

Van Roost enters final

AUCKLAND, Jan 8: Defending champion and top seed Dominique van Roost of Belgium will play third seed Julie Halard-Decugis of France in the final of the Auckland Women's Classic tennis tournament Saturday, reports AP.

Van Roost overcame a poor start against fourth seed Australia Barbara Schett to win 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 Friday, the last set in just 17 minutes.

Halard-Decugis, who earned a wild card entry to this tournament last year when she returned from injury without a ranking, avenged her quarter-final loss last year to Italian Silvia Farina, the second seed, with a 7-6 (7-5), 6-1 win Friday.

Halard-Decugis finished 1998 with a ranking of 22, just three places behind Farina who looked tired after her marathon three-set effort against seventh-seeded American Chanda Rubin in the quarterfinals Thursday.

Van Roost and Halard-Decugis have only met once before, at last year's United States Open, where the Belgian won the first-round match 6-2, 6-2.

Dosedel disposes of Rafter

ADELAIDE, Jan 8: US Open champion Pat Rafter suffered a major early season setback on Friday, losing to lowly ranked Czech Slava Dosedel in the second round of the Adelaide men's hardcourt championships, reports Reuters.

Rafter, the Australian world number four, was comprehensively outplayed by the 74th, Dosedel, who trumped him with repeated passing shots for a 7-5, 6-4 victory.

The Queenslander was appearing in his first tournament back from a two-month lay-off caused by a knee injury.

His lack of match practice was apparent. Rafter's journey to the net proved to be largely fruitless and his powerful serve was the only useful weapons in his armoury.

A thrilling tussle ended when the 29-year-old Czech converted his fifth match point. Rafter, the top seed in Adelaide, is among the favourites for this month's Australian Open in Melbourne and could even grab Pete Sampras' number one spot if he wins.

