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Odisha pegs losses caused by Cyclone Fani at ₹11,942 crore

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Air India readies revival plan for 19 grounded aircraft

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Vijay Shankar says he can do the job as No. 4 batsman

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NEARBY



No cognisable offence against Rahul, court told

NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Wednesday informed a city court that no cognisable offence was made out against Congress president Rahul Gandhi on a complaint against him for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.

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12 injured in grenade blast in Guwahati

GUWAHATI
At least 12 people, including two Seema Sasstra Bal personnel, were injured in a grenade blast near a police checkpoint on Guwahati's upscale Zoo Road on Wednesday evening.

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HC rejects PIL against Kamal's Godse remark

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday declined to entertain the PIL which referred to actor-cum-politician Kamal Haasan's remark about Mahatma Gandhi's assassin being a Hindu terrorist and sought directions for the EC to "restrict" misuse of religion for poll gains.

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Violence prompts poll panel to pull campaign plug in Bengal

EC cuts electioneering by a day; says fear psychosis is widely prevalent in State

DEVESH PANDEY
NEW DELHI

In an unprecedented move, the Election Commission on Wednesday imposed a blanket ban on political parties' campaigning activities in the nine parliamentary constituencies of West Bengal from 10 p.m. on Thursday, in view of the "growing incidence of disruption and violence."

The decision came a day after violent clashes during a roadshow of BJP president Amit Shah in Kolkata, following which the party lodged a complaint with the Election Commission.

The Trinamool Congress had also approached the Commission seeking intervention.

Elections on May 19

Polls in these constituencies are to be held in the last phase on May 19 and the 48-hour silence period was to start on Friday evening.

The order bars campaigning activities till the conclusion of elections on May 19.

Exercising its powers under Article 324 of the Constitution, to ensure the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections, the EC directed that no person "shall" convene, hold, attend, join or address any election-related public meeting or procession.



Outrage & anguish: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inspecting the vandalised statue of Bengali reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. ■ PTI

Didi, where are you taking Bengal? I remember that something like this had happened during the election held after the Emergency in the country. You are taking Bengal back to the era of Emergency

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

The moment the [BJP chief Amit Shah's] rally came to an end, the hooligans of BJP came out of it with rods and fire and set the college on fire. They damaged the bust of Vidyasagar and this is a matter of huge shame for Bengal

MAMATA BANERJEE
West Bengal CM and Trinamool chief

The order also states that no one can display to the public – through movies and television – or propagate any election matter by holding any event, including musical concert, theatrical performance or any other entertainment or amusement, with a view to attracting people in connection with elections.

A ban has also been placed on the sale and distribution of liquor or "other substances of a like nature" within the polling areas.

The Commission said the decision was taken based on

a report from the Deputy Election Commissioner in-charge of the State.

In the report, the officer said: "During the review with the observers, it clearly came out that...there is distinct resistance and non-cooperation from the district administration and district police when it comes to providing level playing field to all candidates for campaigning and in providing a fear-less threat-free environment to the voters."

The EC observers said that while on the surface everything looked fine, in

their interactions with the public, the fear psychosis that was widely prevalent came out. "They pointed out that utterances of the AITC [Trinamool] senior leaders on the lines of 'Central forces will leave after the elections while we will remain' sent a chilling message among the officers as well as voters alike," said the order signed by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and the two Election Commissioners.

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SC decries Sharma's detention

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up the West Bengal government for keeping BJP Yuva Morcha leader Priyanka Sharma behind bars overnight despite the court's May 14 order to release her immediately on bail.

A Vacation Bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and Sanjiv Khanna even threatened contempt action against the State government.

Ms. Sharma was arrested by the State police and sent to 14 days of custody for allegedly posting a morphed image of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on social media.

The court called her arrest "prima facie arbitrary" in the first place. However, on May 14, while granting her bail, the Vacation Bench asked her to apologise for the "meme." The apology was not a condition for her release, though.

Returning to court on Wednesday, senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul said the court's order was not complied with by the State. Ms. Sharma was not released from jail on May 14.

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MORPHED FREEDOMS
► EDITORIAL

Rain gauge

IMD has forecast near-normal rainfall for 2019. The numbers refer to percentage of Long Period Average rainfall (89 cm) received from June to Sept. The forecasts are made in April

Year	IMD forecast (%)	Actual rain (%)
2013	98	106
2014	88	88
2015	106	86
2016	106	97
2017	96	95
2018	97	91
2019	96	-

Source: IMD



Rainclouds gather over the Kochi estuary in Kerala on Wednesday. ■ H.VIBHU

‘Monsoon to reach Kerala on June 6’

IMD's forecast expects 'slight delay'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday said the southwest monsoon will be "slightly delayed" over Kerala and arrive on June 6. The normal onset date is June 1.

The IMD forecast is in line with the one by private forecaster Skymet, which said on Tuesday that it will reach Kerala on June 4.

The IMD has been using a customised model, since 2005, to forecast the monsoon's onset over Kerala. From 2014 to 2018, the agency claims, it got the date wrong only in 2015.

