron outfit. The India Today-Axis exit poll said AAP would sweep the elections, winning 59 to 68 seats, while the BJP would bag two to 11 constituencies.

On Sunday, the saffron party dismissed exit poll predictions with BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi saying, "exit polls don't have their math right". The party's Delhi unit chief Manoj Tiwari also rejected the exit polls, saying the AAP would fail on February 11, when results are declared.

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# Goa Archbishop urges govt to revoke CAA

**PANAJI, FEB 9 (PTI):** Archbishop of Goa and Daman, Rev Filipe Neri Ferrao, has urged the central government to “immediately and unconditionally revoke the Citizenship Amendment Act” and stop quashing the “right to dissent”.

He also appealed to the government not to implement the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

However, Goa BJP’s general secretary Narendra Sawaikar asked why the Archbishop was opposing CAA when “crores of people including Goans” were supporting the new law.

Diocesan Centre for Social Communications Media, a wing of the Goa Church, in a statement on Saturday said, “The Archbishop and the Catholic community of Goa would like to appeal to the government to listen to the voice of millions in India, to stop quashing

the right to dissent and, above all, to immediately and unconditionally revoke the CAA and desist from implementing the NRC and the NPR.”

The CAA, NRC and NPR are “divisive and discriminatory” and will certainly have a “negative and damaging effect” on a multi-cultural democracy like ours, the church said.

There is serious concern that NRC and NPR will result in “direct victimisation of the underprivileged classes, particularly Dalits, adivasis, migrant labourers, nomadic communities and the countless undocumented people who, after having been recognised as worthy citizens and voters for more than 70 years, will suddenly run the risk of becoming stateless and candidates for detention camps,” it said.

There has been widespread discontent and open protests throughout the country and even abroad against the CAA, NRC and NPR, which are



“forecasting a systematic erosion of values, principles and rights” that have been guaranteed to all citizens in the Constitution, the release said.

Eminent citizens, including top intellectuals and legal luminaries, have taken a studied and unequivocal stand against the CAA, NRC and NPR, it noted.

Goa also witnessed

several protests, which transcended the confines of religious and caste affiliation and brought people from all walks of life together on one united platform, said the statement.

It said Christians in India have always been a peace-loving community and deeply committed to the ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fra-

ternity, enshrined in the Constitution.

“We have always taken great pride that our beloved country is a secular, sovereign, socialist, pluralistic and democratic republic,” the church said.

The very fact that CAA uses religion goes against the secular fabric of the country, it said.

“It goes against the

spirit and heritage of our land which, since times immemorial, has been a welcoming home to all, founded on the belief that the whole world is one big family,” the church said.

“We pray for our beloved country, that good sense, justice and peace prevail in the hearts and minds of all,” it added.

However, BJP’s state general secretary Narendra Sawaikar asked why the Archbishop was opposing CAA, when it was being supported by “crores of people”.

“Archbishop says that #CAA should be withdrawn as it is being opposed. My question is Why? When Crores of people are supporting #CAA, including Goans,” Sawaikar, the former Lok Sabha member from South Goa, tweeted.

The Goa Assembly recently passed a motion congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for enacting CAA.

## Rajasthan govt transfers 30 IAS officers

**JAIPUR, FEB 9 (PTI):** In a bureaucratic reshuffle, the Rajasthan government on Sunday transferred and redesignated 30 IAS officers.

Senior IAS officer Sudhansh Pant, who was on awaited posting order, was appointed the Principal Secretary of Forest and Environment Department whereas Shreya Guha, who was earlier holding the charge, was redesignated as the Principal Secretary of Tourism, Art and Culture Department.

Sandeep Verma was transferred as the Principal Secretary of Revenue, Colonisation and Soldier Welfare Department, and Rajesh Kumar Yadav was appointed in his place as the Principal Secretary of PHED and Ground Water De-

partment.

Praveen Gupta, who was a member of the Revenue Board in Ajmer, was appointed the Commissioner of Departmental Inquiry, Jaipur.

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Ajitabh Sharma was transferred to the Energy Department. He was also appointed the Chairman of DISCOM and Rajasthan Renewable Energy Corporation.

Kunji Lal Meena, who was earlier the Principal Secretary of Energy Department, was given the charge of Mines and Petroleum Department.

Umardeen Khan, Namrata Vrishni and Himanshu Gupta were appointed the district collectors of Jhujhunu, Dungarpur and Jalore, respectively.

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## KUTSE SHEGU



The 49th days Kutse Shegu of our late father Ren Rey Mondal or Tenzing Lepcha, who left for heavenly abode on 29 th December 2019 falls on 15th and 16th February 2020.

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Rey Busty, Rumtek East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all the well wishers who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

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# India lose 2-3 to Belgium in FIH Pro League match

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9 (PTI): India fought hard but a defensive lapse from Harmanpreet Singh cost them dear as they slumped to their first defeat in the second edition of the FIH Hockey Pro League, losing 2-3 to world champions Belgium here on Sunday.

After defeating world number three the Netherlands in their opening two matches of the FIH Pro League, India beat world number one Belgium in a thrilling match on Saturday to continue their unbeaten run, which lifted them to number four position in the world rankings.

But the Manpreet Singh-led side could not repeat Saturday’s performance and went down fighting in their second match against world number one Belgium.

Alexander Hendrickx scored from a penalty corner in the third minute for Belgium but it was Maxime Plennevaux’s (17th, 26th) two field

goals that ensured the win for the visiting side.

India’s goals came from the sticks of Vivek Sagar Prasad (15th) and Amit Rohidas (17th).

The win enabled Belgium to keep their top position at the standings with 14 points from six games, while India are placed second with eight points from four matches.

The Kalinga Stadium has been a happy hunting ground for Belgium as it is the same venue where they lifted their maiden World Cup title in 2018.

The Red Lions took the lead as early as in the third minute when Hendrickx scored from a penalty corner after the the initial two efforts of Sebastien Dockier and Thomas Briels were brilliantly saved by India custodian PR Sreejesh.

India drew level eight seconds before the end of the first quarter when Vivek tapped in after Surender Kumar’s fine work from the right



flank.

Belgium restored their lead two minutes into the second quarter through Plennevaux, who deflected in a beautiful pass from Simon Gougard.

But it took India just 30 seconds to level the scores when Rohidas scored off a rebound from a penalty corner.

The Indians matched Belgium in every aspect

of the game but a howler from Harmanpreet cost the home side dear as Belgium again took the lead just four minutes from half-time.

Harmanpreet was guilty of a giving away a loose ball which was picked up by Nicolas de Kerpel, who passed it on to Plennevaux and he made no mistake in scoring his second goal of the day.

Down by a goal, the Indians made an aggressive start after the change of ends, securing a penalty corner soon but Rohidas’ shot was saved by Belgium goalkeeper Vincent Vnasch.

After Harmanpreet’s howler, the Indian defence produced a solid performance to thwart Belgium’s threats.

## Coronavirus scare: 6 under home quarantine in Mizoram

**AIZAWL, FEB 9 (PTI):** The Mizoram government has placed six students, who had recently returned from China, under home quarantine as a part of precautionary measures in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in the neighbouring country, officials said on Sunday.

Blood samples of two among the six have been sent to the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED) in Kolkata for

test, the state nodal officer of Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, Dr Pachauu Lalmalsawma, told PTI.

However, the NICED was not satisfied with it and had asked for fresh samples.

The students did not develop any symptoms of being infected by the coronavirus so far, the epidemiologist said.

He also said that another student, who is scheduled to return from China, will be ar-

riving in Aizawl on Tuesday.

He will also be placed under home quarantine after being screened at the Lengpui airport, Lalmalsawma said.

All the six students have returned to returned to Mizoram from China since January and they have been quarantined at their homes according to the guidelines and procedures to prevent the spread of the novel

coronavirus.

He said that the state government was closely monitoring the students by visiting their houses regularly. According to the official, the state government has issued an advisory discouraging people to travel to other countries, especially China and its neighbouring countries.

He said that the state government also restricted import of goods from China and other foreign countries.

## States can’t be forced to give reservations in government job promotions: Supreme Court

**NEW DELHI, 09 FEB:** The Supreme Court on Friday said that reservations for promotions in government jobs are not a fundamental right, NDTV reported on Sunday. The top court said it cannot compel states to provide quotas, and that states cannot be forced to make such provisions, unless data shows imbalance in representation for certain groups in government service.

The Supreme Court delivered the verdict after hearing pleas on reservations for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities in promotions to assistant engineer (civil) posts in the Public Works Department of the Uttarakhand government.

“There is no doubt the state government is not bound to make reservations,” the court said.

“There is no fundamental right which inheres in an individual to claim reservation in promotions. No mandamus can be issued by the court directing state governments to provide reservations.” The court’s judgement overturned a 2012 Uttarakhand High Court ruling that directed the state to provide quotas to specified communities.

The Supreme Court

added that while Articles 16(4) and 16(4A) of the Constitution give states the power to make such reservations, it is so only “if in the opinion of the state they are not adequately represented in the services of the state”. The court also cautioned the states, asserting that they have to justify decisions taken if challenged in a court of law.

## Peak power demand sets record in Delhi this winter



**NEW DELHI, FEB 9 (PTI):** Delhi’s peak power demand this winter set a new record, crossing last year’s high of 4472 MW on 25 times as consumption of electricity for heating purposes soared due to prolonged cold spells.

During the winter season (November-December-January), Delhi’s peak power demand increased by over 19 percent to set a new record of 5343 MW. The peak demand this winter crossed last year’s peak power demand (of 4472 MW) on 25 days - 8 days in December 2019 and 17 days in January 2020, discom officials said.

In each of the months this season, the peak power demand was higher than the corresponding months last year. In November, it was on 19 days, on 30 days in December and

on 28 days in January.

Since last year (2018-2019), the highest increase in the peak power demand during winter months was witnessed in the BSES discom BRPL’s area of South and West Delhi (more than 17 percent), followed by TPD-DL area of North Delhi (more than 15 percent) and BYPL’s area of East and Central Delhi (more than 5 percent), the said.

Discom officials said heating load is the “main factor” behind enhanced power consumption in winter months of Delhi.

According to estimates, over 40 percent of Delhi’s power demand in winters is because of the heating load (heaters and geysers), they added. A BSES spokesperson said discoms are fully geared to ensure adequate power availability during winter months.

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# Kathak workshop in Singtam



**SINGTAM, 09 FEB [IPR]:** The North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC), in collaboration with the Culture Department,

Government of Sikkim, is organising a classical dance workshop on Kathak at Natraj Kala Kendra Society here in Singtam,

East Sikkim. The 15-day workshop, which began on Sunday, is being taken by 40 students. The workshop was inaugu-

rated by Deputy Director, Culture Department, in the presence of officials from Education and Culture Departments.

## Fed Cup to be held in Dubai in March: ITF

**NEW DELHI, FEB 9 (PTI):** The Indian Fed Cup team will travel to Dubai for this year's competition as the ITF has named the desert city as the new venue for the matches, to be held from March 3 to 7.