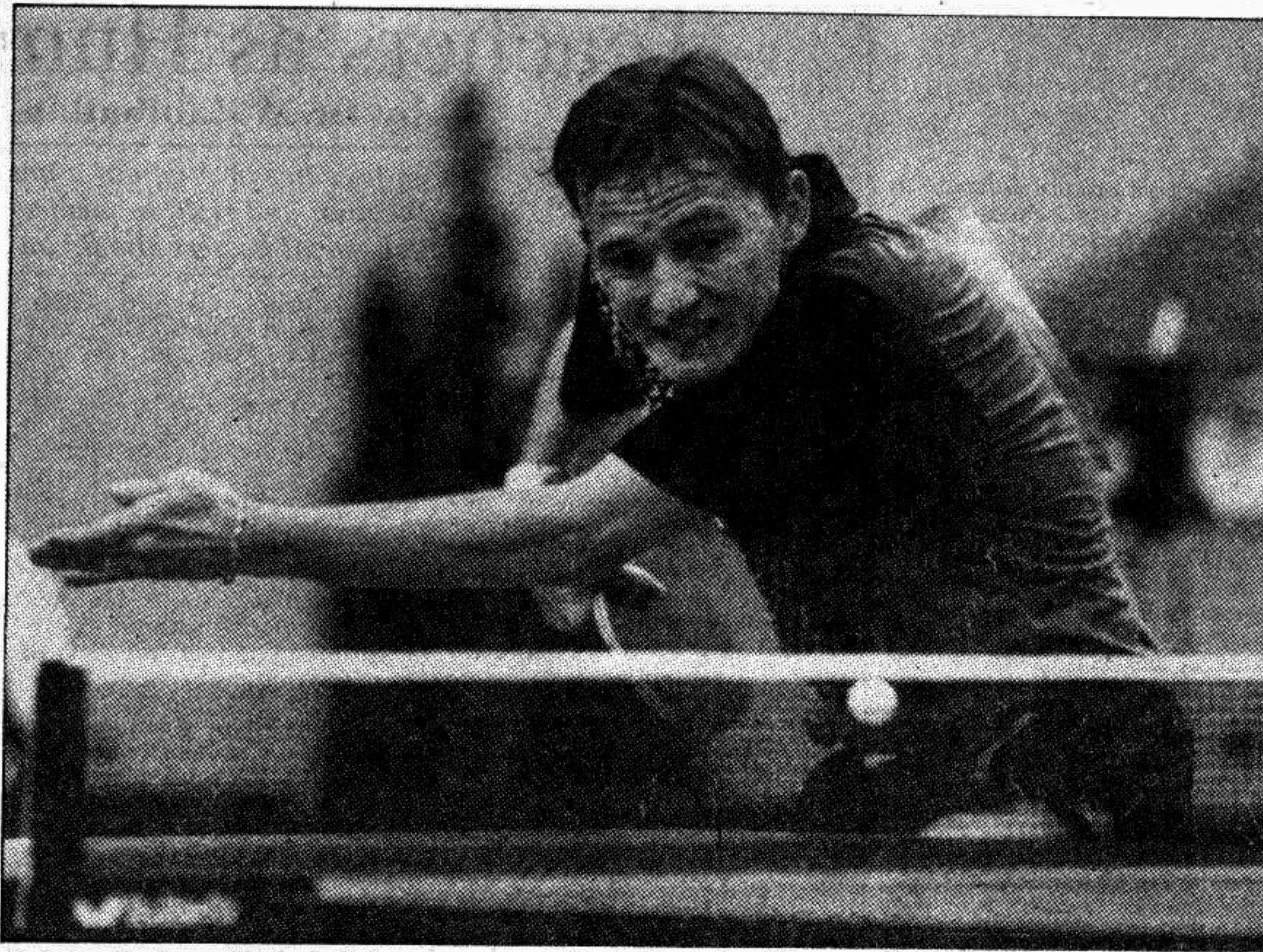
L'pool's version of events

LONDON, Jan 8: Liverpool denied reports on Thursday that Robbie Fowler had rejected an offer to stay with the club and said talks with the striker were continuing, reports Reuters.

British newspapers reported Fowler had turned down an eight million pounds (£13.2 million dollars) deal to keep him with the club after his current contract expires in 18 months.

But the club said on Thursday "discussions were ongoing" with the player and they believed he wanted to stay with Liverpool.

"He has not turned down a Liverpool deal," Liverpool said in its club call line. Further talks with Fowler and his agent are planned.



Belgium's Jean-Michel Saive serves against Austrian Werner Schlager at the ITF Pro-Tour de Paris on January 7. The Belgian won 3-2. —AFP photo

Wang springs a surprise

PARIS, Jan 8 (AFP): A procession of champions waltzed into the men's quarterfinals of the ITF-Pro Tour tennis event here on Thursday.

But world number-one Vladimir Samsonov lost 6-4, 6-3.

China's Olympic champion Liu Qiangliang beat home hope Damien Elot 16-21, 21-10, 21-17, 21-13 in the first round of the tournament, and China's former world champion Kong Linghui got the better of France's world number-10 Jean-Philippe Gatien 21-19, 21-17, 21-13.

The shock of the day came when China's Asian champion Wang Ligin thrashed world number-one and the tournament's defending champion Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus 21-17, 21-4, 21-8.

In today's quarterfinals, Liu faces France's Patrick Chila, who beat 1991 world champion Jorgen Persson of Sweden 21-17, 21-17, 21-18, Persson, however, was hampered with a back injury which contributed to his loss.

"It's no disgrace to lose to Chila but 3-0 was a bit harsh," said Persson.

"I had two opponents today — Chila and my back injury." Reigning world champion Jan-Ove Waldner had a convincing win over Germany's Peter Franz 17-21, 21-16, 21-13, 21-14 to set up the only all-European quarterfinal in the men's singles. He meets Belgium's Jean-Michel Saive.

Former European champion Saive had the best comeback so far in the competition, beating Austria's Werner Schlager 21-18, 21-19, 20-22, 18-21, 23-21 on his third match point of the fifth set.

Schlager had led 10-5, 12-8 and 15-12 in the final set before the fighting qualities of Saive, also the 1993 world men's singles runner-up, came to the fore.