This model crunches six meteorological parameters: minimum temperatures over northwest India; pre-monsoon rainfall peak over

the south peninsula; outgoing longwave radiation (OLR) over the South China Sea; lower tropospheric zonal wind over the southeast Indian Ocean; upper tropospheric zonal wind over the east equatorial Indian Ocean; and OLR over the southwest Pacific region.

It has a built-in error margin of 4 days. That is, a June 6 onset can mean any day between June 2 to June 10.

"Conditions are becoming favourable for advance of southwest monsoon over the southern part of Andaman Sea, Nicobar Islands and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal during 18-19th May," the IMD press note says. Generally, the monsoon reaches Kerala within 10 days of crossing the Andamans.

In U.P. village, dog menace keeps farmers off the fields

No contractor to dispose of cattle carcasses in Pisawa, where stray dogs had mauled a girl to death

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Shaken by a pack of dogs mauling a seven-year-old girl to death earlier this week, residents of Pisawa village in Mathura district are loath to step out to their farms, let alone send their children to the government school.

Devki's death on Monday, when she was trudging through the fields to deliver food to her father Bhoop Singh at their farm a kilometre away from home, is linked not only to a dog menace in the area but also to 'cow politics'.

Village headman Kali Charan said there's no one to dispose of carcasses since potential contractors are afraid of being attacked by right-wing activists; the previous contract expired six months ago. A district-level official admitted as much: "No contractor is coming forward because of the fear of getting lynched while transporting cow carcasses.



Bhoop Singh, father of Devki, who was mauled to death by stray dogs at Pisawa village in Mathura, and (right) the spot where she was killed. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

The immediate solution is castration of dogs."

'No other option'

"We are left with no other option than to dump the cattle carcasses on the outskirts of the village, where stray dogs and birds feed upon them. The dogs have turned violent in the absence of a regular supply of meat," said Suraj Pal Singh, another



villager.

Pisawa residents are agitated over the fact that no officer from the district administration has visited the village after the tragic incident. "Instances of cattle being attacked by stray dogs are common in the area but this is the first time a human life has been lost," pointed out Sita Ram, a villager. "We are pained that no govern-

ment official is taking the incident seriously nor has anyone visited the victim's family even four days after her death," he said.

The farmers have just harvested the rabi crop and are readying their farms for the kharif season, but the fear of stray dogs is keeping them away from their fields.

"To guard crops from stray animals and nilgai,

farmers have to spend the night in the field. The district administration has failed to stop the stray cattle menace. Now, the fear of dogs has forced us off the fields. There seems to be no end to the problems of farmers," said Rameshwar Singh, a farmer.

While calls to Mathura District Magistrate Sarvagya Ram Mishra went unreturned, Sudhir Singh, an official of Chhata tehsil under which Pisawa village falls, said that a new contractor to dispose of animal carcasses will be selected after the election model code of conduct period ends.

At Devki's home, mother Kamlesh is inconsolable. "Every day before going to school, she used to take food for her father at the farm. She was her dad's favourite... she never allowed her siblings to go. I can't forget the last time I saw her before she left for the farm," she said of the third of her five children.

FIR against Minister for poll code violation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A first information report has been registered against Haryana Minister of State for Cooperatives Manish Grover and former Congress MLA from Rohtak B.B. Batra for violation of model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha election in Rohtak on May 12.

The FIR has been registered on charges of disobeying the orders of a public servant and disorderly conduct near a polling station.

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‘Indians eager to cut alcohol intake’

It reflects awareness of abuse, says global survey of recreational drug use

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A global survey of recreational drug use, which for the first time polled respondents from India, has found that Indians – more than from other nationalities – are seeking help to reduce their alcohol intake.

Alcohol, tobacco and cannabis were the most common stimulants used by Indians. Of the nearly 1,00,000 respondents from 30 countries, Indians reported 'being drunk' on an average of 41 times in the last 12 months – behind the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Australia and Denmark in that order but well above the global av-



Fifty-one per cent of the respondents wanted to 'drink less' in the following year ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

erage of 33 times.

The Global Drug Survey (GDS) is an anonymised, online survey that uses a detailed questionnaire to assess trends in drug use and self-reported harms among

regular drug users and early adopters of new trends.

Though the survey is not designed to determine the prevalence of drug behaviour in a population, it throws light on "stigmatised behaviours and health outcomes of a hidden population that is otherwise difficult to reach...and can be used to inform targeted interventions," according to a description by the organisation in a 2018 editorial in the medical journal *Lancet*.

Indian respondents to the survey, conducted online during October-December 2018, appeared more than other nationalities to be eager for help with reducing

their alcohol intake.

According to the 2019 GDS, 51% of the respondents wanted to 'drink less' in the following year and 41% 'wanted help to do so' – again the highest percentage among other countries.

"It might genuinely reflect high levels of concern among drinkers of being aware of consuming at levels known to be harmful," said Adam Winstock, among the key authors of the survey, in an email. Mr. Winstock is a London-based psychiatrist and founder and director of the GDS.

6% OF WOMEN SOUGHT
EMERGENCY HELP ► PAGE 10