The ITF named the new venue after moving out the matches from then Chinese city of Dongguan due to Coronavirus threat. The Asia/Oceania

Group I matches were originally scheduled to be played from February 4-8.

"The event will be held in the week following the ATP Dubai tournament at the same venue, and will see six nations China P.R., Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Korea Rep. and Uzbekistan - compete for a place in the Fed Cup Play-offs in April," an ITF release said.

The six teams will vie for two spots in Fed Cup Play-offs.

"Being in Dubai makes no difference. But the dates give enough time to Sania for her recovery. Doubles is an important point. Ankita is playing well. The other team members will also get some tournament to play under their belt," India's Fed Cup captain Vishal Uppal told PTI.

Sania's participation

was under doubt due to a calf injury she aggravated during the Australian Open, where she pulled out of the mixed doubles before retiring midway into her women's doubles opening round match.

"I think we have a good chance but we will have to be at our best and fight hard for every point, every game, every set, every match," Uppal added.

## GDP will reach new heights, says Niti Ayog official

**COIMBATORE, FEB 9 (PTI):** The country's economy would grow in the next few years and the GDP would reach a commendable position, a senior official in NITI Ayog said on Sunday.

"The Indian economy is going to rise in the next few years and the workforce of youth will take the country to new heights," Ramanan Ramanathan, mission director Atal Innovation Mission and Additional Secretary NITI Ayog,

said here.

Delivering the Graduation Day address of Sri Krishna College of Technology, he said the Indian workforce is creating name and fame to the country and also to the globe and GDP of India would reach a commendable position.

The energy of Indian youth is recognised by various countries and lots of changes are taking place in technology and society, which is going to play an innovative role in

the future, he said.

Stating that teachers were playing a significant role in shaping the young generations, he said the youth should face the challenges in life and also in workplace.

"India is the greatest country in the world in many aspects. Destiny of the country is decided by the contribution of youth and we should bring out the energy of youth for various useful purposes," Ramanathan said.

Asking the student to become job creators and not job-seekers, he said the youth should have strong beliefs and extraordinary commitments.

Malavizhi, chairperson and managing trustee of Sri Krishna Institutions, and Mathur Parameswaran, business management leader, Altran India, Bengaluru, were present at the function, a press release from the college said.

## 62.59 pc voter turnout in Delhi election: Poll officials

**NEW DELHI, 09 FEB:** Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ranbir Singh declared on Sunday evening that the final turnout in the Assembly elections held yesterday was 62.59%.

This figure is about 2 percentage points more than what was recorded in the recent Lok Sabha polls in Delhi (60.5%), but about 5 percentage points less than what was tallied in the 2015 assembly elections. On the delay in the announcement of final turnout, which led to AAP leaders asking probing questions, Singh said that the returning officers

ficers, station masters, ticket collectors and railway officials have been authorized to detect and penalise offenders across all three ECoR divisions -- Khurda Road, Sambalpur and Waltair.

The official also said that ECoR, earlier, had different penalties for its stations, but now uniformity would be maintained across the three divisions.

"For the first time, there will be uniformity in fines imposed on offenders across all stations of ECoR. The revised rates will come into effect from Monday," he added.

## Penalty hiked for violation of cleanliness rules: ECoR

**BHUBANESWAR, FEB 9 (PTI):** Littering railway properties will attract hefty fines from Monday as the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has revised penalties, as part of its measures to maintain cleanliness and hygiene.

According to an ECoR official, commuters will have to cough up more for strewing trash on railway station premises, defacing property, spitting, sticking unauthorized bills and open defecation.

Penalty will also be imposed on vendors who do not take necessary initiatives - separate dustbins for dry and wet waste and use of permis-

sible plastic bags, the official said.

The fine will be in the range of Rs 100 to Rs 5,000, depending on the nature of the offence, he said. For almost every category of offence, the fines have been hiked by at least Rs 100.

The move was being taken in line with the Centre's 'Swachh Bharat Mission' and a National Green Tribunal order, which had asked the railways to put in place a mechanism with provisions of fixing accountability of individuals in respect to waste disposal and littering, the official said.

Along with RPF of-

## Ex-Dawood aide Tarik Parveen held for extortion

**MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI):** The Anti Extortion Cell (AEC) of the Mumbai Police on Sunday arrested a former aide of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim for allegedly extorting a city-based businessman, police said.

Tarik Parveen was arrested from Dongri in south Mumbai, they added.

"We arrested Parveen today after a case of extortion was registered against him at the MRA Marg Police Station. A businessman had lodged a complaint of extortion," Joint Commissioner of Police Santosh Rastogi said.

In the FIR, police have also made former aide of Dawood Ibrahim, Ejaz Lakdawala and Salim

Furniturewala alias Salim Maharaj as the accused, he added.

"Lakdawala and Furniturewala are already in our custody," he said.

Lakdawala (50), who was wanted in 25 cases in Mumbai, was arrested from Patna in Bihar on January 8.

A Byculla-based builder had complained to the police last year that Lakdawala was seeking extortion money from him, police said.

During Lakdawala's interrogation, Furniturewala's involvement in the extortion racket came to light. It was found that Furniturewala was helping Lakdawala in running the racket he was operating from overseas, police said.



**WHEN ATMs FORGET THEY SHOULD DISPENSE ALL THE TIME:** For all the stress on getting everyone into the banking system, not enough attention is clearly being paid to banking services. Take the 9 ATMs established in Singtam for instance. Not all of them can ever be expected to respond to requests for cash. On Sunday, 09 Feb, only the SBI ATM in town had any cash in it and the crowd outside was big and frustrated. [from YOGEN THATAL]

## Bareilly gets back its 'jhumka' at last

**BAREILLY ( UP), FEB 9 (PTI):** Jhumka and Bareilly became synonymous after a 1966 chart-buster on the jewellery in which actor Sadhana gave a feisty dance performance.

The city has finally got a fanciful 14-ft 'jhumka', embellished with colourful stones and the city's famous 'zari' embroidery, installed at the Parsakhara area on the National Highway 24 and is expected to be a major attraction among visitors.

The Asha Bhosle song

'Jhumka gira re, Bareilly ki bazaar mein' immortalised the connection between the city and the piece of jewellery.

Also known as Manjha city, Bareilly has been manufacturing kite-strings for over a century, but the jhumka has carved out a niche, prompting the Bareilly Development Authority (BDA) to conceive the project for tourists visiting the city.

While unveiling the iconic structure, Union Minister and Bareilly MP Santosh Gangwar said visitors will finally be able to associate the landmark jhumka in the city with the evergreen song.

Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a public meeting here, once recalled the lilting song from the

Sunil Dutt-starrer to strike an instant chord with the crowd assembled at Kisan Kalyan Rally.

"I had never been here in the past. But I have definitely heard Jhumka gira rey," he had said.

Amid raptures from the crowd, he had also recalled another Bhoosle song 'Surma bareilly waala (kohl) manufactured in Bareilly), ankhiyon mein aisa daala' from film 'Kismet'.

Inaugurating the structure, Gangwar said, "The collaborative effort made by the authority, various organisations and local residents in setting up the ambitious jhumka in Bareilly is

commendable. It looks beautiful and unique."

"In Parliament, Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad in lighter vein used to ask me whether Bareilly's 'jhumkaa' has been found or not. Now, I will tell him that Bareilly has got its jhumka."

Officials said the project has cost the BDA around Rs 18 lakh -- Rs 8 lakh for the jhumka and Rs 10 lakh for the beautification of the landscape surrounding the main structure. The location, design and decoration were decided by the authority. It employed skilled artisans, who worked diligently ensuring that the jhumka becomes a major attraction for the tourists.

## Cong says it disagrees with SC order on quota in jobs

**NEW DELHI, FEB 9 (PTI):** The Congress on Sunday said it disagreed with the Supreme Court's decision on the issue of reservation in appointments and promotions, and alleged that the rights of SC/ST communities are under threat during the BJP rule.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik said the party will raise the issue inside and outside parliament.

The Supreme Court has held that states are

not bound to provide reservation in appointments and there is no fundamental right to claim quota in promotions.

"In view of the law laid down by this court, there is no doubt that the state government is not bound to make reservations. There is no fundamental right which inheres in an individual to claim reservation in promotions," a bench of justices L Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta said.

The apex court said this while dealing with pleas regarding Uttarakhand government's

September 5, 2012 decision when the Congress was in power in the state, to fill up all posts in public services in the state without providing reservations to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.


"We respectfully say that we do not agree with this decision...the rights of Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes are not secured under the BJP government," Wasnik said.

"The Congress party believes that the appointment of SC/ST people to government posts should not be at the discretion

of governments, but it is the fundamental right conferred by the Constitution," he said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Congress spokesperson Udit Raj, who was also present at the press conference, said the matter shows the contradiction between the BJP-led government at the Centre and in the state, as the Centre in a similar case had pushed for reservation in promotions.

Taking on the saffron party, the Dalit leader said, "The BJP is basically against Dalits and reservation".




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**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

**The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.**

**Symptoms of nCoV**


- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

**Precautions to Prevent nCoV**

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

**Treatment**

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.



If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104

District surveillance Officer

EAST : 7029372100


WEST : 9593297809

NORTH : 9641957468

SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE**

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## The Inequality Index

*Realities that the distasteful polarization seeks to hide*

While the nation was being distracted with rabid polarization in which a Prime Minister claimed he could tell rioters by their clothes, a chief minister saw enemies in culinary preferences and cops went after children with sedition charges, an economic miracle was underway. Yes, in a year during which the aftershocks of demonetization had still not petered away despite the years that have passed since and onions became more expensive than the meats they are supposed to enhance the taste of, there were a privileged very few who laughed their way to the bank even as banks themselves collapsed under the weight of NPAs. In a vulgar reiteration of how far we have veered from the pretext of being a socialist state, arrived information that 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth! 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 67 million Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth. Did someone say sabka saath-sabka vikas? According to this new survey by international rights group Oxfam, the rich, who have always had it good in the easily co-opted governments of the past and through the years of liberalization, are clearly having even giddier days of profiteering in the current times of uber-nationalism and in-your-face majoritarianism. Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over a decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire Union budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19. This is not a rant against the rich or even the super rich, but a query wondering at what cost this has arrived.

The same study reported that many ordinary Indians are not able to access the health care they need, and no, the central health insurance scheme offers no real reprieve because it leaves too many out of its purview. In that sense, only after a family has collapsed into penury due to healthcare costs can they apply for and hope to get some support from the health insurance scheme that is being tom-tommed so much. 63 million Indians, for instance, are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year - almost two people every second. As for the promise MGNREGA, it will take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what a top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year. Yes, minimum wage assurance is not a long-term solution, not a condition a person is expected to survive on for long and a temporary support till better times arrive. But how will they get there when the policies continue to favour a very few?