In an all-Chinese bottom half to the draw, Kong meets compatriot and world number nine Yan Sen, who beat

France's Christophe Legout 21-18, 21-16, 17-21, 21-18.

The winner of the Kong/Yen battle meets either world number six Ma Lin, who beat Greece's Kalinikos Kreanga 21-23, 21-17, 21-10, 21-13, or Samsonov's conqueror Wang.

The women's section has been a virtual clean sweep for China who have seven out of the eight quarterfinalists.

Germany's Jing Tian-Zorner who qualified in first place, fell at the first hurdle 21-18, 18-21, 21-17, 21-14 to Croatia's Tamara Boros, the only European to make the last eight.

World number five Jing, a defensive player, was no match for the consistent attacks of Boros, ranked just 19th in the world. Boros now meets China's Lin Ling, who ousted Germany's Qianghong Gotsch 21-12, 21-17, 20-22, 21-18, in the quarterfinals.

The other six winners for China were Sun Jin, Li Ju, Wang Hui, Wang Nan, who won four gold medals in the Asian Games in Bangkok last month, Yang Ying and Zang Yining.

In the first match of the day, world number two Liu, despite a hiccup in the first set, raced to victory in just 41 minutes against Elot.

The competition, although not as big as a World Championships, Olympic Games or World Cup, is not far behind.

It groups the best 16 men and women players from 11 international tournaments between February and November last year.

World number 15 Elot, who won the Swedish Open men's singles title at the end of November, said there was nothing he could have done against such a formidable opponent.

Liu has the best array of services in the sport and plays a powerful, close-to-the-table smashing game with a traditionally Asian penhold grip, which is similar to the way one holds chopsticks.

Elot added he would much rather have played Liu's teammate Kong Linghui, who has a more open European style.

From 10-10 in the first game, Elot won three consecutive points for 13-10 and never relinquished the lead, winning the first set 21-16 when Liu put a receive of serve into the net.

But Liu raced to 12-6 and 16-9 and made it one set all when Elot hit a forehand way over the end of the table, and Liu did the same thing in the next set, racing away from the start to lead 2 sets to 1.

Liu led 12-6 in the fourth set when French coach Patrick Brouchard called a time-out, hoping to stop Liu's flow of winners.

Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman and his teammate Asa Carlsson celebrate their victory over Switzerland in the Hopman Cup in Perth on January 8.



Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman and his teammate Asa Carlsson celebrate their victory over Switzerland in the Hopman Cup in Perth on January 8. —AP/UNB photo

Hopman Cup Sweden set up final with hosts

PERTH, Jan 8 (Reuters): Australia will play Sweden in Saturday's Hopman Cup final after Jonas Bjorkman and Asa Carlsson came from behind to defeat Switzerland's Udo Heuberger and Martina Hingis 2-1 on Friday.

World number two Hingis won the opening singles tie 6-2, 6-2, before Bjorkman brushed her partner.

Heuberger 6-2 6-0 to even the tie. The Swedes then claimed the mixed doubles 2-6 6-3 6-4.

Sweden could have lost the mixed doubles and still advanced after taking out the second set on a percentage of sets won over sets lost throughout the tournament.

The relief was evident on the face of Bjorkman, who has been required to win all of his singles games during the mixed teams championship because Carlsson has lost all three of hers.

Bizarrely, Carlsson will play in the final despite losing all seven singles matches in three trips to Perth.

The final will pit the Swedes against the big-serving Mark Philippoussis, last year's losing U.S. Open finalist, and 15-year-old prodigy Jelena Dokic.

Hingis had little trouble accounting for Carlsson. Hingis was broken first game of the second set and then fell behind 0-2 when Carlsson held, but rattled off the last six games in authoritative fashion.

On court two, American world number one Lindsay Davenport beat the Slovak Republic's Karina Habsudova 6-4 6-2, before partner Jan-Michael Gambill upset world number seven Karol Kucera 5-7 7-6 (7-5) 6-4 after more than two-and-a-half hours on court.

