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VOL. IX NO. 111 REGD. NO. DA 781

INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

JAISTHA 3, 1406 BS

DHAKA MONDAY MAY 17, 1999

MUHARRAM 30, 1420 HIJRI

16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

## Embarrassment for defence committee

By Nurul Kabir

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence was exposed to an embarrassing situation when Science and Technology Minister Lt Gen (ret'd) Noor Uddin Khan appeared to represent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the meeting.

General Noor Uddin carried a letter from the Prime Minister informing that the Technology Minister would represent her at the meeting. The PM, who is in charge of the Ministry of Defence, is a member of the parliamentary body on the ministry. However, the committee found the proposition to be inconsistent with the Rules of Procedure of Jatiya Sangsad.

But the members concerned eventually felt relieved as the General decided himself, on reading the rules concerned, not to attend the meeting - sources in the JS body said.

The Rule 247 (6) of the Rules of Procedure of Jatiya Sangsad says: "If there be no minister in charge, or minister of state or deputy minister of a ministry, the Leader of the House shall nominate a member of the cabinet to the standing committee of such ministry and if he is a member of parliament, he shall be the member of the committee and if he is not a member of parliament, he may remain present in the meeting and take part in the proceedings but shall abstain from voting."

On the arrival of Noor Uddin at the meeting venue yesterday morning, chairman of the committee and ruling party legislator Major General (ret'd) K M Shafulah just read out the rule to the minister. The minister did not take time to realise that there is a specific minister - the PM herself - who is in charge of the ministry of defence. So there is no scope for her to nominate any other person.

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## JP march attacked in Mymensingh

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Mymensingh

The otherwise peaceful 'road march' led by Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad came under an attack by Chhatra League activists at Mymensingh town yesterday.

However, Ershad and his party men were not hurt. Some 10 pedestrians were injured, one in a bomb explosion, during a clash between Chhatra League and Jatiya Party activists that ensued over putting up of a road barricade near the Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute.

The marchers who left

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## Shazneen murder Proceedings of case adjourned till June 3

By Staff Correspondent

The First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday adjourned the proceedings of Shazneen murder case till June 3.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of industrialist Latifur Rahman, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23 last year. A murder case and another case under the Woman and Children Repression Prevention Act 1995 were filed with Gulshan thana in connection with the incident.

Police accused seven persons in the charge sheets in the cases. They are domestic help at Latifur Rahman's house.

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## Inside Today

### Article

## Kashmir after a Decade of Militancy

Column: Perspectives by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz  
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### Focus

Importance of community health and family practice  
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## Prayer Timings

	May 17	
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-20
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-45	4-55
Maghrib	6-40	6-43
Esha	7-55	8-10

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Quit now, call snap polls: Khaleda BNP convoy crosses bridge peacefully

By Nazmul Ashraf



BNP 'road march' led by party chief Begum Khaleda Zia leaving the city for Panchagarh yesterday. — Star photo

A huge convoy of 328 motor vehicles crossed the Bangabandhu Bridge peacefully yesterday under the personal supervision of BNP chief Khaleda Zia as she led the road march to northern Bangladesh, launching a campaign to project "government's failures".

The three-day march began from city's Paltan Maidan at 10:40 am after the Opposition leader's fiery speech denouncing the Awami League government's "failures" to run the affairs of the state and demanding immediate general elections.

"The government has miserably failed to protect public interests and run the affairs of the state," she told a Paltan Maidan rally, while giving a summary of "failures".

On her way to Panchagarh, nearly 500 kilometres from the capital, she reached Bogra late last night stopping at four points (Tongi, Gazipur, Tangail town and Elenga) before the bridge and another two (Bhuiyanganj at Serajganj and Sherpur at Bogra) on the other side of the Jamuna. On the first day, she touched five districts.

In all six places, she addressed public rallies asking the government to quit immediately and call snap polls.

She told them that the Awami League administration failed to

- \* solve power, water crises,
- \* generate jobs,
- \* protect the interests of farmers, teachers, government employees, workers and all groups of professionals,
- \* ensure safety and security of people and their property,
- \* end repression on political opponents, and
- \* protect the sovereignty of the country.

The government had therefore lost every right to stay in

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## PM rules out mid-term polls Upazila election may be shifted 'for convenience'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday ruled out any mid-term general election as demanded by the opposition, reports agencies.

She said she had offered early election as per demand of the opposition but they did not reciprocate and have been continuing agitation programmes.