Oxfam International's 'Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index' ranks India 147th among 157 countries analysed, describing the country's commitment to reducing inequality as a "a very worrying situation" given that it is home to 1.3 billion people, many of whom live in extreme poverty.

Earlier, a research paper, 'Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: from British Raj to Billionaire Raj?', revealed income inequality in India was at its highest in 2014 since 1922, the year the country passed the Income Tax Act. The paper's findings are now in a full-fledged report, the World Inequality Report, published by the World Inequality Lab. According to it, 10% of Indians garnered 56% of the national income in 2014. To get some perspective, sample this - the top 1% of earners captured less than 21% of total income in the late 1930s, before dropping to 6% in the early 1980s and rising to 22% in 2014, the report reveals. In 2017, the richest 1% rolled up 73% of all earnings! Our nationalist leaders see no problems in this figure and point out that in comparison, globally, 3.7 billion people that account for the poorest half of population saw no increase in their wealth and that 82% of the wealth generated last year worldwide went to the top 1%. But that can be no consolation, right?

Clearly, for inclusive growth, the nation needs labour-intensive sectors to be supported so that more jobs are created; agriculture needs to be incentivized so that existing strength and wider sections of the population benefit and social protection schemes need to be reinforced so that more people feel more confident to take risks. Take a look at the major policy interventions imposed on the country in recent years and the maliciousness with which they undercut all the sectors mentioned in the previous sentence becomes apparent. Could this bloodletting in the unorganized sector and agriculture and suspension of subsidies have contributed to the windfall pouring into the income accounts of the nation's richest? Why did no one notice this earlier? Was the dazzle of nationalist posturing so dazzling that it blinded all realities away? It clearly did, but we are still not taking note.

And it will not take massive disruptions to begin getting the balance right. Oxfam has calculated that if India were to reduce inequality by a third, more than 170 million people would no longer be poor. Time to start at least thinking in earnest on these lines.

# The Coronavirus Outbreak Has Exposed the Deep Flaws of Xi's Autocracy

RICHARD MCGREGOR  
THEGUARDIAN

Soon after Li Wenliang succumbed to the coronavirus in Wuhan early on Friday morning, a drawing of the Chinese doctor appeared on the internet, sleeping and being hoisted gently into heaven by an angel.

From late in the evening until dawn yesterday, Chinese citizens stayed up, posting emotional tributes and venting their fury at the government over the treatment of the 34-year-old ophthalmologist, who had tried to warn the authorities about the virus in late December, only to be told by the police to shut up.

The authorities, seemingly in a panic at the outpouring of grief and anger, announced that Li was still being treated before reposting confirmation of his death hours later. "You think we've all gone to sleep?" posted one netizen? "No. We haven't."

In an interview with Chinese magazine Caixin before his death, Li delivered his own verdict on the government's handling of the issue: "I think there should be more than one voice in a healthy society."

It is wise to be cautious about the political impact of a single event or, in this case, one person's death, especially in China, which is ruled by an opaque Communist party. After all, can a virus that has so far claimed more than 700 lives, fewer than in a normal flu season in many countries, really hold the future of China in its thrall?

However, the fallout from the spread of the potentially deadly coronavirus is already grim, most immediately in the form of a reeling Chinese economy that is having to temporarily sever supply lines to factories and retail outlets around the world. China has been responsible for about one-third of global growth in recent years, a greater share than the US, and any slowdown in its economy will be felt across the world.

But the greatest focus is on what Li alluded to when he complained about the country being ruled by "one voice", which Chinese people would immediately recognise as a barb directed at Xi Jinping. Xi has swept all enemies, real and imagined, aside since taking over as Communist party chief in late 2012 and made many more along the way.

Powerful families and moneyed interests topped by his relentless anti-corruption campaign will never forgive him and are lying in wait for revenge. Equally, many of the technocratic elite have been alienated by his illiberal economic policies and his assertiveness overseas, which they blame for triggering a concerted pushback in Washington.

Much of their anger was captured in a single moment that embodied their fears that Xi is taking the country backwards – his decision in early 2018 to do away with term limits and make himself lead-



er in perpetuity.

Difficult as it is to measure public opinion in China, it is doubtless true that for many Chinese, the anti-corruption campaign – Xi's key initiative – has been highly popular. With the economy growing steadily before the virus hit, most Chinese are also still seeing their living standards rise.

But Li's death and the mismanagement of the crisis have done more than just crystallise the elite's dislike of Xi. Over time, they could direct the anger of the wider populace against him as well.

"In previous crises, like the Wenchuan earthquake [in Sichuan in 2008], the vast majority of Chinese citizens were spectators commenting on an event that angered them but was far away," said Bill Bishop, of Sinocism, a Washington-based China newsletter. "In this epidemic, no one is just a spectator – everyone is directly impacted."

The spread of the virus, most likely starting from live animals in the Wuhan wet market late last year, has showcased both the party state's formidable strengths and corrosive weaknesses.

The initial coverage of the virus focused on the authorities' abrupt order, issued at 2am on January 23, to quarantine Wuhan, a city of 11 million in central Hubei province.

"To my knowledge, trying to contain a city of 11 million is new to science," said Gauden Galea, a World Health Organization official, who seemed both in awe at the order and wryly unsure whether it would work. Once areas surrounding Wuhan were pulled inside the sealed-off zone days later, a total of 35 million people had been effectively put into lockdown with the stroke of an administrative pen. The power of the Chinese state and its ability to mobilise resources overnight has long been ad-

mired by foreigners, be it in building a hospital in barely a week, as in Wuhan, or enforcing a cordon sanitaire containing tens of millions of people. But it is the chronic weaknesses in the political system that exacerbated the spread of the virus in the first place.

The authoritarian strictures of the Chinese party state place a premium on the control of information in the name of maintaining stability. In such a system, lower-level officials have no incentive to report bad news up the line. Under Xi, such restrictions have grown tighter.

In Wuhan, Li and seven of his fellow doctors had been talking among themselves in an internet chat group about a new cluster of viral infections. They stopped after being warned by police. By the time the authorities reacted and quarantined the city, it was too late.

Li was neither a dissident nor a pro-democracy activist seeking to overthrow the Communist party. But he was risking jail to even discuss the virus. For in Xi's China, the professional classes – doctors, lawyers, journalists and the like – all must subsume their skills and ethics to the political directives of the moment.

During the crisis, Xi has maintained an unusually low profile, perhaps because he doesn't want to step in publicly until it is clear the health authorities have gained control of the situation and new infections start to fall.

For a man whose propaganda apparatus has recently begun to promote him as the "people's leader", it has been a humbling moment.

*[Richard McGregor is a senior fellow at the Lowy Institute in Sydney. His most recent book is Xi Jinping: The Backlash]*

# Stop telling authors what they can write. The only limit is imagination

KENAN MALIK  
THEGUARDIAN

"What insults my soul," Zadie Smith has written, "is the idea... that we can and should write only about people who are fundamentally 'like' us: racially, sexually, genetically, nationally, politically, personally."

Both as novelist and essayist, Smith is one of the most subtle guides to the fraught terrain of culture and identity. The problem of "cultural appropriation" – writers and artists being called out for having stepped beyond their permitted cultural boundaries to explore themes about people who are not "fundamentally 'like' us" – is an issue that particularly troubles her. Too often these days, on opening a book or on viewing a painting, we are as likely to ask: "Did the author or painter have the cultural right to engage with that subject?" or: "Does he or she possess the right identity?" as: "Is it any good?"

So it is with the latest cultural firestorm over Jeanine Cummins's novel American Dirt, which tells the story of a mother and son, Lydia and Luca, forced to flee their home in Acapulco and join the migrant trail to America after their family is slaughtered by a drugs cartel. Cummins wants Americans to stop seeing migrants as a "faceless brown mass" and to bear witness to the "tragedy of our making on our southern border".

The novel's supporters have hailed it as a Great American Novel, even the new The Grapes of Wrath. Its detractors point to the fact that Cummins is non-Mexican and that this wasn't a story that was hers to tell, which is why she gets it all wrong.

Cummins's critics are right that, as a work of fiction, American Dirt is shoddy and unconvincing. Its plot is as obvious as a narco gangster's threat, the characterisations flat and the dialogue has all the depth of an episode of CSI. A detective at the bloody scene of the murder of Lydia's family asks her whether she has anywhere to go. "Please don't concern ourselves with our wellbeing," Lydia responds. "Serve justice. Worry about that." Even a CSI scriptwriter might be embarrassed.

Most of the anger about the novel has been generated, though, not by how Cummins writes but by who she is. Not Mexican. Not migrant. White.



Cummins herself sets up her critics' argument in an author's note: "I worried that as a non-migrant and non-Mexican I had no business writing a book set almost entirely in Mexico, set almost entirely among migrants." She "wished someone slightly browner than me would write it".

What both sides seem to have forgotten is what fiction is for. Fiction, as Smith observed in the inaugural Philip Roth lecture in 2016, "is a way of asking... what if I was different than I am?" Today, though, she notes elsewhere: "The old – and never especially helpful – adage write what you know has morphed into something more like a threat: stay in your lane." To do so, Smith insists, is to deny the very possibility of fiction.

Cummins's critics argue that this is to misunderstand their point. They are not forbidding white authors from writing about Mexican migrants, simply condemning a white writer writing so badly about the subject. But introducing Cummins's whiteness as an issue is inevitably to shift attention away from the quality of the work and on to the nature of the author's identity.

In any case, the context of the debate is a literary and artistic culture that increasingly does insist that people should stay in their lanes. "Where

did the new orthodoxy arise that writers must only set stories within their own country of origin or nationality?" the writer Aminatta Forna has asked. In trying to constrain the imagination by identity, she points out, it's not the privileged but those on the margins who most lose out. The "white male writer" is called simply "writer"; all other others have to be "hyphenated", writing, in Nesrine Malik's words, "as a": as a woman, as a Muslim, as an immigrant.

Certainly, puncture the absurd hype around American Dirt as a novel that reveals the truth about the treatment of immigrants. Certainly, celebrate the Mexican and Latinx writers, from Luis Alberto Urrea to Valeria Luiselli (whose poetic, haunting Lost Children Archive has just been published in paperback), who have long explored the stories of migration with subtlety and power.

But let us not create gated cultures in which only those of the right identity have permission to use their imaginations. For, as novelist Kamila Shamsie tweeted (in response to another controversy over cultural appropriation): "'You – other – are unimaginable' is a far more problematic attitude than 'You are imaginable'." She might have added, "even if imagined badly".



## Suspected coronavirus patient in Odisha tests negative



**BHUBANESWAR, FEB 9 (PTI):** Suspected coronavirus patient in Odisha has tested negative and has been discharged from a state-run hospital in Cuttack, authorities of the medical institution said on Sunday.

Earlier, two medical students admitted to the hospital had also tested negative, they said.

The remaining patient, who was admitted to the coronavirus isolation special ward of the SCB Medical College and Hospital, was discharged on Saturday after reports from Pune's National Institute of Virology verified he was not infected, hospital authorities said.

