

## American Cup golf Dec 11

Dan McDermott of Mobil Oil will put his best golf title on the line as the American Cup starts at the lush Kurmitola Golf Club on December 11, says a press release.

Expatriates from United States, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, India, Pakistan are among the participants in this annual event.

Keeping in mind the large turnouts in the past few years, the organisers have expanded the tournament to a two-day event.

This is a premier golf event which is sponsored by major American companies doing business in Bangladesh. The tournament will be formally inaugurated by Maj Gen Hasan Mashud Chowdhury, Chief of General Staff, vice president of the Club and Charge D'Affaires of the Embassy of the United States, Theodore A Nist.

## Not interested

SYDNEY, Dec 8 (AFP/Internet): Test cricket is the sport most likely to lose popularity in Australia over the next 25 years, according to a university study.

University of South Australia academic Tim Olds surveyed 150 university students and 27 per cent gave Test cricket the thumbs down.

Basketball was the second least popular, followed by rugby.

Australian Rules football, triathlon and beach volleyball were expected

to become the most popular sports in Australia.

## The crush!

BANGKOK, Dec 8: A Thai Airways stewardess who reportedly has a crush on Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, chased him while he ran through Bangkok carrying the Asian Games torch. The Nation newspaper reported Monday, reports AP.

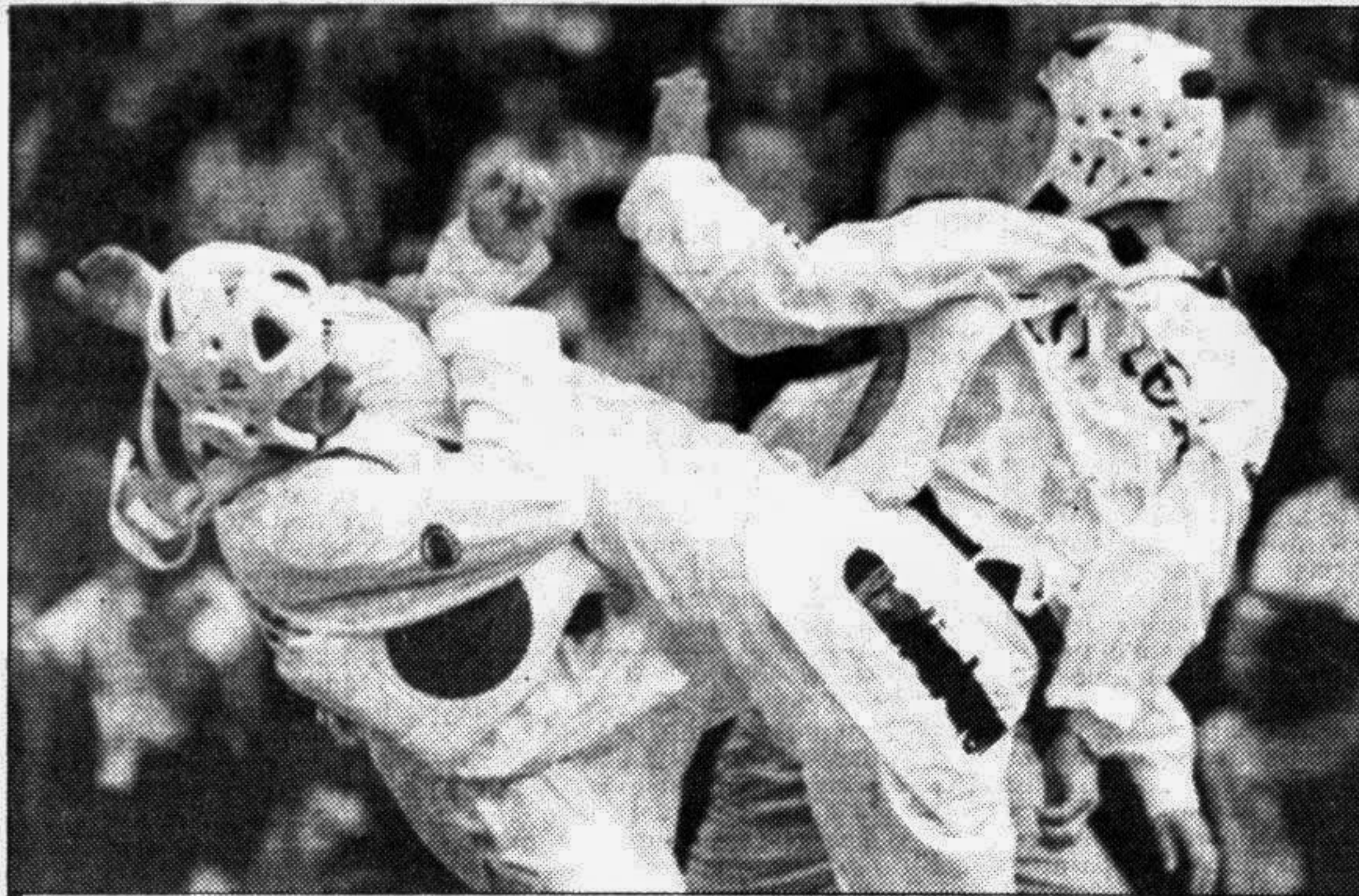
The stewardess, Jittiporn Apibalpuwanart, made headlines last year when she engaged in an altercation with Chuan's bodyguards after taking a seat next to the Prime Minister on a Thai Airways flight.

