

AMEx OPEN GOLF
Rahman in command

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Siddikur Rahman raced to a commanding six-stroke lead after posting a seven under 65 in the third round of the American Express Bangladesh Open at the Kurmitola Golf Course yesterday.

Rahman began his day with birdies on the first and third holes. He bogeyed the fourth and then came back with another birdie on the par four fifth hole thanks to an excellent drive which landed just off the green. A hat-trick of birdies followed on the seventh, eighth, ninth.

The local favourite came up with an amazing six-iron tee shot on the par three eighth which stopped just a few inches from the hole. A superb sand wedge approach shot from 100 yards led to the birdie on the ninth since it landed a mere three feet from the pin. He pulled-off a 30 feet putt for another spectacular birdie on the 15th.

"Today's (Wednesday's) round was one of my best in recent months. I putt really well in comparison to the first two days. I was also in good hitting form and played some outstanding approach shots, especially on the seventh, ninth and 18th. My best shots of the day included a 260-yard drive (second shot) on the seventh and a nine iron shot

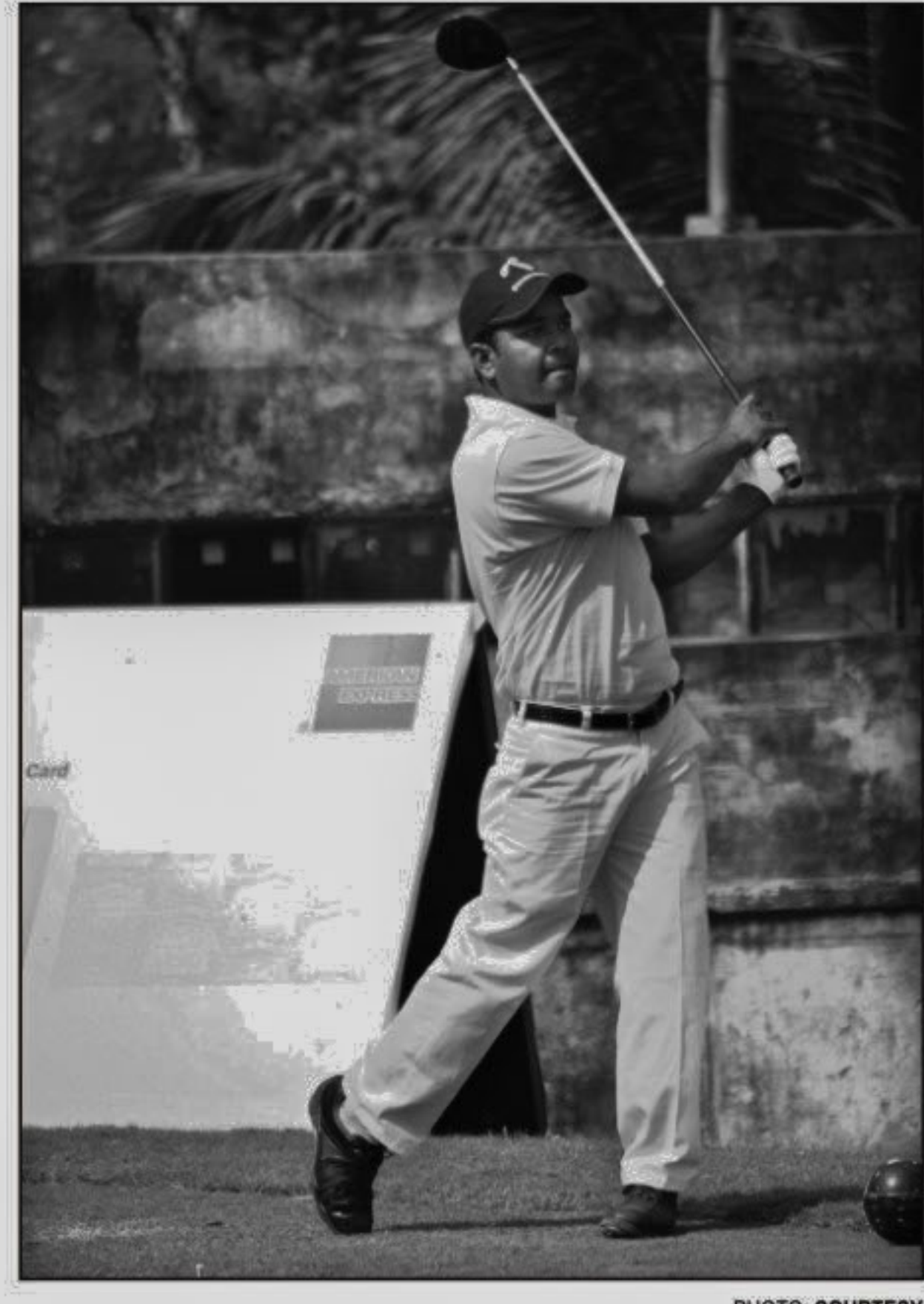


PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh's top golfer Siddikur Rahman swings during his wonderful performance in the American Express Bangladesh Open at the Kurmitola Golf Course yesterday.

of 125 yards on the 18th that landed within 10 feet of the pin," said an elated Rahman. "I'll just try to play my normal game on the final day and will try not to bother too much about the leaderboard. I'll definitely attack the pins from the very start," he added.

