VOA NEWS

May 3, 2019

This is VOA news. I'm Liz Parker.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr was again at the center of Capitol Hill drama Thursday without even being there.

AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports from the White House.

A day after a tense Senate hearing, Barr did not show up for an appearance with the House Judiciary Committee after taking issue with the Democratic-led panel's plan to have its lawyers question him.

"What we saw is fear." Chairman Jerry Nadler called Barr afraid.

Another Democratic put a toy chicken at Barr's empty seat. Republicans were not amused, with ranking member Doug Collins saying Barr would have testified if not for Democratic shenanigans.

"... the stunt and the circus continues over here."

Not long after, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ramped up the tensions, suggesting Barr had already lied to Congress last month, calling that a crime.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Venezuela's socialist President Nicholás Maduro is clinging to power.

Thursday morning, Maduro was greeted by troops singing and clapping as he joined them for a ceremony. The disputed president called on the country's armed forces to oppose any coup plotter after opposition leader Juan Guaidó failed to win defections from military leaders.

Maduro's televised address to the military came after two days of massive street demonstrations against his government.

Guaidó supported by a small contingent of defecting security forces called for a massive uprising against Maduro days earlier.

President Donald Trump said Thursday conservative economic commentator Stephen Moore has withdrawn himself from consideration for the Federal Reserve Board.

Trump announced Moore's decision on Thursday on Twitter after weeks of controversy over Moore's writings about women.

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More than 100 million people are in the path of Cyclone Fani as it slowly moves toward the eastern Indian state of Odisha.

The cyclone generating winds of nearly 200 kilometers per hour is expected to make landfall early Friday.

Indian authorities have evacuated more than 1.2 million people from the coastal, low-lying areas and plan to move thousands more.

The India Meteorological Department refers to it as an "extremely severe cyclonic storm."

Catholic services are being canceled for a second weekend in Sri Lanka's capital. This comes after the government warned of more possible attacks by the same Islamic State-linked group that carried out Easter suicide bombings.

VOA's Steve Miller has more.

The April 21 bombings at churches and luxury hotels killed more than 250 people. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has canceled all Sunday services in the Colombo diocese based on the latest security reports.

Ranjith has criticized the government's apparent failure to share near-specific intelligence on the Easter plot and on some of the suspects involved.

The U.S. embassy in Colombo remained closed to the public through Friday.

The education minister has said that the 9,000 public schools across the nation will open on Monday, May 6 with stringent security measures.

Steve Miller, VOA news.

SAS AB's top executive [on late] said late on Thursday that the Scandinavian airline and its pilots' unions in Sweden, Denmark and Norway had reached a deal to end a strike that would affect hundreds of thousands of travelers over the past week.

Chief executive Rickard Gustafson told a news conference it would take up to 24 hours before operations were fully up and running again as he announced a three-year agreement with four pilots' unions.

SAS had canceled more than 4,000 flights since pilots went on strike on April 26 over wages and working conditions.

The Caribbean nation of St. Lucia has imposed a quarantine on a visiting cruise ship. Passengers or crew are barred from leaving the boat while in port after a case of measles was diagnosed on board.

Here is the island's chief medical officer. "We got information early this morning through two sources, two reputable sources, that there was a confirmed case of measles on board a cruise ship that visited our Island."

The cruise ship quarantine comes as the number of measles cases in the United States has reached a 25-year peak, with more than 700 people diagnosed as of this week - part of an international researching in the disease.

I'm Liz Parker, VOA news.