The Prime Minister neither confirmed nor ruled out whether her earlier decision to hold the election by 2000 is still valid. "The election will be held in proper time," she said addressing a crowded press conference at the Bangabhaban on her return from The Netherlands.

Sheikh Hasina also chief of ruling Awami League, however, hinted that a political negotia-

tion might influence the time of election.

She told a questioner that the Upazila election might be shifted for convenience. The monsoon month of July is not suitable for holding election. Besides, the Election Commission is also interested to shift the date. It can be done by amending related laws, she added.

Asked if the government would go for discussion with the opposition, which is staying of the polls to press for replacement of the Chief Election Commissioner, she said talks had already started and would continue.

Hasina pointed to Home Minister Mohammad Nasim's two meetings with BNP Secre-

tary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and a 4-member team led by Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

About the lifting of restrictions on Road March through the Bangabandhu Bridge, Hasina said the withdrawal followed BNP leaders' assurance that they would maintain discipline and would not hold any demonstration within 12 kms of both sides of the bridge.

As the press conference was underway, she informed the newsmen that BNP's convoy of 305 vehicles crossed the bridge with Begum Zia cruising at the rear.

Asked if changing the decision was a defeat for the ruling party, she sharply replied: "Not at all."

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## Fuel tanker burst in Pakistan kills 65

ADDAL RODU SULTAN(Pakistan) May 16: Giant plumes of smoke and flames engulfed a town in eastern Punjab province today after a tanker loaded with gasoline exploded, killing as many as 65 people and injuring at least 75 others, police said, reports AP.

According to police and witnesses the truck was barreling down the dirt road that runs through the centre of Adda Rodu Sultan in Jhang district, some 180 kilometres southwest of Lahore, when it rolled.

Gasoline began to leak from the tanker. About 150 residents and shop owners rushed to the vehicle with buckets and cans to collect the leaking gasoline. But minutes later there a fire began and the tanker exploded, they said.

"It's still not clear what sparked the explosion, police said."

"It seemed that all hell had broken loose," said Sabir Hussain, a resident of the area. "People caught in that inferno were wailing and crying... but none of us could help. The flames and the heat were unbearable... We watched them die."

Dozens of people who were trying to collect the leaking gasoline died immediately.

Many people, with their clothes on fire, jumped into a nearby canal. A few bodies were later recovered, but several more people still are missing.

Another 70 people are being treated for burns, at least 35 of them are reported in serious condition.

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## Italian origin Sonia faces rebellion in her party

NEW DELHI, May 16: Sonia Gandhi was girding to face an unprecedented rebellion in her Congress Party today after senior colleagues questioned the Italian-born leader's claim to India's seat of power, reports AP.

Three members of the Congress Working Committee, its top decision-making body, demanded the party propose changes in India's 1950 constitution to allow only a natural-born Indian citizen to become the prime minister.

Sonia has been projected as the party's prime ministerial candidate ahead of the federal elections in September-October.

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## Beyond the boundary

# Schizophrenia, anyone?

By Shakil Kasem

In, taking on Brian Lara's none so convincing outfit Pakistan did what they normally do with a certain degree of élan most of the time. They bared their schizoid soul for the world to see.

They won the toss, which is always handy under the circumstances, but were rudely asked to pay the price of batting first against a seam attack that knows all about English conditions. Batters of the pedigree of Ambrose and Walsh are more than a handful at the best of times. At Bristol, home for Courtney Walsh, nee Gloucestershire, for more years than he

would care to remember, the two remaining dinosaurs of the fast bowling species were in their elements.

Pakistan's top order quickly dissolved to a chemistry of cut and swing. Afridi's technical shortcomings were exposed to the hilt. Being tied down longer

than was warranted Saeed Anwar decided to play the kind of shot one usually gets arrested for. Two wickets off consecutive deliveries from Dillon then rocked legions of Pakistani supporters round the world. The score was then a mere forty odd

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we score... while others watch



## 2 businessmen murdered in Chittagong

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 16: Two businessmen were murdered in the port city in the last two days. Khalilur Rahman, a businessman of Firingee Bazar under Kotwali thana was stabbed to death by some unidentified miscreants in the bazar area this evening.

Police said, Khalil was murdered due to land dispute. A case was filed with Kotwali thana in this connection, but none was arrested till filing of this report.

Another businessman, identified as Gulzar Hossain, was shot dead by some armed miscreants in Fakirhat area under Double Mooring thana at midnight last night.