U-19 WORLD CUP
Aussie-Pak finale

AFP, Wellington

Australian captain Mitchell Marsh plundered 97 from 110 balls to lead his side to victory over Sri Lanka Wednesday and set up a showdown with Pakistan in the final of the under-19 cricket World Cup.

The Australian innings at Lincoln, near Christchurch, was built around a near-flawless knock from Marsh, who was called to the crease in the second over with Australia at 3-1 in reply to Sri Lanka's 205.

By the 22nd over, Australia were teetering at 93-5 before Marsh and Tom Triffitt (50) put on 78 for the sixth wicket. When Marsh fell in the 38th over, caught and bowled by Ramesh Buddika, he had his side in sight of victory at 171-6.

Australia lost two more wickets before reaching their 206-run target with nine balls to spare.

Sri Lanka won the toss and elected to bat, only to be blitzed by the Australian fast bowling of Josh Hazlewood, who took four for 26, and Alister McDermott, who finished with two for 43.

By the 11th over Sri Lanka were 35-5 and only late resistance from Kithuruwan Vithanage (40), Akshu Fernando (52) and captain Chaturanga Peiris (39) carried them past the 200 mark.

Pakistan, who beat the West Indies by four wickets in the first semi-final on Monday, are the only unbeaten side in the competition, while Australia were beaten by South Africa in pool play.

Federer, Serena in semis



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer and Serena Williams bowed championship form to battle each other in semi-finals at the Australian Open on Wednesday.

Li Na also made the last four with an upset victory over Venus Williams, giving China two players in a Grand Slam semi for the first time. Her reward is a clash with top seed Serena.

But the tournament ended for ailing third seed Novak Djokovic who was knocked out in a thrilling late night five-setter by 10th seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the man he beat in the 2008 final.

The Frenchman will now meet Federer, who was given a scare by sixth seed Nikolay Davydenko when the Russian ace led 6-2, 3-1 before the Swiss star clicked into gear.

He won 13 straight games to take the next two sets before a titanic struggle in the fourth with the 15-time Grand Slam champion eventually coming home 2-6, 6-3, 6-0, 7-5 to end Davydenko's 13-match winning streak.

It puts Federer into his 23rd consecutive Grand Slam semi-final, having never missed out since his third round defeat to Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten at Roland Garros in 2004.

"I've played him many times and I know he goes through phases for half an hour, an hour," Federer said of Davydenko.

"You've just got to stick with him and if you don't he's going

to crush you. "All of a sudden I went on a run like I did and that was a bit surprising, but I needed that cushion at the end of the fourth when he played well."

Asked if he was concerned that he might lose, he said: "I was a touch worried, let's put it that way."

Tsonga prevailed 7-6 (10/8), 6-7 (5/7), 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 in a near four-hour marathon against Djokovic, who was struggling with illness and at one point took a medical timeout for an upset stomach.

It was sweet revenge for the Frenchman after his 2008 disappointment.

"It was just amazing the level we played at. I'm so happy I won," said Tsonga, who added he would be ready for Federer

on Friday despite being taken to five sets in his past two matches -- the only five-setters of his career.

"I will be ready," he said. "It's going to be tough though, he's the best player ever."

Fifth seeded Andy Murray faces 14th seeded Croat Marin Cilic in the other semifinal on Thursday, with the Scot seeking to win Britain's first Grand Slam since Fred Perry in 1936.

Like Federer, Serena was also on the ropes before staging a comeback to stay on track for her fifth Australian title.

She was down 4-6, 0-4 to seventh seed Victoria Azarenka before fighting back and winning a tense tiebreaker to level the match.

Azarenka was rattled and Serena rammed home her

advantage to win 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and set up a clash with Li, who came from behind to shock Venus 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5.

Justine Henin and unseeded Chinese Zheng Jie contest Thursday's other semi.

"I am surprised and I am just happy to still be here," said Serena. "I didn't expect to win when I was down 0-4."

Venus should have made it sister act in the semis, but she threw it away against Li in a scrappy match where they made an incredible combined 110 unforced errors.

She was a set and 4-2 up in the second when Li made her move, playing with greater freedom as Venus tightened up, with her forehand going to pieces.

Venus, who has won seven Grand Slams but never in Melbourne, admitted Li was the better player.

Making the semifinals of a Grand Slam for the first time was a dream come true for the Chinese 16th seed.