The Americans, seeded second in the event, were ahead 2-0 with the mixed doubles rubber still to be played but were already out of contention for a place in the finals.

ITF admits an error in judgement

LONDON, Jan 8 (AP): The International Tennis Federation says its own appeals committee was wrong in not suspending Australian Open champion Petr Korda after he failed a drug test.

Under pressure from some top players, the ITF said Thursday it would seek to overturn the ruling and impose a one-year ban for Korda, who tested positive for the steroid Nandrolone at Wimbledon in July.

ITF president Brian Tobin, speaking at the Hopman Cup in Perth, said the federation was unhappy with the December 22 decision of the appeals committee and would seek to overturn it at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Tennis has been widely criticised for a lenient policy toward drugs and Korda's case was seen as the latest example, coming just weeks before the February 2-4 IOC-sponsored World Anti-Doping Summit.

The ITF appeals committee acknowledged Korda had tested positive for a steroid on July 1 at Wimbledon, but cited "exceptional circumstances" in deciding against any suspension. Korda was only stripped of his Wimbledon prize money and ranking points.

The committee accepted Korda's contention that he had no idea how the drug got in his system.

But Tobin said the appeals committee's decision did not reflect the ITF's wishes. He said he agreed with players who believe the excuse was insufficient reason for Korda to escape a ban.

"I question if that is a legitimate reason for reducing the penalty," Tobin said Thursday. "We did prove that he was positive."

live, and if it happened to me I'd say the same thing."

The ITF, at Korda's urging, Thursday released the full findings of the appeals committee.

The committee, which received a character reference in Korda's defence from three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker, concluded that Korda acted "innocently and reasonably" and described him as an "honest, open and reliable witness."

The committee also: — acknowledged there were minor flaws in the testing and custody procedures of Korda's urine sample, but said it was satisfied with the positive results "beyond a reasonable doubt."

— dismissed arguments by Korda's lawyer that the steroid may have entered his system by eating meat from animals that had ingested the steroid.

— dismissed the defence argument that a mixup may have occurred with the sample of a female player who was taking oral contraceptives containing norethisterone.

— noted that Korda's was the only positive test at Wimbledon.

ITF spokesman Alan James said the federation expected to lodge its initial appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday or Monday. He said a ruling could take up to four months.

In the meantime, Korda is free to defend his title in this month's Australian Open and to play in any tennis event, James said.

"The appeals committee made their decision, we looked at it and took legal advice and believe the have misapplied the rule," James said. "To clarify and send out the right signals, we need to change the decision."

"We obviously are not deaf to what the players are saying," he added. "The ruling leaves them wondering what qualifies as mitigating circumstances."

Top-ranked women's player Lindsay Davenport criticised tennis officials, saying, "It seems that in tennis there's always exceptions made for players for whatever it is."

And Swedish player Jonas Bjorkman claimed that tennis officials "cover up" positive tests and accused authorities of being "scared" to act.

Boost for Olympic Tennis Centre

SYDNEY, Jan 8: Tennis New South Wales and Tennis Australia have provided nearly 7 million Australian dollars (4.4 million dollars) towards the construction of the Olympic Tennis Centre — the biggest contribution by any Australian sport involved in the Games, reports AP.

Arazi amazes Kafelnikov

DOHA, Jan 8: Morocco's Hicham Arazi notched up a major surprise at the one million dollar ATP event here Thursday when he surged back to beat Russia's former French Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov 3-6, 6-1, 7-6 (12/10) in a second-round clash, reports AP.

The 25-year-old left-handed Arazi now plays compatriot Karim Alami, who finally saw off Argentina's Franco Squillari 6-2, 6-7 (2/7), 7-5 after a two-hour marathon.

Alami put out Czech Petr Korda in the first round.

"This win will inspire me for the rest of the tournament," said a visibly weary Arazi after clinching his win over the Russian — the fifth seeded player to be beaten in the event.

"I am very serious about my tennis this year," said Arazi, who also said that if he stayed fit he felt he could break into the top-ten in the rankings.