The person, who hails from Jagatsinghpur district, is an engineer working with a Beijing-based firm and had recently visited Hong Kong, they said.

He was admitted to the hospital after he showed symptoms of novel coronavirus, the authorities said.

The state government has set up a special isolation ward with 84 beds in the hospital to treat patients suspected to be infected by the novel coronavirus.

A three-member central team had on Thursday visited the hospital and inspected the facilities available for the treatment of suspected novel coronavirus patients in Odisha, officials said.

The team had also visited Paradip Port, Biju Patnaik International Airport and another hospital in Bhubaneswar to check whether arrangements have been made as per guidelines of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, they added.

## Southee behaved like a true leader in 2nd ODI: Bennett

**CHETAN NARULA**

**AUCKLAND, FEB 9 (PTI):** New Zealand pacer Hamish Bennett says Tim Southee showed exemplary leadership qualities when he played through pain and discomfort during the second ODI against India.

New Zealand were almost rendered a bowler short as Southee was hit by a stomach bug and bowled through the pain to get his side across the line.

He picked 2-41 as the Kiwis won the second ODI by 22 runs on Saturday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three match series.

"For him to do that, it just shows how much wearing the silver fern on his chest means to him. He's a good leader in our side and his actions have a lot to do with that and last night we saw that. He led by example, to show that no matter what the situation is, you've just got to go out there and get the job done," said Bennett.

"As New Zealanders, that's what we pride ourselves on, getting the job done, whether we're fit or not fit. It was a pretty brave effort."

Bennett said they were confident to defend the 270-run total despite Eden Park being a small ground.

"Eden Park is a funny ground, it is a small boundary wise and scores here haven't been too high, as people would like to believe. It is not an easy ground to bat in the ODIs. We knew if we get early wickets we could put pressure on their batting order.

"They have a couple key players, and once we got them early, you can put pressure on any batting group doing that. Last night we were fortunate that our plans came off," said Bennett.

It was a debut to re-

member for pacer Kyle Jamieson. Playing on his home ground, he put up a valuable partnership with Ross Taylor to propel the score. Then, he took two wickets to rock the Indian line-up and steered his side to victory.

Bennett said India got too close at the end for comfort, but they managed to sneak through with the win.

"Kyle and I have played together in Auckland. We have trained together and I remember when we were at Lincoln University nets. He bowled to Tom Latham and almost hit him on the throat. He is tall, gets that bounce and was quick as well. I have always felt there will be a time for Kyle.

"Being big means he would have some problems physically, but he has got over them, and now has a bright future ahead of him, no doubt," said Bennett.

India are now starting down the barrel at a series' whitewash. New Zealand have the chance to make it 3-0 in reply to the 5-0 loss they had suffered in the preceding T20I series.

"Our young bowling unit has done pretty well. Energy is high in the group and we want to secure as much as we can and enjoy this challenge. We have done it well in the last two matches, although we weren't far off in the T20s either just needed a bit of luck. Fortunately through the ODI series, luck has been on our side.

"It has been a great challenge against India. They are a world-class side and have played some great cricket on this tour. I have loved every over I have bowled in this series. I have enjoyed playing out there for my country. Humbled to do that even if it is a cliché," he said.

## North Bengal Icon Awards held in Siliguri



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 09 FEB:** Governor Ganga Prasad attended the North Ben-

gal Icon Award 2020 at Club Montana Vista, Matigara, Siliguri, on Sunday. The award is an initiative

of Hindi daily newspaper, Dainik Jagran.

The Governor handed over the awards to vari-

ous social organizations, entrepreneurs and other eminent personalities of North Bengal, a press communiqué from Raj Bhawan informs.

In his brief address, the Governor applauded the initiative of Dainik Jagran to facilitate icons of North Bengal and remarked that this programme will inspire others to work for the upliftment of society.

He urged Dainik Jagran to organise such a programme in Sikkim as well. The function was attended by Darjeeling MP, Raju Bista, eminent personalities from North Bengal and a host of dignitaries.

## Half of Bangladesh will be empty if Indian citizenship offered: Union Min

**HYDERABAD, FEB 9 (PTI):** Half of Bangladesh's population will leave that country if Indian citizenship was promised to them, Union Minister G Kishan Reddy said on Sunday.

Speaking at Santh Ravidas jayanthi celebrations here, Reddy dared Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to prove in what way the Citizenship Amendment Act was against the 130 crore population of India.

"Half of Bangladesh will be empty (vacant) if India offers citizenship to them (Bangladeshis). Half of Bangladeshis will come over to India if citizenship is promised (to them). Who will take responsibility? KCR? or Rahul Gandhi?" he asked.

"They seek citizenship for infiltrators. The Government of India is ready to review the CAA if it has one word against anyone of the 130 crore



citizens, but not for Pakistani or Bangladeshi Muslims," Reddy said.

Noting that CAA was brought in on humanitarian grounds for certain persecuted communities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, he said some political parties were demanding that citizenship be given to Muslims of those countries also.

Taking a dig at TRS and its 'friendly party'

AIMIM, Reddy alleged that the former was indulging in vote bank politics.

"I am requesting the TRS party. I am requesting the Chief Minister (KCR). I am challenging the Chief Minister to prove if any one person out of 130 crore citizens of this country were affected by the Citizenship Amendment Act," the Union Minister of State for Home said.

Asserting that refugees and infiltrators should not be treated alike, he claimed that parties such as Congress were seeking citizenship for infiltrators, who came from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

According to him, some refugees have been staying in India for the past 40 years without any facilities and documents such as voter id, Aadhar or ration card.

## Mamata's book on CAA sold out in book fair

**KOLKATA, FEB 9 (PTI):** A book against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act written by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was sold out six days after it was launched in the International Kolkata Book Fair, her publisher said.

Titles favouring and opposing the CAA and the proposed nationwide NRC authored by others were also in high demand in the 12-day book fair which concluded on Sunday.

"All the 1,000 copies of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's new title 'Nagarikatta Aatank' (Fear of Citizenship) were sold out this afternoon. It was launched on February 4 in the book fair," Apu Dey said on behalf of the publishers, Dey's Publishing.

In her book, the TMC supremo talks about the "barbaric uncertainty which has gripped India in the sphere of politics-economy-society everywhere...."

The book was sold from the stall of Trinamool Congress mouth-

piece 'Jago Bangla', apart from the pavilion of the Dey's Publishing.

"Since 1993 my books on contemporary issues have been published in every book fair, which reflects my views, thinkings, opinions everything. This year the people's movement against CAA, NPR and NRC prompted me to chronicle my views which salute the uprising against divisive politics," she wrote in the book.

Another book of poems by Banerjee, which touches on contemporary issues, had also been sold out, Dey said.

With 14 new titles released in this book fair, the number of books written by Banerjee has crossed 100.

Now she is the author of 102 books written mainly in Bengali and English. While Banerjee also has books of Urdu poems to her credit, her poetries were also translated to Alchiki, the language of the Santhals.

At the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP)

stall number 370, over 6,000 booklets on the benefits of the CAA have been sold till Saturday, the person manning the stall said.

The booklet said the amended citizenship law would provide Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The VHP stall had also stocked titles on the Ram Mandir issue in Ayodhya and the need for scrapping the Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Both the books are also nominally priced and were in high demand," he said.

At the Students Federation of India (SFI) stall, over 800 copies of two booklets on the proposed nationwide NRC and the CAA have been sold out on Friday, the 10th day of the book fair, one of the persons manning the stall said.

The stall is also selling tee-shirts with "NO CAA" written on it and it has become a craze among the youth, he said.

### Sweden's Duplantis breaks world pole vault record

**PARIS, FEB 9 (AFP):** Armand Duplantis of Sweden set a world pole vault record of 6.17 metres at an indoor meeting in Poland.

Duplantis, the US-born 20-year-old who won silver at last year's world championships in Doha, cleared the bar on Saturday on his second attempt in Torun to break the previous record of 6.16m set by French vaulter Renaud

Lavillenie in February 2014. "It's something that I wanted since I was three years old," Duplantis told the website of World Athletics.

"It's a big year, but it's a good way to start it," Lavillenie, the 2012 Olympic champion, said he was not surprised his record had been eclipsed.

"It's not a surprise. For two years now I knew he had the potential," the

33-year-old Frenchman told RMC Sports after competing at a meeting in Rouen. "Records are made to be beaten. He has got time on his side to definitely do even better and that's a great thing."

Duplantis had almost broken the record at a meeting in Duesseldorf on Tuesday. His performance marks him out as a clear favourite for the Olympic title in Tokyo this year.

## 'Centuries-old' tunnel unearthed in Bengal



**BURDWAN (WB), FEB 9 (PTI):** A tunnel, believed to be centuries-old, was unearthed while digging a plot of land for building the foundation of a house in West Bengal's East Burdwan district, officials said on Sunday.

During foundation work on the land of Jiarul Mullick in Mahata village under Bhatar block on Saturday, a seven feet by four feet opening of the tunnel was found, the district officials said.

A team of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is expected to visit the village on Sunday,

they said.

Historian Sarbajit Yash said that the tunnel is likely to be 250-300 years old and some portions of it have similarities with Jain architecture.

However, the tunnel could also be of any aristocratic family built during the early days of the British rule, he said.

"The area has been cordoned off and a police contingent deployed as a large number of people from across the district have come to Mahata village to take a look at the tunnel," a police officer said.

## U'khand: Forest conservator suspended

**DEHRADUN, FEB 9 (PTI):** Conservator of Forest Ashok Kumar Gupta has been suspended for alleged administrative and financial irregularities committed by him during his stint as the District Forest Officer, Champawat, officials said on Sunday.

Gupta was suspended on the basis of a fact finding report, Secretary Forest Anand Bardhan said.

The suspension order issued on February 7 also attached Gupta with the office of the Head of Forest Force in Dehra-

dun till further orders. He was currently posted as Conservator of Forest, Directorate of Land Survey, Dehradun.

Whistle blower forest officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi had submitted the fact finding report running into more than 2,000 pages against Gupta, accusing him of issuing illegal permits for large-scale felling of pine trees in Champawat forest division.

Gupta was also accused of making cash payments to agencies in violation of the norms.