The bodyguards complained to airline management, saying she had annoyed the Prime Minister. Jittiporn insisted she was Chuan's friend and knew his mother well.

The Nation reported that Jittiporn waited for Chuan on Sunday outside the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister was one of several prominent Thais who ran in a relay, carrying the torch to the main stadium for the opening ceremony of the 13th Asian Games, being hosted by Bangkok.

## Delwar champ

M Delwar Hossain and M A Muttalib Khokon emerged champions and runners-up respectively in the Gulshan Club annual billiards tournament concluded at the Gulshan Club billiards room on Monday, says a press release.



Action from the Asian Games taekwondo finals between Kang Dong-kuk (R) of South Korea and Jordan's Tahlem Hussein in Bangkok on December 7. Kang won the gold. —AP/UNB photo

# Waiting for Usha



BANGKOK, Dec 8 (AP): The Asian Games on Tuesday awaited sprinter P T Usha, the 33-year-old mother from India who will run her last races in an international meet.

"I am really looking forward to talking to her, getting a few tips," said Sankuntika Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka, 10 years younger.

Fellow athletes view Usha not merely as a competitor, but someone who can inspire others.

"She is not only a great runner, but very brave," said Jayasinghe, a runner who herself is fighting odds to return to track honours after a drug abuse scandal that has nearly ruined her career.

Twenty years ago, Usha, then a shy, 13-year-old in pig-tails, arrived on the Indian athletic scene. Today, the railroad public relations official is the only Indian to boost of an Asian Games gold in track and field since 1986.

For these games, she has

missed a crucial part of her training due to a heel injury. In addition, in a November meet in the eastern city of Calcutta, she strained her right hamstring, collapsing in the 200 metres.

In Bangkok, Usha may run only in her favourite 400 metres, since endurance is not among her strengths.

In the 200, even at her best, Usha would find it difficult to beat the Chinese.

"My preparations have been geared toward 400 metres," Usha, mother of a 6-year-old son Ujjwal, meaning radiant in the Hindi language, said in a recent interview.

Usha has been India's most unpredictable athlete. Taking everyone by surprise, she came out of her self-imposed eight years of retirement to run in the Asian Track Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, in July.

She was third, in 23.46 seconds, in the 200m. The same day, she anchored India's victorious 4x100-metre relay. Usha also anchored India's silver medal team in the 4x400, which

finished 16 seconds behind China.

Usha has been unusual in India, where the question has been raised whether the country of 980 million people is a "sleeping giant" of sports, or whether there is something basically wrong that prevents development of very few athletes of international standard.

No Indian has won a track and field medal in the Olympics, but Usha came closest, missing bronze by 0.01 seconds in the 400-metre hurdles at the 1994 Games.

Through Usha made her mark in 1978 in an under-14 Indian National Athletic Championship, her prominence spread in 1982, when she won silver at 100 and 200 metres in the New Delhi Asian Games. One year later, she won gold in the 400 in the Asian Championships in Kuwait and a silver in the 200.

One year after starting her first retirement from sports in 1991, she married Sreenivasan, a sportsman in his own right. He plays the Indian sport of kabaddi.

# Sema succeeds IBM



LONDON, Dec 8: Sema, a relatively obscure European computer company, beat out several leading technology firms to replace IBM as the Olympics' chief technology sponsor, starting in 2001, reports AP.

International Business Machines Corp., the world's largest computer company, said last August it would end its 38-year partnership with the International Olympic Committee at the 2000 Sydney Games.

Olympics organizers on Monday described the eight-year deal with Sema, a French-

English company, as the biggest sports-related information technology contract ever awarded. While figures weren't disclosed, the deal was believed to be worth about 220 million dollars.

Sema will head a consortium of three companies in the IOC's new Olympic Information Technology Group. The companies will provide the computer technology and results systems for the Summer Games of 2004 and 2008, and Winter Games of 2002 and 2006.

The Salt Lake City Winter Olympics in 2002 will be the first under the new technology arrangement.

Sema is a computer services and defense technology firm employing 16,500 people. The high-profile tie-in with the Olympics should put the company on the world map.