Gulzar, a businessman of Agrabad (Singapore Market) came under attack while he was returning home from his shop.

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## Bangladesh ready for today's World Cup battle

Star Report

Bangladesh, buoyed by pre-World Cup wins against two top County teams, take on New Zealand in their first ever World Cup appearance today, hoping to stage the first real upset in the current cricket carnival.

Some 90 kilometres off London, at Chelmsford, the ground where they beat Essex nine days ago, Bangladesh boys hope to give the Kiwis a tough time, if not hand them an upset.

The match is scheduled to start at 3:45 pm BST. Bangladesh Television and

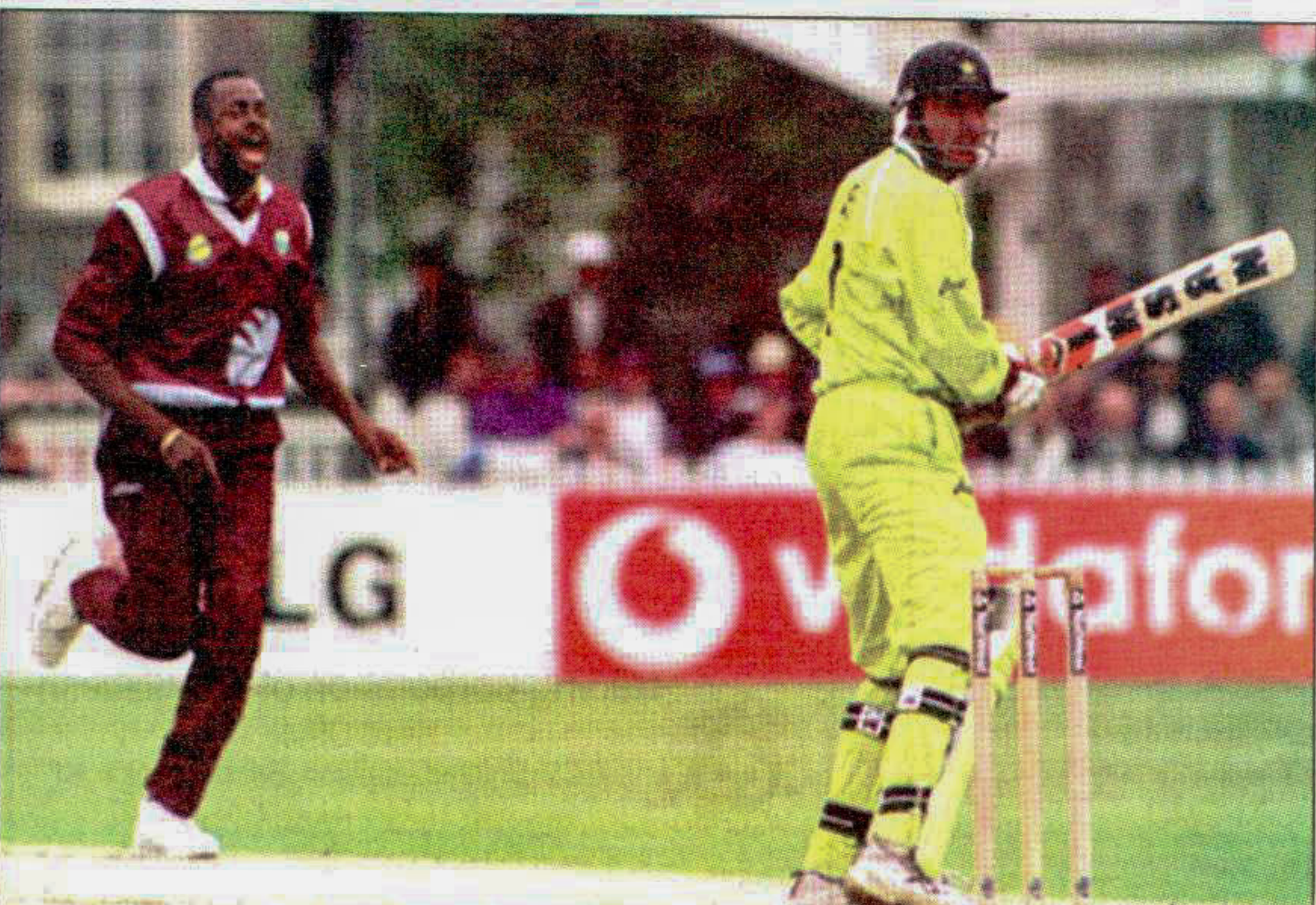
ESPN will telecast the match live while Bangladesh Betar is ready for a ball-by-ball commentary in Bangla.