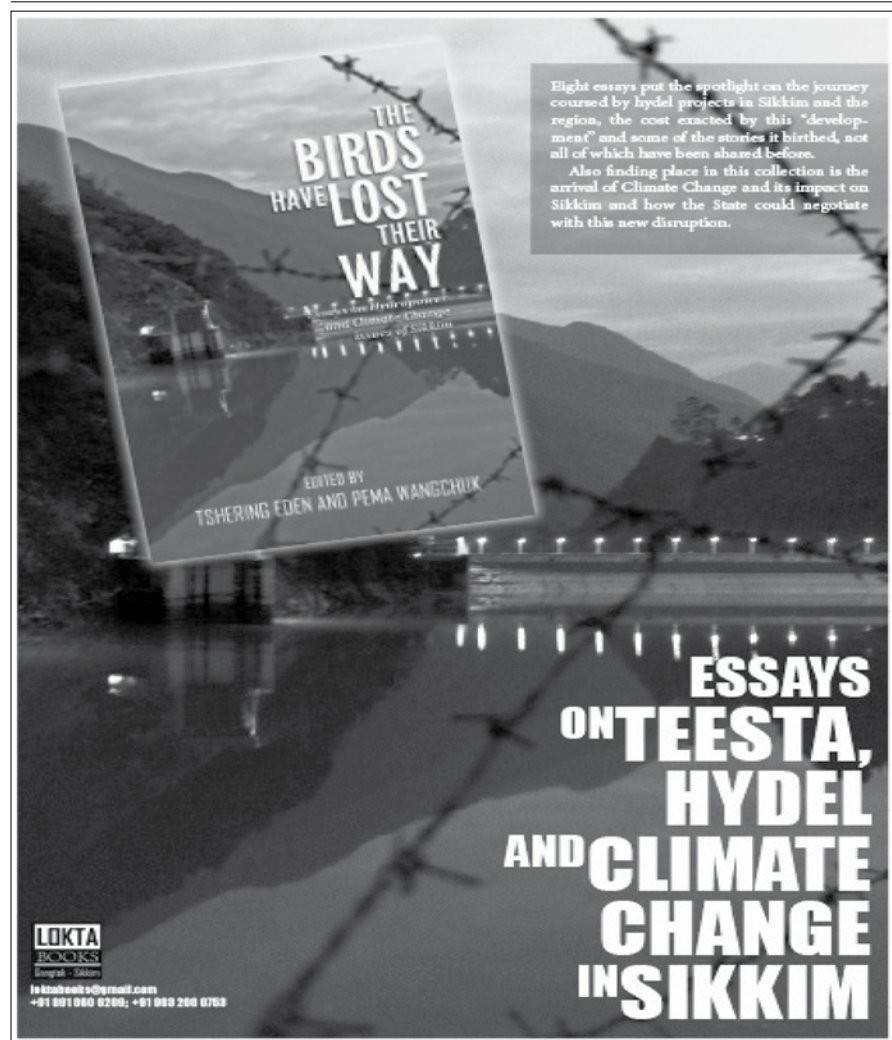
## Kartik Aaryan to star in Om Raut's 3D action film

**MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI):** Kartik Aaryan will be seen in filmmaker Om Raut's next directorial venture, a 3D action film. Kartik, who has been part of several hit romantic-comedies, is all excited about doing some high octane action in the forthcoming movie, to be produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-series.

"I've been keen to do an out and out action film for a while, and Bhushan sir knew about it. I recently watched 'Tanhaaji..' and was completely

blown away by not only the spectacular visuals but also the narrative.

"Om Raut's vision when it comes to action storytelling using 3D is unparalleled. I'm super excited to be a part of his next film and can't wait to start work on my first action movie," Kartik said in a statement. According to the press release issued by the makers, the yet-untitled film will be shot in India and various locations abroad. The remaining cast is yet to be finalised.





## RB Leipzig hope to cut short Bayern's brush with Bundesliga supremacy

**MARCUS CHRISTENSON**  
**MUNICH, 09 FEB**  
[THEGUARDIAN]: Ralf Rangnick was not impressed. The day before RB Leipzig's Bundesliga game against Eintracht Frankfurt on 25 January, the celebrity barber Sheldon Edwards, aka HD Cutz, had been flown in to the team hotel to cut nine of the players' hair. Leipzig promptly lost 2-0.

Rangnick, who is head of sport and development at Red Bull in New York these days and a former coach of RB Leipzig, was perplexed. "If someone had asked me on Sunday, which of the 12 teams who played on Saturday had flown in a barber I would have put quite a lot of money on it not being RB Leipzig," he told Bild. "If I am honest I am pretty stunned by this, because from a barber in the team hotel to a gold steak, the step is not too far."

The comment about the gold steak was a reference to Franck Ribéry's visit to Dubai in January 2019. But this was not a dig at the former Bayern player: the barb was directed completely at the Leipzig players.

The team were top of the Bundesliga going into the game against Frankfurt but defeat meant Bayern Munich leapfrogged them. The two teams face each other in a mouthwatering game at the Allianz Arena on Sunday and the feeling is that Leipzig have to get something from this game or the Bayern machine will just do what it has done in the past seven seasons: go on to win the title.

Leipzig's current coach, Julian Nagelsmann, was not too hard on the players after the Frankfurt game but lamented a lack of intensity in training. "We are perhaps just beneath the summit at the moment," he said. "And the question now is: do we want to reach the summit? Or do we stay where we are, have a bit of food, a bit of drink and then start our descent?" "I am not talking just about matches, because [against Frankfurt] they were totally engaged. But this is about training as well. We don't have that much training time and I find that we sometimes are not, by any means, engaged enough.

"On Wednesday, for example, the decision was: 'This is quite good what we have done so far.' The decision was not: 'I am going to go out there, burn [for the cause] and become German champions.'" Nagelsmann is a fascinating character. Still only 32, he demands absolutely everything from his players. They are not in great form going in to the game against Bayern, with the defeat in Frankfurt followed up by a point rescued in the 89th minute at home against Borussia Mönchengladbach last Saturday in the league, before a 3-1 defeat at Frankfurt in the German Cup on Tuesday.

Bayern, on the other hand, are flying under Hansi Flick, who took over from Niko Kovac in November. The Bavarians have won eight of their past 10 games and go into Sunday's showdown as clear favourites.

# Lionel Messi and money are keeping rudderless Barcelona afloat

**JONATHAN WILSON**  
**BARCELONA, 09 FEB**  
[THEGUARDIAN]: Last Tuesday, as Lionel Messi lashed out at the club's sporting director, Eric Abidal, the crisis at Barcelona became official. But this is a story about far more than clashing egos and mismanagement at the Camp Nou. It is a parable of modern football, of the problem with genius and the difficulty of identity.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of the saga – sparked by the Argentinian reacting with fury to what he saw as Abidal's attempt to blame the players for the recent sacking of Ernesto Valverde – is that it has taken so long to reach this point, a reminder that in the modern era super-clubs can be run with staggering ineptitude and still win titles.

The disjointedness of Barça's team structure has been evident for several years. Again and again, opponents in the knockout stages of the Champions League have rampaged through vast spaces in what should have been the midfield. That's how Paris Saint-Germain beat them 4-0 in the first leg of their last-16 tie in 2017,

and Juventus thumped them 3-0 in the following round. It's how Roma and Liverpool have been able to overcome three-goal deficits against them, how even an ordinary Chelsea made them look vulnerable at Stamford Bridge in 2018, albeit the game finished 1-1.

A midfield that is variously old, slow and unable to handle the demands of a modern pressing game is the most obvious problem, but it probably isn't the most troubling. There are two other major issues, both of which cast doubt on core elements of the club's identity.

The first is Messi. A decade ago, he was a willing worker. He might not have been the most voracious presser, but he did his share. In 2009-10, he regained the ball through tackles or interceptions an average of 2.1 times per game in La Liga. That was an exceptional season but in the years that followed 1.2 or 1.3 was standard. Since Pep Guardiola's departure, those figures have steadily slipped. Last season he was at 0.5; this season 0.8.

Messi has always been a minimalist genius – indeed part of his



greatness has been his capacity consistently to select the lowest difficulty option – but his work rate has declined with time.

That is not necessarily a criticism. It may be that the conservation of energy, his constant low-intensity reconnaissance of the opposition's defences, is required for him to be so effective at the creative aspects. He is 32 but showing few obvious signs of slowing down in terms of goals or assists. Yet as his genius has papered over the cracks, it is probably also responsible for at least some of those cracks.

This is not about casting blame: brilliance can be problematic. When Juventus's Argentinian

forward Paulo Dybala spoke in the run-up to the 2019 Copa América of his struggles to play with Messi, it was widely reported as a rift between the two, but it could equally have been seen as a statement of fact. It can be hard to play with somebody that good because the temptation to just give him the ball is so strong.

It is not a coincidence that Barcelona have begun to face similar problems to Argentina. And it is not just on the pitch that Messi's aura creates imbalances. It is almost impossible for him not to be indulged: which coach would ever drop him, let alone sell him? It's not just about the

political consequences of potentially ostracising him, it is that at any moment in any game, he might suddenly beat four men and lash a shot into the corner and so transform a poor result into a good one. But no player should also be a de facto sporting director.

What has exaggerated the problem, with Barcelona and Argentina, is the near total absence of rational leadership. Neither club nor federation, seemingly, has either vision or a plan. That is an issue exacerbated at Barça by the unusual nature of the club and by the difficulty of replacing a coach as extreme and idiosyncratic as Guardiola.

Of all Zlatan Ibrahi-

movic's many criticisms of Guardiola, the line that remains the most memorable is his description of Barcelona's players as schoolboys, standing head bowed before the teacher. It was a sneer that contained a deeper truth: what happens when the teacher leaves? What does a class used to obedience to an extremely prescriptive leader, a class that had found it hard to accommodate outsiders, do then?

This is the issue for any club that has a clearly defined sense of how it should play once the architect of that style has departed, but it is perhaps particularly acute at Barcelona, where a post-Cruyffian style has become intertwined with Catalan self-identity.

Luis Enrique offered a solution of sorts, grafting a celebrity trident on to the side that brought the 2015 Champions League while shifting away from the strictest definition of Guardiola's philosophy. But Luis Suárez is ageing and injured, while Neymar left to pursue his own ambition, a huge transfer that should have allowed Barça to reconstruct their defence and

midfield, but instead led

to a pair of vain nine-figure splurges on glamour. The greatest effect of the Neymar deal, as it turned out, was to gift Liverpool the Philippe Coutinho windfall they used to become the best side in the world.

So what do Barça do now? Spend more, but this time on the right players? Or try to return to some system of pure guardiolismo?

Quique Setién's possession-driven approach already feels slightly archaic. Devotion to an ideal is never in itself a solution. Brilliant as he is, Guardiola was fortunate at Barça to inherit a squad that included seven high-class players brought up at the club academy who understood his philosophy perfectly and to do so at a time when various changes in the game's laws and economics had made the world receptive to his revolution.

But football has moved on. High pressing and transitions reign. Even Guardiola has evolved. Meanwhile, Barcelona, devoid of leadership, stagnate, sustained only by Messi and their wealth, as the game flows ever further away from them.

## Ireland general election: Sinn Féin surges to 22% in exit poll



**RORY CARROLL**  
**DUBLIN, 09 FEB**  
[THEGUARDIAN]: Sinn Féin has scored dramatic gains in Ireland's general election, according to an exit poll on Saturday night, realigning Irish politics and boosting the party's chance of joining the next government.