SEMIFINALS LINE-UP

- WOMEN: Serena Williams (USA x1) v Li Na (CHN x16); Justine Henin (BEL) v Zheng Jie (CHN); MEN: Andy Murray (GBR x5) v Marin Cilic (CRO x14); Roger Federer (SUI x1) v Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (FRA x10)



PHOTO: AFP

Defending champion Serena Williams of the US returns the ball against Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in the quarterfinals of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

Zia keeps winning

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman kept his winning run on to share the lead in the Chennai Open Grand Masters' chess tournament at the end of the fourth round in India yesterday.

Zia beat IM Murali Krishnan of India to secure maximum four points from as many matches and shared the lead with seven other players. Zia defeated FM Visweswaran in the third round match.

BOA receives

FROM PAGE 17 AMA Muhith attending as the chief guest. The torch will finally be carried by a few renowned athletes during the opening ceremony before legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin kindles the torch at the big bowl.

The torch will be used to ignite the newly-constructed cauldron, which has been built with nearly 250 tonnes of steel with a height of 100 feet. Architect Dilruba Ferdous Shuvra and her team designed the torch that will carry the message of regional warmth of friendship, fraternity and the rebirth of the cultural connectivity. BOA also awarded three firms who contested to design the torch.

Meanwhile, the final dress rehearsal of the opening ceremony was held at the BNS yesterday, the main venue of the Games and thousands of performers from schools, colleges, army, ansar and VDP completed their jobs almost flawlessly as the opening ceremony will focus on the country's rural life and culture. Some 600 Santals presented their war against British rule in light of Natcholeer Rani of Ila Mitra.

Rajshahi, Khulna

in control

Forhad slams another ton

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi's middle-order batsman Forhad Hossain notched up a consecutive score of over 150 to help his side take a massive 180-run lead in their national league clash against Dhaka. Forhad's 157 of 247 deliveries was complemented by opener Zahurul Islam's 115 as Rajshahi piled up a mammoth total of 375 in their reply to Dhaka's 195 on the second day of the four-day match in Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. In the other matches, Khulna and Chittagong imposed their authority over Barisal and Sylhet respectively.

The two Rajshahi centuries started the day on 70 for two and took the score to 287 with a 207-run partnership before Zahurul fell to the pace of Mohammad Sharif. Zahurul hit 12 boundaries in his knock of 115 that came off 215 balls, while Forhad stayed for an hour more as he notched up 157 off 247 balls with as many as 26 boundaries. Forhad too was dismissed by Sharif who ended the batsmen with five for hundred. The other batsmen didn't make much impact as Rajshahi got bowled out eventually for 375. Dhaka started their second innings and got to ten losing the wicket of Mehrab Hossain Jr. Dhaka will start the third day 170 runs behind with nine wickets in hand.

At the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Barisal trail Khulna by 146 runs with only two first innings wickets remaining. Barisal were 196 for eight at stumps on day two, thanks to a half-century from former national opener Hannan Sarker (51). Barisal pacer Abul Bashar was batting on 32 while opener Fazle Rabbi scored 39. Wickets were fairly shared by the Khulna bowlers with best figures of two for 34 from Dollar Mahmud. Earlier starting the day on 263 for five, Khulna

lost their last five wickets for 71 runs. Innings' topscorer former Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar added just six to his overnight score of 81 before being caught behind off the bowling of Arafat Salauddin. Salauddin was the best bowler for Barisal taking six wickets for 68 runs.

At the Rajshahi Divisional stadium, Chittagong took a 20-run lead in their first innings against Sylhet and then restricted the opponents to 40 for five as the stumps were drawn on the second day. Chittagong had started the day on 29 for one in their reply to Sylhet's 207 in first innings, and scored 227 before being all out. Chittagong's stylish left-hander Faisal Hossain played an enterprising knock of 96 runs off just 112 deliveries including two sixes and 11 boundaries. Nazimuddin got 49 runs, and both were dismissed by pacer Taposh Baisya. Batting for the second time, Sylhet found it hard going as they lost 5 wickets to reach 40 runs by the end of the day. Alok kapali is the only batsman left batting on 7 with Taposh Baisya yet to open his account.

BRIEF SCORES DHAKA: 1st innings 195 (Sharif Ullah 54 not out; Saqlain Sajib 7-85, Mohammad Shahajada 3-56)

RAJSHAHI: 1st innings 375 (Forhad Hossain 157, Zahurul Islam 115; Mohammad Sharif 5-100)

DHAKA: 2nd innings 30 for 1

KHULNA: 1st innings 132 (Habibul Bashar 87, Nazmus Sadat 75; Arafat Salauddin 6-68)

BARISAL: 1st innings 196 for eight (Hannan Sarker 51, Fazle Rabbi 39; Dollar Mahmud 2-34, Syed Rasel 2-49)

SYLHET: 1st innings 207 (Golam Mabud 48, Golam Rahman 42; Tareq Aziz 4-47)

CHITTAGONG: 1st innings 227 (Faisal Hossain 96, Nazimuddin 49; Nabil Samad 3-66)

SYLHET: 2nd innings 40 for five (Alok kapali 7

Hockey

FROM PAGE 17 Bangladesh will play their first match of the Games against Sri Lanka on January 30 while Pakistan start their campaign taking on Nepal the next day.