Sema provided information systems at the 1992 Barcelona Games and has been involved in other sports events such as the 1994 World Cup, the 1996 European Soccer Championship and the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

"It's not a very well-known brand name, but they come to the table with a tremendous amount of knowledge and understanding," IOC marketing director Michael Payne said.

## India off to a solid start

BANGKOK, Dec 8 (Reuters/Internet): Favourites India overcame injuries and the heat to beat Qatar 2-0 on Tuesday in the first contest of their defence of the Asian Games tennis title.

With team captain Leander Paes off to the tournament with injury and his replacement Mahesh Bhupathi sidelined for the moment with a back problem, India had their reserve players Syed Fazzaluddin and Prahlad Sriniath to thank for the flying start.

Syed, ranked 568 in the world, overran Mohammed Ali Al-Saoudi 6-2 6-1 in just 42 minutes.

In the second match, Sri-nath ranked 393, equally easily overcame Sultan Khalifan Al-Alawi 6-1 6-2.

The heat was so bad during Sriniath's match that a ball boy fainted and was carried from the court.

"The team which handles the heat best will win the title," Bhupathi said as the temperature rose above 30 degrees Celsius (90 Fahrenheit).

Bhupathi said he expected to recover from his back injury to play in the remaining matches of the tournament.

## Thai police get tough

BANGKOK, Dec 8: Thai police are cracking down on people who are using fake identification cards to gain access to Asian Games facilities, the chief of the Thai Police said Tuesday, reports AP.

"I would like to warn people that we have the tools to detect fake IDs," said the chief, Gen Pracha Promnong.

This is an important issue, one that the Thai Police give highest priority as it jeopardizes the security of the Asian Games," he said.

A number of food vendors have used fake identification cards to enter the Thammasat University Sports Complex, one of the three main competition arenas for the Games.

## Damned glass door!

BANGKOK, Dec 8: Innto Budi, the cycling coach of Indonesia, became the first casualty among participants in the 13th Asian Games when he crashed into a glass door Tuesday. Games officials said, reports AP.

Budi was taken to a hospital, where he received a number of stitches on one of his fingers, said Pornchai Duangnate, a senior official from the Thai Amateur Cycling Association.

The glass door was very clear and there were nothing around to warn that it was there," Pornchai said.

He said Budi smashed into the door as he left a building being used by Games officials for the mountain bicycle competition in Pak Chong District in Nakorn Rachasima province, northeast of Bangkok.

The injury was not serious, Pornchai said.

# BANGKOK NOTEBOOK

BANGKOK, Dec 8 (AP): Will the person responsible for supplying drinking water at the sun-scorched Asian Games please raise his or her hand.

That's what perspiring, water-short athletes are asking as their supplies run out at training sessions, according to The Nation newspaper.

Teams and individuals reportedly aren't allowed to bring water out of the Athletes' Village to training venues where the organisers are not making deliveries. Water is supplied only during competition.

The newspaper quoted one

official as saying anyone who needed more water could come and get plastic bottles at the headquarters of the Bangkok Asian Games Organising Committee.

But it said nobody at headquarters knows who is responsible for doing it out.

**NO CASH, PLEASE**

The Most Valuable Player of the Asian Games isn't going to get his or her hands on the 100,000 dollars already promised by a South Korean sponsor, officials have ruled.

By International Olympic Committee rules, prize money

cannot go to amateur athletes, but must be funneled to a winner's national Olympic committee.

South Korea's Samsung Group is offering the cash prize and, with three other sponsors, is contributing to four hole-in-one awards for the golf event. These awards total 300,000 baht (8,600 dollars).

The decision came at a meeting of the national team chiefs. Other problems raised: Fire alarms going off because of athletes smoking, electrical cuts and the flags of Syria and Tajikistan not being raised at the Athletes' Village.

**CHAMPION CHOW**

Journalists at the Asian Games are complaining about slow results and lacklustre organisation, but they're likely to award Thailand a gold medal in the food department.

Recalling greasy American fast food and instant noodles, veterans of Asian Games past say they've probably never eaten better — or cheaper.

The cafeteria at the main press centre offers everything from vegetarian curries from one of Bangkok's finest Indian restaurants to German sausages for meat eaters and specially prepared dishes for Muslims. There also are Japanese sushi and Chinese dim sum.

And just down the street, nearly 100 food stalls under an open-sided pavilion display fiery Thai dishes and shrimp still swimming in tanks.

The prices are also record-breaking. A full lunch, including a soft drink, can be savoured for about 30 baht (83 US cents).

**OPEN-DOOR POLICY**

Hoping to fill stadiums with cheering fans, organisers of the Asian Games are offering free access to a wide range of sports and venues beginning Tuesday.

Tickets must still be bought for popular events like swimming and athletics but most are reasonably priced, averaging 200 baht (5.50 dollars).