The republican party won 22.3% of the vote while Leo Varadkar's ruling Fine Gael party slumped to 22.4%, the poll said, potentially spelling an end to Varadkar's tenure as taoiseach. Fianna Fáil, the main opposition party, won 22.2%.

If replicated in actual results it would signal an unprecedented tie among the three parties, leaving it unclear which, if any, could woo smaller parties and independents to form a parliamentary majority and ruling alliance.

Sinn Féin's surge – up from 13.8% in the 2016 general election – reflected the anger of voters, especially among the young, at soaring rents and homelessness.

The party's leader, Mary Lou McDonald, cast the party as a left-wing agent of change that would break up the duopoly of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, centrist rivals that have alternated in power for a century.

Sinn Féin, shunned by voters as the IRA's political wing during the Troubles, also tapped voter frustration

at hospital bed shortages, insurance costs, pension reform and a sense of being left behind by economic growth. The party's agenda for Irish unification, and Northern Ireland in general, took a backseat in the campaign.

However, Sinn Féin fielded too few candidates to fully translate its surge into extra seats in the new parliament, meaning it is likely to trail Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in the 33rd Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish parliament.

The exit poll was based on a sample of 5,000 respondents and has a margin of error of 2%. Previous exit polls by Ipsos MRBI have proved reliable predictors of overall support.

However, the allocation of seats in the 160-seat chamber remains unclear. Counting of votes will begin on Sunday, with full results expected on Monday or Tuesday. No party will win an outright majority, obligating party leaders to negotiate coalitions.

Varadkar hoped a thriving economy and his handling of Brexit would deliver a third consecutive term for Fine Gael, but he encountered voter anger at the high cost of living and fraying public services. The exit poll showed support for Fine Gael, which won 25.5% in the last election, sliding but not col-

lapsing, giving Varadkar a chance of hanging on as taoiseach.

The Fianna Fáil leader, Micheál Martin, had hoped to surf the public mood for change but the exit poll showed his party also slipping a few points – possible punishment for its confidence-and-supply deal that propped up Varadkar's administration.

Varadkar and Martin have ruled out working with Sinn Féin, and Martin also ruled out a coalition with Fine Gael, leaving it unclear if either man will be able to muster a majority.

Both will come under pressure from some party colleagues to form a grand centrist coalition. Some Fianna Fáil members are expected to lobby Martin to make a deal with Sinn Féin. In the event of deadlock, another election looms.

Early expectations that this would be Ireland's first climate crisis general election faltered after bread-and-butter issues dominated the campaign. However the exit poll gave the Green party 7.9%, a big jump from its 2.7% support in 2016, which will put it in contention for a place in a new government.

Storm Ciara whipped strong winds across Ireland, prompting organisers to cancel the opening ceremony for Galway's year as European Capital of Culture, but voting precincts across the country reported strong turnout.

## Belarus and Russia claw out Fed Cup victories

**MADRID, FEB 9 (AFP):** Aryna Sabalenka's day of wild extremes ended with Belarus clawing their way into the Fed Cup final while Naomi Osaka's participation ended more tamely when she was benched as Japan lost.

Belarus beat the Netherlands 3-2 in the Hague. Russia was also forced to go the distance as they beat Romania 3-2 in Cluj-Napoca.

Spain swept Japan aside 3-1. Switzerland beat Canada, Belgium beat Kazakhstan and Slovakia beat Britain, all 3-1. Germany thrashed Brazil 4-0 in warm conditions in Florianopolis.

They join already-qualified Australia, France, Czech Republic and Hungary in the 12-team finals in Budapest in April.

The final place was to be decided later Saturday in Everett, Washington, where the Serena Williams-led USA, who also boast newly crowned Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin in their team, started the second day leading Latvia 2-0.

In the Hague, Sabalenka opened the day by losing 6-4, 6-4 to Kiki Bertens. It was a match notable for an awful miss by the Belarussian who seemed to start crying after netting an easy winner.

"It was not the best tennis from myself," Sabalenka said.

When Arantza Rus won the opening set of the fourth rubber to love and Aliaksandra Sasnovich took an injury time out in the next rubber in clear distress with a wrist injury, Belarus



seemed doomed.

Somehow Sasnovich battled back to win 0-6, 7-5, 6-2.

Then, in front of a noisy home crowd, Sabalenka and Sasnovich teamed up to outlast Bertens and Demi Schuur in a taut doubles to win 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (10/8).

A nervy deciding set went to a tiebreak, Belarus raced to a 5-2 lead but when Sabalenka celebrated a winner too early she was called for hindrance. The Belarussians then each squandered a match point by netting a forehand. Bertens saved another before the pressure told and she served a double fault to lose the match.

In the other tie decided by the doubles, the Russians Anna Blinkova and Anna Kalinskaya had a less stressful time as they beat Jaqueline Adina Cristian and Elena Gabriela Ruse 6-3, 6-2.

Cristian had just kept the hosts in the tie by beating Veronika Kudremetova 7-5, 6-3 in the last singles.

- SPAIN TOO STRONG

-

In Cartagena, two-time Grand Slam champion Osaka was replaced in the reverse singles by Kurumi Nara, after an error-filled loss the day before. Nara lost to Carla Suarez Navarro 6-1, 6-3 as Spain took an unsailable 3-0 lead.

"We wanted to be in Budapest so much and we are there, so I'm so happy," said the 31-year-old Suarez Navarro who is set to retire from tennis this year.

In Bratislava, Heather Watson gave Britain hope when she beat Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova 6-0, 7-5 in the opening singles, but Anna Karolina Schmiedlova beat Harriet Dart 7-5, 6-3.

Dart, who had lost a three-setter that lasted almost three hours the evening before, sat on her chair and wept in frustration.

In Biel, Switzerland, 185th ranked Leylah Anne Fernandez beat fifth ranked Belinda Bencic 6-2, 6-7 to keep Canada in their tie.

Teenager Jil Teichmann then clinched a Swiss victory beating

Gabriela Dabrowski 6-3, 6-4.

"She really deserved the win," Bencic said. "Already she's a great player at 17 years old."

- BELGIAN PASSION -

Belgium won both the reverse singles to beat Kazakhstan in front of a home crowd in Kortrijk.

Elise Mertens beat Yulia Putintseva 6-1, 7-6 (7/1), and veteran Kirsten Flipkens then beat Zarina Diyas 6-3, 6-4 "You don't have this feeling very often of playing in front of a full stadium here in Belgium, said Mertens.

"So you really have to treasure it," Germany completed a 4-0 rout of Brazil in Florianopolis in a tie in which the last singles was not played. Germany did not drop a set, but star Laura Siegmund said the victory was hard work.

"Maybe sometimes it look easier than it was," she said. "We have almost no German fans, except our box, so it's not easy. Also the weather conditions... for us this was very hot.

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# Doctor who exposed Sars cover-up under house arrest in China, family confirms

VERNA YU

**HONG KONG, 09 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]:** The Chinese military surgeon who exposed the government's cover-up of the the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) epidemic in 2003 has been placed under de facto house arrest since last year, according to his friends and family.

The fate of 88-year-old Dr Jiang Yanyong, a retired general in the People's Liberation Army, has been brought under the spotlight after a whistleblower doctor, Li Wenliang, who exposed the coronavirus epidemic, died last Friday at the age of 34.

Jiang has had his contacts with the outside world cut off and his movements restricted since April last year, after he wrote to the top leadership asking for a reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, said a close friend, on condi-



tion of anonymity.

His wife, Hua Zhongwei, confirmed he is currently confined to his home.

"He is not allowed to be in contact with people outside. He is at home. He has no means of communication [with outside]," she said. "His health is not good. He is not in a good mental state either. He is not very well."

She said he suffered from pneumonia and was treated in hospital last year. "I am sorry, it is not

convenient to say more," she said.

Jiang was treated in 301 military hospital in Beijing – the hospital where he served for more than 60 years – from April last year for more than a month, but was guarded under heavy security and banned from being visited by his family at the time, his friend said. The doctor became agitated and was given medication, which has led to severe memory

loss, the friend said.

Jiang has pleaded more than once with the authorities to reappraise the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, which was brutally suppressed 31 years ago. It remains one of the most politically sensitive issues in China.

The elderly Chinese surgeon became a national hero by exposing the government's cover-up of the Sars epidemic in 2003, but was

detained and forced to undergo "brainwashing sessions" after he called on the government to acknowledge that the 1989 student movement was a "patriotic movement".

"Errors committed by our party should be resolved by the party. The sooner this is done and the more thoroughly this is done, the better," Jiang wrote in 2004, the 15th anniversary of the military crackdown.

In a 2013 interview with Southern People Weekly, an outspoken state magazine, Jiang stressed his insistence on speaking the truth.

"As a doctor, protecting patients' health and lives is first and foremost... the most basic requirement for a doctor is to speak the truth. I have experienced numerous political movements for 50 years, I feel deeply that it is easy to lie, so I insist on never telling lies," he told the magazine.

## Hong Kong border towns welcome virus controls, despite trade hit

**HONG KONG, FEB 9 (AFP):** Traders in Hong Kong's border towns are lamenting plunging business during the coronavirus outbreak but some residents say they are enjoying the absence of crowds of Chinese mainlanders.

The influx of migrants, tourists and traders has long been a controversial topic as the financial hub increasingly chafes under Beijing's authoritarian rule and the ever-rising cost of living.

The polarisation is especially stark in towns along the city's border with mainland China.

They have become huge draws for "parallel traders" who buy up tax-free goods for re-sale in China, a booming trade but one that worsens over-crowding and spiralling commercial rents.

However, the coronavirus outbreak has closed all but two of the city's land borders with the mainland.

And on Saturday officials rolled out plans attempting to ensure -- with spot checks and daily phone calls -- that all arrivals from the mainland undergo 14 days of compulsory quarantine.

Parked next to one of the shuttered checkpoints earlier this week, a minibus driver said he had waited for three hours without picking up a single passenger.

The man, who gave his surname Lai, said he

had been driving for four decades and never seen business so slow, not even during the 2002-03 SARS virus outbreak that killed 299 Hong Kongers.

"The situation is worse than what we had during SARS," the 70-year-old told AFP.

Four empty minibuses were ahead of him in the queue.

Usually Lai could earn around HK 1,300 ( 170) a day shuttling between the towns of Sheung Shui and Yuen Long -- another border district in northwest Hong Kong.

"I did not wear a mask in 2003 but now I wear one when I am driving," he said. "We transport people from all kinds of places after all." The crowds began dwindling during the Lunar New Year when the spread of the novel coronavirus through central China started being widely reported.

Then the border crossings began closing.

Sheung Shui, the first town passengers come to after passing through the now-shut Lo Wu checkpoint, was a frequent battleground between protesters and police during last year's months of pro-democracy rallies.

Sparked by a demand for greater democratic freedoms, many of the demonstrations had an anti-mainland feel and embraced local grievances about issues such as parallel traders.

