

**Australia take series easily**

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia expectedly whitewashed Bangladesh 2-0 in the Test series when the world champions cantered to a massive one innings and 80-run victory in the second and final Test yesterday.

Shane Warne, who had a poor start to the two-match series, finished with five wickets as Bangladesh were bowled out for 309 in their second innings before lunch on the fifth and final day at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The hosts, who pushed the visitors hard to raise hopes of an upset victory but lost a seesaw first Test in Dhaka by only three wickets, survived only 26.2 overs after resuming on 195-4 despite a few lusty blows by Mohammad Rafique, who smashed six sixes and two fours in a cameo 65 off 53 balls. The left-handed all-rounder whacked three over-boundaries off Warne in one over, which produced 21 runs. He was also equally harsh

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# Oil hits new high above \$74 on supply fears

REUTERS, London

Oil jumped to a fresh record high above \$74 a barrel yesterday after a steep drop in US gasoline inventories fueled fears of tight summer supplies at a time of growing anxiety over Iran's exports.

The United States on Wednesday reported a larger-than-expected drop in gasoline inventories of over 5 million barrels, adding to concern created by the shutdown of almost a quarter of Nigeria's oil

output and the row over Iran's nuclear program.

"We've gone from comfortable US gasoline stocks to average and seem to be heading very clearly toward the low of the range," said Deborah White of SG SIB Commodities in Paris. "The market is worried about that."

London's Brent crude climbed as high as \$74.22 a barrel, its eighth consecutive session to mark a new peak. It was trading down 3 cents at \$73.70 a barrel by 1132 GMT.

US May crude oil futures were down 3 cents to \$72.14, hitting an all-time high of \$72.49 earlier.

Gasoline stocks in the US fell as demand averaged over 9.1 million barrels per day (bpd), 0.8 percent more than a year earlier, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said.

"It's all about gasoline and it has been since January," said US consultant PFC Energy in a report, adding that stocks are at the

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**Saifur blasts opposition for calling hartal**

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday accused the 14-party opposition combine of obstructing the country's development programme by enforcing destructive political programmes like hartal.

"Enforcement of hartal is totally meaningless at a time when an atmosphere for dialogue is being created through exchange of letters between the government and the opposition," he told reporters after a meeting held at the Planning Commission.

The meeting reviewed the progress in implementation of projects under Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The minister said the parties in the 14-party alliance, except the Awami League (AL), hardly have one lakh supporters. "This type of destructive programme must be

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League (AL) lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor climbs on the bumper of a prison van as AL members lie down on the street near the GPO in the city preventing police from taking away fellow party men during the hartal yesterday.

**ELECTORAL REFORMS  
Bhuiyan says Jamaat should be in dialogue**

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said Jamaat-e-Islami should be in the proposed dialogue on the opposition's reform proposals.

"Jamaat should be in the discussion... But no decision has been taken yet. We will take a decision after consultation," he told reporters at the secretariat.

The BNP secretary general

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**Morshed flies to Europe today on 10-day visit**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan leaves Dhaka today for Europe on a 10-day official visit to France, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the EU Headquarters in Brussels.

The foreign minister will meet his French counterpart, Dutch ministers for foreign affairs and development cooperation and Swiss foreign minister to discuss bilateral issues, trade and investment cooperation and important

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# Allowance for disabled poor

1.4 lakh to get Tk 200 each a month

UNB, Dhaka

Over 1.4 lakh physically challenged poor people of the country will get a monthly allowance of Tk 200 each from the current fiscal year under the National Social Welfare Policy is approved.

"An amount of Tk 25 crore has been allocated for the programme for fiscal 2005-06," Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid told reporters at a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday.

The press briefing was arranged to highlight the ministry's development activities during the last four years of the present government.

Replying to a query, the minister said, "We can start distributing the allowance as soon as the programme gets the approval, which is expected within a month."

About politicisation of the lists, Mujahid said, "There is no scope of politicisation as everybody knows who are the handicapped."

He said some 48,000 handicapped people are already getting benefits under microcredit projects and the number will be raised to 65,000.

He said the social welfare policy suggested introducing special ticket counters at every transport terminal and keeping seats reserved for the physically challenged.

"We're communicating with authorities concerned to take steps for keeping five seats reserved in every bus, 20 in each train and three per cent of total seats in each launch and steamer for the physically challenged," Mujahid said.

He said a process is also underway to withdraw the restriction on recruitment of handicapped people in class I and class II government jobs apart from keeping one per cent quota in class I services for the handicapped.

**51 killed as wedding party bus skids off road in India**

AFP, Guwahati

At least 51 people were killed yesterday when a bus carrying a wedding party skidded off the road and slid into a pond in India's northeast, police said.

"We have extricated 51 bodies so far. There could be some more people in the pond and divers are at work," police officer A. Barman told AFP.

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**CMCH interns threaten to resume strike from Sunday**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Intern doctors of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) yesterday threatened to resume the indefinite strike at the hospital from Sunday as they were yet to receive increased allowance despite as pledged by the authorities.

The interns enforced an indefinite strike on April 5 and postponed

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PHOTO: STAR

Farmers harvest boro in Boillarchar on the outskirts of the city yesterday. This boro season was plagued with an acute fertiliser crisis.

**JCD men confine PSTU VC for three hours**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) men yesterday confined the vice-chancellor (VC) of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) in his residence for three hours demanding his removal from office.

Around 50 JCD men at 2:00pm went to Krishi Kunja, the VC's residence, and locked its doors

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# Tigers put off talks indefinitely

Four more killed in violence

REUTERS, AFP, Kilinochchi/Columbo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels pulled out of peace talks indefinitely yesterday, saying the island was heading for war and dashing hopes that a Norwegian peace mission could stem rising violence.

At least four people were killed in Sri Lanka yesterday. Suspected Tamil Tiger rebels shot dead a rival activist in the eastern town of Batticaloa on Thursday and fought a gun battle with government forces in the neighbouring district of Trincomalee, a defence official said.

The body of a suspected Tiger rebel together was found with a

hand grenade at Kinniya in the Trincomalee district, the official said, adding that a government soldier was wounded in the firefight.

Two more dead bodies were found at Maharambakulam in Vavuniya district, the military said, but their identities had not been established.

At least 64 people were killed in the bombings alone while the Tigers said more than a dozen were killed in attacks carried out by pro-government militias.

About 80 people have been killed in the past two weeks in a series of suspected Tiger attacks, ethnic riots and unsolved murders which the two sides blame on each other.

Talks due to take place in Switzerland next week had been seen as the best chance to reduce tension, but the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said on Thursday they would not attend until "normality" returned.

"We are not in a position to attend the Geneva talks on the currently decided dates under the present environment," head of the LTTE political wing S.P. Thamilselvan told reporters. "It is the government that is creating a war-like situation and pushing us towards war."

Prayer Timing		
April 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-27	6-31
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation