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SHAH CEMENT

India sees more monsoon rains than forecast

A warning for Bangladesh as rivers in upstream may swell

AGENCIES

India looks likely to receive higher monsoon rainfall than previously forecast as concern over the El Nino weather condition has eased, the chief of the weather office said on Tuesday, raising prospects of higher farm and economic growth.

The state-run India Meteorological Department on April 18 forecast this year's monsoon rains at 96 percent of the 50-year average of 89 cm.

"Things have changed for the good since then," said K.J. Ramesh, director general of the state-run India Meteorological Department, told Reuters in an interview.

The monsoon delivers about 70 percent of India's annual rainfall, critical for crops such as rice, cane, corn, cotton and soybeans because nearly half of the country's farmland lacks irrigation.

"We assessed 96 percent based on the climatological conditions up to March. Now, conditions are becoming favourable for an improvement over our April 18 estimate," Ramesh said.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology recently said there were signs of concerns easing over El Nino.

El Nino, a warming of ocean surface temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific that typically occurs every few years and was linked to crop damage, fires and flash floods, faded in 2016.

The establishment phase of the monsoon north of the

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Devotees present their ritual offerings of fruits, flowers and candles in front of Lord Buddha at Nandankanon Buddhist Monastery at Chittagong yesterday celebrating Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhists community. The food is later distributed among the poor.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Three hurt in 'BCL' attack on function in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Three cultural activists including two women, were hurt in an attack allegedly by Chhatra League men to foil a programme on the Shaheed Minar premises in Narayanganj yesterday.

The attackers vandalised chairs, loudspeakers and the decorations of the programme in the city's Chasara area around 5:30pm. Unmesh, a cultural platform, organised it to mark the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

After the incident, the BCL activists took position on the Shaheed Minar premises, forcing the organisers to postpone the programme. Unmesh President Pradip Ghosh Babu said at a press briefing at Narayanganj Press Club later in the evening.

The attackers' target was to prevent Rafiur Rabbi, a local cultural activist, from taking part in the

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BSMMU rejoinders, our replies

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in three rejoinders dated April 5, 6 and 10 protested The Daily Star reports about the university published on January 20, 23, 25, 28, 29, and April 2, 4, 9.

Following is the list of our reports.

The report on January 20 dealt with an untoward incident between the BSMMU VC and a pro-VC. January 23 report was about a meeting to ease BSMMU "tension" emanating from the above incident, January 25 news was on Health Minister Mohammed Nasim's directive to the VC to apologise to the pro-VC, January 28 and 29 reports were on recruitment of BSMMU's 200 nurses amid irregularities, and BSMMU's decision to investigate the irregularities respectively.

The report of April 2 was on the absence of an

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Trump defends firing of FBI chief

Pledges 'far better' replacement of Comey; Democrats demand independent probe of Russia's alleged meddling in US polls

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump lashed out against his critics in a fresh Twitter attack yesterday after his unprecedented firing of FBI chief James Comey.

Democrats have pounced on the president amid a massive backlash over his sudden decision to fire Comey on Tuesday, just as the spy agency was investigating whether Trump's campaign aides colluded with Russia in an attempt to sway the US election in the Republican's favor.

"The Democrats have said some of the worst things about James Comey, including the fact that he should be fired, but now they play so sad!" Trump said in a series of morning tweets.

The FBI director had antagonized all sides -- first angering Republicans by closing the email probe against Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and then Democrats by reopening it days before the November presidential elections. Clinton claimed the move contributed to her loss to Trump.

"Cryin' Chuck Schumer stated recently, 'I do not have confidence in him (James Comey) any longer.' Then acts so indignant. #draintheswamp," Trump said late Tuesday, referring to Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Trump cited Comey's handling of both investigations -- of Clinton's emails and possible Russian election meddling -- to justify his decision to fire him.



James Comey

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State can't have any religion: CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In every religion, there is an opportunist group that explains religion in its own way and this ultimately benefits vested interests, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha has said.