A pharmacist who gave his surname as Shing said business was down 30 percent over the Lunar New Year, reaching 50 percent once the borders started closing.

Last year's protests also slammed trade.

But he said he understood the need to curb mainland arrivals.

"Maybe the government should have done it earlier," he said. "Because the sooner it contains the epidemic, the sooner our business can revive." Some Sheung Shui locals said they welcomed the uncharacteristic quiet.

Candy Kwan, a mother of three, said her three grown-up children have been unable to find any surgical masks in recent weeks, a commodity snapped up across the city, including by parallel traders.

She supported a complete closure of Hong Kong's border.

"What can matter more than human lives?" she asked. "I am feeling more comfortable on streets and less worried about infections after the checkpoint was closed."

Another Sheung Shui resident, a 70-year-old surnamed Chan, said she was angry with the government's partial closure of the border.

"It reacted like a toothpaste being squeezed," Chan said. "If it closed the border earlier, we might not have had to compete with mainland shoppers for masks."

## Rogue soldier shot dead after Thai shopping mall massacre



**BANGKOK, 09 FEB [AP]:** A soldier who shot dead 26 people has been killed by police following an overnight siege at a Thai shopping mall.

Eight people were held hostage by the gunman in the city of Nkhon Ratchasim, according to sources quoted by Reuters. Dozens more were trapped for hours on Saturday night as police attempted to regain control of the seven-floor building.

One police officer was killed during the raid, it was confirmed. "He had been hit and unfortunately he couldn't make it," said Anutin Charnvirakul, Thailand's health minister.

Lt Gen Kongcheep Tantrawanich, a defence ministry spokesman, named the gunman as Jakrapanth Thomma, who held the rank of ser-

geant major. According to Associated Press, officials said he was angry about a financial dispute.

The attack began late on Saturday afternoon when the gunman fired at people at an army barracks, killing the commanding officer of the 22nd Ammunition Battalion, in which the suspect also served. Thomma, who livestreamed the attacks on social media, stole military guns, ammunition and a vehicle before driving to the city centre and shooting at people both inside and around the Terminal 21 shopping centre. "I can't run away because I don't know where the shooter is. I am here with about 20 people," one man, who called himself Mr Green, told the Thai state broadcaster MCOT on Saturday from inside the mall.

Another woman, Ms

Uam, said she hid with 30 people inside a storage room, where they stayed for around six hours with the lights turned off. "All of us switched off our phones. No one posted anything on social media," she told Thai Rath TV. She was later able to flee at around 11pm local time.

Footage taken in the early hours of Sunday morning showed crowds of people, some carrying children, running out of the shopping centre as the police secured parts of the mall. Renewed gunfire was heard within the building, where the gunman was hiding on the lower ground floor.

The Thai prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, said on Sunday morning that another 52 people had been wounded. The soldier was motivated by a grudge over a land

deal in which he felt he had been cheated, said Prayuth, who travelled to Nakhon Ratchasima to visit wounded survivors. Thomma reportedly also shot at a Buddhist temple before opening fire at Terminal 21.

Nattaya Nganiem and her family were leaving the mall at the time. "First I saw a woman run out from the mall hysterically," said Nattaya, who shot video of the scene on her phone. "Then a motorcycle rider in front of her just ran and left his motorcycle there," she added.

Footage apparently taken inside the mall during the attack showed people running from stalls to take cover. "It was about 5pm that I heard the gunfire," added Uam. "Then a crowd started running. I could see it clearly because I was in front of the mall. I saw him shooting and I saw him moving in front of the parking lot where he later took [a] selfie that he posted on Facebook."

CCTV images showed the gunman walking through an empty section of the mall carrying a rifle and dressed in his soldier's uniform.

"We were scared and ran to hide in toilets," said Sumana Jeerawattanasuk, one of those rescued by police. She said seven or eight people hid in the same room as her.

"I am so glad. I was so scared of getting hurt," she said.

In videos taken by eyewitnesses on the main road outside of the shopping centre, the sound of repeated gunfire could be heard. During the attack the gunman posted images and videos to his Facebook page, which was later removed. Facebook said in a statement: "There is no place on Facebook for people who commit this kind of atrocity, nor do we allow people to praise or support this attack."

The city of Nkhon Ratchasim, also known as Korat, is more than 155 miles (250km) from Bangkok.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the world but such attacks are rare outside of the far south where an insurgency has continued for decades.

## Turkey threatens to hit back as Assad advances in northern Syria

BETHAN MCKERNAN

**Ankara, 09 Feb [theGuardian]:** Time is running out for three million civilians on Syria's border with Turkey, caught in the crosshairs of a brutal regime offensive that has led Ankara to threaten military action against Bashar al-Assad if his forces do not pull back.

Yesterday Turkey's defence ministry said it would strike back at regime troops and allied militias if its military posts in Syria's north-west Idlib province were threatened, echoing President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ultimatum last week that Assad must withdraw to a previously agreed ceasefire line before the end of February.

Erdoğan's communications director, Fahrettin Altun, said the escalation in Idlib – which led to the deaths of eight Turkish military personnel on Monday – was unacceptable. "We cannot tolerate what has been unfolding in Idlib. We will seek accountability for our martyrs," he told a Turkey-Syria media forum in Istanbul yesterday. "Bashar al-Assad's place in the future ... is not the presidential palace but the international court of justice at The Hague."

Turkey is seeking to shore up a de-escalation agreement for Idlib brokered in 2018 by Moscow – which backs Assad – and Ankara, which supports some rebel groups

in the area. The ceasefire has been routinely broken by both sides, but an attritional campaign by Syria has escalated since Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly al-Qaida's Syrian affiliate, seized control of most of the area last year.

A full-scale regime air and ground offensive, which began in December, has sparked one of the worst humanitarian crises in Syria's nine-year-old war to date, killing more than 300 civilians in airstrikes that hit hospitals, markets and bakeries, and driving 580,000 people fleeing the violence towards the Turkish border. Turkey, already home to about four million Syrian refu-

gees, which is unwilling to open its border to more.

Fifty-year-old Abu Omar, from the village of Hass in southern Idlib, left home with his family for another village as the fighting drew close at the end of last year. After shelling reached their temporary home two weeks ago, they fled to Deir Hassan on the Turkish border. All 11 family members have been living in a tent in freezing winter conditions, camped out with thousands of other families.

"We have lost all hope at this point," he said. "I think wWe are going to have to stay here a long time, but if the regime keeps advancing there is no other place left to go."

## Raveena Tandon joins 'KGF: Chapter 2'

Bengaluru, Feb 9 (PTI): Bollywood actor Raveena Tandon is set to star in the Kannada action drama "KGF: Chapter 2", the makers announced on Sunday.

Directed by Prashanth Neel, the film is a sequel to the 2018 period action movie starring Yash in the lead.

Neel took to Twitter to announce Tandon's coming on board.

"The lady who issues the death warrant has arrived! A warm welcome to you @TandonRaveena mam. #RamiKaSen in the building. #KGFChapter2," the filmmaker wrote.



Tandon, who plays a character named Ramika Sen in the upcoming movie, thanked the director.

"Absolutely a pleasure to work with the team," the National Award-winning actor tweeted.

"KGF" follows Rocky who rises from poverty

to become the king of a gold mine.

Despite garnering mixed reviews from critics, the film minted over Rs 200 crore at the box office.

Also starring Sanjay Dutt, Srinidhi Shetty and Malavika Avinash, "Chapter 2" is slated to be released in July.

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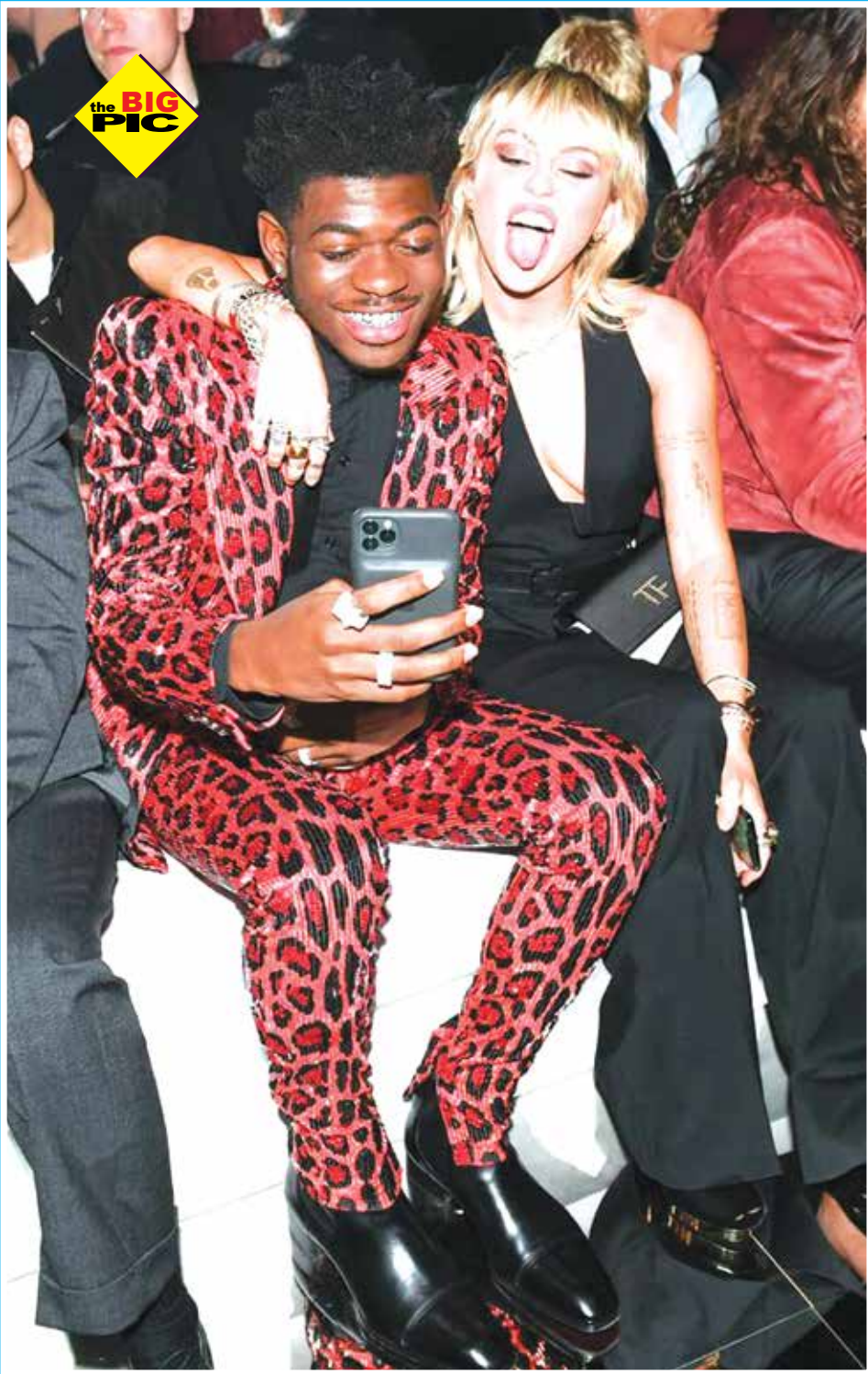
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**LIL NAS X & MILEY CYRUS: The friends goof around taking a selfie in the front row of the Tom Ford Fashion Show in Hollywood.**

## Jennifer Lopez explains the empowering message behind Her Super Bowl performance

Jennifer Lopez is setting the record straight on her 2020 Super Bowl performance.