Offered free Tuesday will be baseball, canoeing, equestrian, handball, field hockey, rugby, shooting, softball, squash and yachting. Some of these sports are being staged in provincial areas where few have 200 baht to spare.

## TRADITIONAL RELIEF

Asian Games athletes under pressure to win golds and fans fatigued by hours under the sun are being offered relief for a mere 200 baht (5.50 dollar) an hour.

To soothe stress and strain, the organisers have set up a traditional Thai massage centre at Muang Thong Thani, one of the three major sports complexes of the Games.

While athletes are expected to get the green light to get rubbed down and oiled, coaches of most nations are trying to throw a cordon around less than traditional Thai massages at thousands of Bangkok establishments that offer sexual services.

Luckily for the coaches, the Athletes' Village is on the outer edges of the city, far from night life centres like Patpong Road and Soi Cowboy.

## Oman humble Iran



BANGKOK, Dec 8: Oman provided the shock of the Asian Games football tournament today when they overturned top side Iran 4-2 in the second round, reports AP.

The win was sweet revenge for Oman coach Badu Vieira, who was unceremoniously dumped by the Iranians last year after taking them to their first World Cup finals in 20 years.

Vieira took over the reigns of an ailing Iranian team after the federation decided to sack Mayeli Kohan and it was the Brazilian who coached the side when they beat Australia on the away goals rule to qualify for France.

Bayern Munich striker Ali Deai, one of eight players fielded by the Iranians that played in the country's World Cup win over the USA in Lyon, opened the scoring in the 20th minute in what looked like being a routine victory for Mansour Pourfardari's side.

Within 21 minutes the Omanis were ahead — Zayid Mohamed levelling the score after four minutes and veteran Iranian defender Nader Mohammad Khani putting through his net just before half-time.

Six minutes into the second half Oman effectively put the

game beyond Iran's reach with a goal for Hani Al-Dhabit but Yehid Hashemian scored his third goal in three games to give Iran some hope.

Iran pushed forward for the equaliser as the clock counted down but as the Persians left more space at the back, substitute Salim Radhwan put the final nail in the coffin as time ran out.

## STANDINGS

Standings of second round groups in the Asian Games football tournament after Tuesday's matches.

(Tabulate under played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, pts).

**GROUP ONE**

Uzbekistan	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Turkmenistan	1	0	0	3	2	3	0
India	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
North Korea	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

**GROUP TWO**

Kuwait	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
South Korea	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Japan	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
UAE	1	0	0	1	0	5	0

**GROUP THREE**

Oman	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
China	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Iran	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Tajikistan	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

**GROUP FOUR**

Qatar	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Thailand	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Kazakhstan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Lebanon	1	0	0	1	0	1	0



Turkmenistan's Roman Bondarenko (R) surges ahead of Indian R Fernandez for possession during their match in the Asian Games in Bangkok on Monday. The former Soviet republic won 3-2. —AP/UNB photo

# The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Wednesday 9th December

(All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme).

## BTV

3:00 Opening announcement  
Al Quran 3:12 Recitation from the Geeta 3:15 Patriotic song  
3:20 Cartoon film: Back To The Future 3:45 Pushti Pathya 4:00 Khatula 4:05 Film show: Zoo Adventure 4:30 Open University 5:15 Drawing and Writing 6:30 Geetbitan 6:30 Khabar 6:40 Programmes from Chittagong Centre 7:05 Special Programme in memory of Rokiya Sakhawati Hossain 7:25 Aamra Tomader Bhubuna 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Drama Serial 9:00 Detective Serial: Feluda 10:00 News at Ten 10:30 Anandakal 11:30 Khabar/The News 11:45 Close down

## BBC

6:00 BBC World News 6:30 World Living: Future Fantastic-Under A Purple Sky 7:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/USA Direct/Asia Today 24 Hours 9:00 BBC Newsroom 9:30 World Business Report/Asia Today 24 Hours 10:00 BBC World News 11:30 World Focus: Reporters 12:00 BBC World News 12:30 World Living: The Travel Show 1:00 BBC World News 1:30 Hard Talk 2:00 World News 2:30 World Focus: Reporters 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Hard Talk (r) 4:00 BBC World News 4:30 World Living: Future Fantastic-Under A Purple Sky 5:00 BBC World News 5:30 BBC World News 6:00 BBC World News 6:30 BBC World News 7:00 BBC World News 7:30 BBC World News 8:00 BBC World News 8:30 BBC World News 9:00 BBC World News 9:30 BBC World News 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 BBC World News 11:00 BBC World News 11:30 BBC World News 12:00 BBC World News 12:30 BBC World News 1:00 BBC World News 1:30 BBC World News 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 BBC World News 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 BBC World News 4:00 BBC World News 4:30 BBC World News 5:00 BBC World News 5:30 BBC World News 6:00 BBC World News 6:30 BBC World News 7:00 BBC World 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