"If we analyse the holy books of every religion, we see all of them talk about people's welfare and different issues of life, and about how to go about life, shunning the path of internal conflict, jealousy and malice," he said.

The chief justice made the comments while addressing a discussion on "World Peace in Light of Buddhism" as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha organised it on the occasion of holy Buddha Purnima at Dharmarajik Buddha Mahabihar in the capital's Sabujbagh.

He said religion is a personal matter and the state is for all and therefore, it cannot have any religion.

Bangladesh is a secular state; there are public holidays on the occasions of Buddha Purnima and Durga Puja and people of different religions enjoy the occasions, the chief justice said.

Shuddhananda Mahathero, president of Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar

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Breastfeeding Aussie senator makes history



AFP, Sydney

A breastfeeding senator has made Australian political history by becoming the first woman to nurse her newborn baby in the nation's parliament.

Greens' senator Larissa Waters returned to the upper house Senate for the first time Tuesday since giving birth to her second child, and brought her in for a feed during a vote.

"So proud that my daughter Alia is the first baby to be breastfed in the federal Parliament! We need more #women & parents in Parli," she wrote on Twitter.

Being able to breastfeed in the chamber follows new rules introduced last year to create a more a

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AHMADIYYA IMAM Three sued over attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A case has been filed against three people in connection with Monday's attack on an imam of the Khanpur Ahmadiyya mosque in Mymensingh's Ishwarganj.

Hazari Ahmad Al-Munim, acting imam of the mosque, on Tuesday night lodged the case with Ishwarganj Police Station, accusing three people, including one Abdul Ahad

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 11
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-15 12-45 5-00 6-34 8-00
JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-15 6-38 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

BRAZILIAN BAND Nine artistes detained at airport

Concert postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine artistes of Brazilian death metal bands Krisiun and Nervochoas were detained at Dhaka airport for several hours since early Tuesday, forcing organisers to cancel a concert they were scheduled to perform at the TCB auditorium in the capital later that day.

According to one of the event organisers Raptor, they had taken all necessary permissions from the cultural affairs ministry, the National Board of Revenue and the Special Branch (SB) of police way in advance and the band members had also got their visas to perform at the "Metal Morgue" concert.

Soon after the Brazilian musicians arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 1:05am from Indonesia on a Malaysia Airlines flight, the immigration police detained



Members of Brazilian death metal bands Krisiun and Nervochoas at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Tuesday. They were detained by immigration police after they arrived in Dhaka from Indonesia to perform at a concert at the TCB auditorium in the capital's Karwan Bazar. They were allowed to move to a city hotel several hours later. The concert had to be cancelled by the organisers.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF RAPTOR

FLASH FLOOD-HIT SUNAMGANJ OMS programme tainted by graft

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Corruption and irregularities by ruling party men and their relatives appointed as dealers of Open Market Sale have caused the food assistance programme to be less effective in alleviating the misery of flood victims in Sunamganj.

Local people and people's representatives have also brought allegations of irregularities in the listing of people for Vulnerable Group Feeding programme and cash distribution programme.

The government on Monday expanded the OMS operation to 110 points, including one in each of 88 unions in the district, to improve the situation following reports on people queuing up before OMS centres for long and returning home empty handed.

But then there are allegations of nepotism that mostly ruling party men and their relatives got the job of selling subsidised food grains.

Already, the dealership of Purnendu Sarkar Rony, a local Jubo League leader of Rafinagar union, has been cancelled for accusations against him of trying to sell OMS rice in the market on May 6, said Derai Upazila Nirbahi Officer Towhiduzzaman Pavel.

The UNO received another complaint of irregularities against Mosharraf Mia, mayor of Derai municipality and joint general secretary of the local Awami League.

Tahirpur Upazila Chairman Kamruzzaman Kamrul said corruption and irregularities had increased in haor areas due to the appointment of AL leaders as OMS dealers and for the job of listing people for the distribution of VGF cards.

For example, he cited that seven dealers in seven unions of Tahirpur upazila were from the ruling party.

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