It's hard to believe that only a week ago she and Shakira shut it down in Miami with an epic halftime performance, which featured glitzy outfit changes, major surprises guests (like Bad Bunny and J Balvin), powerful political statements and so much more.

Despite the iconic show, which also marked the first time two Latinas led a halftime performance at the Super Bowl, some people weren't thrilled with it. Many claimed the show wasn't kid-friendly and it was over-sexualized.

However, J.Lo is making it clear that the message behind her performance was meant to be empowering.

"It was an amazing moment for us," she told E! News at the 2020 Film Independent Spirit Awards

on Saturday, which aired on IFC. "The message was really about women and Latinos raising their voices and stepping up. And not being afraid to stand up for yourselves."

The Hustlers actress explained that she wanted her halftime performance to also be significant and special for her 11-year-old daughter, Emme Maribel Muñiz, who joined her and Shakira on stage that Sunday.

"Everything I want to pass onto my not just my daughter, but to all the little girls on that stage... [is] to be proud of who you are, to speak up for yourself, to know your worth and your value," Lopez said. "That was the message. I think for women everywhere, that was the message."

She added that performing alongside her 11-year-old daughter was a dream come true.

"It's real love, it's what it is," she shared.

Adding, "And I think that translated that night. That, that's what we were about—about spreading a message about love and unity. It was a celebration."

On Friday night, the 50-year-old singer opened up to Jimmy Fallon about her baby girl and how much of a natural she was during her performance.

"She doesn't let it in her mind how big [the performance] is or how it scares you. That's what you have to do when you're up there, you know—you kind of have to [have] control," J.Lo told the host on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

"She has that gene, that gene of 'I'm comfortable up here...' I wish I felt more like her," she continued. "She has a good time with it and I would never make her do it if it ever made her uncomfortable in any way."

Aries:

Yet again the cards are reminding you to sever toxic ties. If you're the only one invested in this relationship, you know you've got a problem, Aries. It's not selfish to exit a relationship that's making you feel disrespected and dishonoured. Be sure to take the high road instead of succumbing to the blame game though. You are an empowered being making empowered life choices. A Rumi quote to help you survive the trials and tribulations of the emotional realm:

Taurus:

When you are on the right path, the Universe tends to wink and nod from time to time to let you know you're winning the game of life. Be cognizant of the signs and synchronicities on your path, Taurus. The song on the radio that describes your state of mind accurately or a conversation you overheard at the bar are no coincidences. They're all nudg-

ing you towards your truth; your true purpose in the earthly realm.

Gemini:

Love and freedom. Freedom and love. They're both two sides of the same coin, Gemini. What's making your relationship thrive: the balance between 'me time' and 'we time'. Continue to give each other space. Trust that this will make your bond a lot stronger. Single twins in the market for love, expect a twist in the tale.

Cancer:

2020 has just begun, Cancer, and you're already thinking about giving up! So you had a minor setback. Things didn't turn out the way you wanted to. Oh, and let's not get started on the people around you! But that doesn't mean there aren't things that are looking up or working out right now and in this moment.

Leo:

The world has a way of mirroring our beliefs back to us. By holding on to the

belief that good things don't happen to you, you are blocking the Universe from giving you all that you deserve and more. This self-limiting pattern could be the reason your anxiety is triggered. So think about how you can break free from this shackle..

Virgo:

Virgo, you're the one everybody turns to for sage advice (a reality check). The responsible member of the crew who drives them home after a particularly debauchorous night. But that doesn't there's only one side to you. Labels are just labels, Virgo. Free yourself from the idea of who you are supposed to be and allow yourself to embrace all aspects of your personality. What the cards are encouraging you to do today:

Libra:

Everything you are looking for is right here and in this moment. There is no rush to get anywhere. You are enjoying the process of getting to know the other organically rather than rushing to the finish line. If they are 'the one', things will

work out despite the odds. If they're not, you'll still have made memories you will cherish for a lifetime.

Scorpio:

It doesn't matter how many times you have had your heart broken. Everything transpired for a reason. This you believe with your whole heart. You're grateful for where you are now: a place of joy and love. For a lot of you, this marks a new beginning.

Sagittarius:

Today, you're taking a no BS approach to love, life, and everything in between. Yes, that means having to sever certain connections or say goodbye to toxic ties, and that's okay. Your space is sacred, Sagittarius. Do what you need to in order to protect yourself. Not everybody is used to being served the truth tea though.

Capricorn:

Capricorn, you're an alchemist. A master manifestor in your own right. Rules of game to help you reclaim your reins: 1) Tell the Universe exactly what you want;

2) Be specific. Visualise the details; 3) Trust in your power; 4) Take the required action and; 5) Express gratitude for what you have and what is yet to come.

Aquarius:

You know what's underrated? A tall cup of cocoa, an old pair of linen pants, and a book that reminds you of the power of being in the now. Aquarius, this is your cosmic cue to shun worldly responsibilities and retreat into your inner sanctum. Be sure to put your phone on flight mode as you. Meditation and mindfulness will also take centre-stage today.

Pisces:

Sometimes you just need to take a moment to review your life, be grateful for the highs as well as the lows, and acknowledge each other's role in the process of evolution. You didn't think you could make it, yet you did! Trust that your connection will only grow deeper. Single Pisceans could be reflecting on their past patterns.

# I don't want to make predictable choices: Alaya

MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI):

"Jawaani Jaaneman" debutante Alaya F is in a happy space right now and says going ahead in her career she wants to make versatile choices.

The Nitin Kakkar-directed film, also featuring Saif Ali Khan, opened to positive reviews on January 31 and Alaya said she is glad with the response.

"I don't want to contain myself at all. I want to pursue all my options, see what feels the best... But I'm just excited to see what comes my way.

"I'm glad that people are liking and appreciating my work, taking note of me. I want to surprise people with what I do and not make predictable choices. I hope within my first five films, I'm able to do five vastly different characters," Alaya told PTI.

"Jawani Jaaneman" chronicles the story of a 40-year-old man whose life turns upside down when he discovers he has a 20-something daughter.

Alaya, 22, wasn't jittery on the day of the film's release as she knew the general feedback from the screenings held before but recalls that she was "quite scared" on the first day of the shoot.

"I remember walking on the set, projecting that I'm very confident as I didn't want people to think I was scared. That was the day when I go back to Saif's place and tell him that



there are chances he could be my father.

"It was a six-minute shot. It was a challenging first day but luckily it went well. After that the whole team was assured about me," she added.

Granddaughter of actor Kabir Bedi and daughter of Pooja Bedi, Alaya said she observed the ups and downs of the industry through both of them and learnt that one should be prepared for everything.

"For me, seeing how volatile the industry can be, what I just focused on is being very good at what I do. If you're good at your craft, no matter the ups and downs things will come back to you.

"That's what I mainly took from it. To be prepared for everything. I'm prepared for it a lot more," she said.

## I'm looking for a game changer Friday: Himesh Reshammiya

MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI): Himesh Reshammiya is one of the prominent names in the music industry, but the composer says he also wants the audience to accept him as an actor.

The music director, who became a rage in mid 2000s with his songs in films such as Aashiq Banaya Apne, Namaste London, Aksar, 36 China Town and Apne among others, made his acting debut in 2007 with Aap Kaa Surroor.

He went on to star in "Karzzzz", "Khiladi 786", "The Xpose", "Tera Surroor", Radio and his latest release in Happy Hardy and Heer.

"My songs and music have been successful. As far as my acting career goes, it is about getting one huge success and being appreciated for a role, which is a game changer.

Every actor is always looking for a game changer Friday, I am looking for it. And sometimes when you don't find it, you keep looking for that Friday," Reshammiya told PTI in an interview here.

He hopes his hard work in acting is appreciated.

"When I first became a singer, people had reservations but when my hundreds of songs became blockbusters then this whole debate of nasal singing ended. When something is new it takes time to be accepted.

### Kendall Jenner shares the importance of staying true to herself in the world of social media

Kendall Jenner is sharing her wisdom about social media and being a role model.

The Keeping Up With the Kardashians star opened up about what it's like to be in the spotlight and remain true to herself in the midst of it all. Speaking to E! News' Victor Cruz for her latest gig as the Longchamp ambassador, the 24-year-old star kept it real.

"I think daily, I'm just trying to be the best version of myself," she expressed, after being asked what message she wants to give people who look up to her. "I really, truly believe in not trying to be someone else but just... being the best version of yourself."

She added, "I don't think you need to try to be anybody else. I think that's what I'm always trying to remember, especially in today's day in social media—when you're looking at everyone else, thinking everyone's lives are so perfect. But just being like, 'You know what? I'm dope.'"

She's dope indeed!

On Friday, the supermodel owned the runway at the



This is my 10th film and because few of my films have done good business, producers like T-series, Vashu Bhagnani have offered me good films. It is about time I take my performance to the next level. I have worked very hard for all the films. I hope I get appreciation for the work I do."

Reshammiya, 46, said he realised a few years ago that it was necessary for him to branch out in other domains of filmmaking and that's when acting happened.

My decision for acting came from within, I knew I

wanted to do but it will take a little bit of time because I had to transform myself completely into an actor.

Talking about his forthcoming projects, Reshammiya said, "The sequel of 'The Xpose' is coming up, the character of Ravi Kumar gave me a lot of appreciation, another film is 'Main Jaha Rahu', for which I will collaborate with Javed Akhtar sahab. It is directed by Rajesh Sethi.

He is also creating music for Rajkumar Santoshi's upcoming film, Anubhav Sinha's next production venture and superstar Salman Khan's Eid release Radhe.

"I am also coming up with a new project with 700 new songs, which I am composing for the last four years," he added.

Tom Ford fashion show in Los Angeles, which was held at Milk Studios.

With New York Fashion Week already in full swing, it's only a matter of time before Kendall takes over the catwalks and makes the streets her own personal fashion show.

On Saturday afternoon, she posted a photo on Instagram Stories of her at the airport.

In the pic, she showed off her ultra-chic and luxurious luggages that were both Louis Vuitton designs.

And it appeared the 24-year-old star made her destination because later uploaded a quick video of the fashion show she attended.

While it's unclear if she walked the runway, she definitely saw the latest and greatest designs from the Longchamp show.

Luckily, if you're a style fanatic and love all things clothes, E! News has you covered with the Fashion Week festivities happening this month. Read all about the latest updates, here!