Bangladesh booked their berth in the last World Cup of the century as champions of the ICC Trophy in Malaysia in 1997.

For the two teams, this is the second ODI clash. Bangladesh lost heavily, by 161 runs, in their first encounter nine years ago -- in the Australasia Cup in Sharjah in 1990.

But a lot has happened since

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Courtney Walsh, the West Indian pace ace, getting Shahid Afridi caught behind at Bristol yesterday. — AFP photo

## Pakistan's perfect start

BRISTOL, England, May 16: Wasim Akram hit 43 off 28 balls to save Pakistan from disaster and then excelled as a captain as his side won their World Cup opener against the West Indies by 27 runs here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Pakistan overcame their chronic lack of match practice ahead of the tournament to dismiss Brian Lara's West Indies for 202 after they had made 229 for eight in their 50 overs.

It was Pakistan's second win in seven World Cup matches against the West Indies and gave them a perfect start in group B.

Akram's gamble to bat first in overcast conditions almost backfired as West Indian pace duo Mervyn Dillon and Courtney Walsh reduced Pakistan to 42 for four, then 135 for six.

Akram, however, hit two

sixes and four boundaries to lead the revival. Pakistan hammered 85 runs in the last 10 overs.

Pakistan, whose three warm-up matches in England were washed out by rain and whose request for another game was denied by World Cup organisers, were also well-served by the most lethal attack in the business.

Abdul Razzaq, the fourth seamer, and Azhar Mahmood picked up three wickets each as

the West Indies' reply faltered after the loss of Lara.

Lara hit two consecutive fours off his first two balls but soon hit across the line and skied a catch to cover.

After Shoaib Akhtar, regarded as the fastest bowler in the world, had castled Sherwin Campbell with an express delivery, Jimmy Adams played away from his body to edge a simple catch to the slips.

Ridley Jacobs followed Lara

See Page 12 Col 5

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## A view from the Gully

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

A disenchanted Indian supporter sneaked on to the ground at Hove and approached skipper Azharuddin and Dravid threateningly after India's defeat against South Africa. This is highly condemnable and one wonders how could the ruffian get past the policemen on duty.

But much as I protest this incident, I seriously think of the future of this Indian team when they return home at the end of the tournament. The hype and the euphoria that have been created by multi-nationals and big businesses across India, which is being displayed on the television round-the-clock give a definite feeling that the Cup

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We give you MORE

## TODAY'S MATCH

Bangladesh vs New Zealand  
Venue: Chelmsford  
Live Coverage: BTV and ESPN (3.45 pm)

## TOMORROW'S MATCH

England vs Kenya  
Venue: Canterbury  
Live Coverage: BTV and Star Sports (3.45 pm)

## Scot go down by 6 wks

WORCESTER, England, May 16: Red-faced Australia launched their cricket World Cup in lacklustre fashion here on Sunday as 1,000-1 shots Scotland cornered the applause despite going down by six wickets, reports AFP.

The Scots, with just two professional players in their ranks and making their debut in the tournament, managed to make the increasingly frustrated Australians look sloppy as they scored 181 for seven off their 50 overs.

But Australian skipper Steve Waugh shepherded home his side - 5-1 second favourites to win the World Cup - with 31 balls to spare after big names Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting and Darren Lehmann all failed to impress with the bat.

Scotland, who conceded defeat before a ball had been bowled but said they hoped to avoid being humiliated, never looked likely to win.

But a 62-run stand between all-rounders Gavin Hamilton and James Brinkley for the sixth wicket succeeded in rattling their much-vaunted opponents.

Pace bowler Glenn McGrath, visibly irritated, let loose a few bouncers as well as a string of

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Mark Waugh  
Man of the Match  
Australia vs Scotland

The Man of the Match in the Pakistan-West Indies game could not be known till late last night.

## Power tower collapses

A tower of 132 KV Ashuganj-Kishoreganj transmission line collapsed in the river Brahmaputra early yesterday, reports UNB.

Power Development Board sources said the districts that plunged into darkness following the tower collapse are Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Jamalpur and Sherpur.

They said tower number 27 of the transmission line was partially damaged on Friday while the second circuit of the line was being repaired. It fell into the Brahmaputra near Bhairab at 2.26 am.

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