The loss was a big blow to Kafelnikov who was playing his

first event since hiring a new coach — American Larry Stefanki, whose former pupils have included John McEnroe and Marcelo Rios.

And it was made worse when he failed to convert four match points in a dramatic 22-point third set tie-break.

Other seeds who have fallen in the opening two rounds are Britain's Greg Rusedski, Sweden's Thomas Johansson and Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands.

Seventh-seed Cedric Pioline did not make any mistakes. He beat experienced Spaniard Javier Sanchez 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 in 86 minutes and now plays Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta who pit out Germany's Bernd Karbacher 6-0, 3-6, 7-5, for a place in the semifinals.

Also lining up for the quarterfinals will be top-seeded Tim Henman of Britain and big-serving Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia.

Henman faces American Jeff Tarango while Ivanisevic plays German qualifier Rainer Schuttler.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Saturday 9th January (All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.)

BTV

9:00 Opening Announcement, Al Quran, Programme Summary 9:15 Nigir Janya 9:25 Sinefield 10:00 Aama Sabai Raja 10:05 Movie of the Week 3:00 Opening Announcement, Al Quran, Programme Summary 3:20 Itayadi (Repeat) 4:00 Khabar 4:05 Kung Fu the Legend Continuing 4:45 Open University 5:00 Mahe Ramadan 5:35 Kishor Mancha 6:00 Nibedan 6:30 Khabar 6:40 Programmes from Chittagong Centre 7:05 Gethiayala 7:25 Swastha Tathaiya 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Drama of the Week 10:00 News at Ten 10:30 Hercules 11:30 Khabar/The news 11:45 Close down.

BBC

6:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 6:30 World Living: Earth Report From The Grass Roots An African grass roots special shot in Western and Eastern Africa. This edition looks at local initiatives that are turning communities around. 7:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 7:30 Asia Today (The latest news, analysis and features from the BBC Correspondents who live and work in the region) 7:45 World Business Report 8:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 8:30 Asia Today 8:45 World Business Report The Latest Business News with informed analysis from the world's financial centres. 9:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 9:30 Hardtalk (Tim Sebastian talks to newsmakers and personalities from across the globe) 10:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 10:30 USA Direct (The Entertainment Show From New York, Tom Brook with the latest movie releases, a rundown of the American music charts and the website of the week. Plus today's American Business News from Wall Street with Patrick O'Connell) 11:00 BBC News Followed by Weather 11:30 World Focus: Panorama Boys Don't Cry (Julie Morris investigates the rise in the suicide rate amongst young men in the UK) 12:00 BBC World

News Followed by Weather 12:30 World Living: Earth Report From The Grass Roots An African grass roots special shot in Western and Eastern Africa. This edition looks at local initiatives that are turning communities around. 1:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 1:30 Hardtalk (Tim Sebastian talks to newsmakers and personalities from across the globe) 2:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 2:30 World Focus: Correspondent 3:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 3:05 Weekend World People's Century 1914 Killing Fields The story of the World War I, when 70 million men were called to fight. Survivors from British, French, Russian, German and US armies tell of their hopes, training and privations in a war in which was mechanised, industrialised and inescapable. 4:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 4:30 World Living: Holiday (Craig Doyle takes a golfing break at the San Roque club in Andalusia in Southern Spain. Kate Sanderson has an exclusive holiday in Nuevo Vallarta in Mexico, and Andrew Jeffrey goes on a family holiday near Florence.) 5:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 5:30 This Week (A weekly showcase for reports from the BBC's network of over 250 global correspondents. Followed by World City Guides) 6:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 6:05 Correspondent Special The Unfinished War: An investigation into the continuing battle between India and Pakistan over control of the Kashmir. This is becoming the most likely place in the world to spark off nuclear aggression? 7:00 BBC World News Followed by Weather 7:05 Weekend World: Plague Wars Russia - Apocalypse Delayed? 1st of a 2 part series looking at the deliberate use of disease as a weapon of war or terror. 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