Mashrafe

FROM PAGE 17 three ODIs and one Test match against the Black Caps.

Meanwhile, there were only two notable omissions from the squads for the tri-nation Idea Cup one-day series and the two-match Test series against India.

Left-handed Shahriar Nafees and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque were dropped. ICL-returnee Aftab Ahmed however retained his place.

"We kept Aftab Ahmed as we believe that he is a very good player for the limited-overs cricket. On the other hand what we felt was that Nafees needed to play more domestic matches before future selection," Rafiqul said when asked whether they made a mistake by giving a chance to a player (Nafees) who was out of longer-version cricket for two years.

There will be one change in the Test team as left-handed Zunaed Siddiqui will join the squad for the only Test match in place of Mashrafe, who will return home after playing the T20 and three one-day matches.

Shakib loses

Iqbal c Dhoni b Zaheer 151; Kayes c sub (Karthik) b Zaheer 5; Junaid c Dhoni b Zaheer 55; Shahadat c sub (Mishra) b Harbhajan 40; Ashraf c Dhoni b Ojha 25; Raqibul b Zaheer 25; Shakib c Gambhir b Ojha 7; Mushfiqur not out 10; Mahmudullah c Vijay b Zaheer 0; Shafiqul b Zaheer 0; Rubel b Zaheer 0; Extras: (b-7, lb-5, w-2) 14; Total: (All out in 90.3 overs) 312; Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-219, 3-222, 4-290, 5-291, 6-301, 7-304, 8-304, 9-304.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Zaheer (20.3, 2, 87, 7), Sharma (15, 2, 50, 0), Harbhajan (26, 7, 75, 1), Ojha (22, 4, 77, 2), Sehwaq (7, 2, 11, 0). Includes India's second innings summary and a table for the Man-of-the-match (Zaheer Khan) and Man-of-the-series (Zaheer Khan).

Arthur explains why

Cricket

AFP, East London

Mickey Arthur said Wednesday that differences with the board of Cricket South Africa led to his resignation as coach of the South African team.

Arthur said he and the board disagreed on plans for the future. "I don't believe I can take the team forward under the present circumstances," he said.

Both Arthur and national captain Graeme Smith, who sat next to each other at a press conference to announce the coach's resignation, denied that a breakdown in their relationship was a factor.

Cricket SA chief executive Gerald Majola announced at the press conference that the national selectors, headed by former South African all-rounder Mike Procter, had been fired as part of what he described as a "restructuring" of the national team set-up.

Asked to elaborate on the differences between Arthur and the board, Majola said that the board wanted to change a situation whereby the coach appointed his own support staff.

Majola said Arthur had done "very well" in taking South Africa to the number one ranking in both Test and one-day international cricket but that the board believed the

structure needed to be changed for the team to advance to the next level after disappointing recent results.

Smith said it was an emotional day for both he and Arthur. He said: "The two of us have had a great partnership for five years."

Smith said it was hurtful to see newspaper reports that Arthur had resigned because of an irreparable breakdown in their relationship. "We spoke several times on the phone yesterday," he said.

National high performance coach Corrie van Zyl has been appointed caretaker coach and will take the team to India on Saturday for a tour which includes two Test matches and three one-day internationals.

Van Zyl has also been appointed to a three-man interim selection panel, along with former Test captain Kepler Wessels and Majola, who will be the convener.

Majola said there would be a board meeting on February 19 at which it was hoped to finalise a new structure for the team.

In a statement, Majola, said Arthur's resignation, "came through the normal stock-taking process which followed the England home series and against the backdrop of the disappointing results of 2009."

"As this process unfolded and remedies were sought, Mickey expressed the very honest and humble view that he did not believe that at this

stage he could continue as coach of the Proteas.

"In the circumstances, he tendered his resignation and it is with much regret that the CSA Board accepted it. The Board wishes to thank Mickey for his great contribution to the advancement of the Proteas to the point where in 2008/09 they had their best season ever and finished on top of the world Test and ODI rankings."

A familiar

FROM PAGE 17 Zaheer picked up three wickets when that big stand took place between Tamim and Junaid and it was his constant variations and change of angles that Bangladesh had to watch.

Once he had tempted Junaid into an indiscreet shot and then got past the outside edge of centurion Tamim he opened the door wider for the Indians. The Shahadat-Ashraf partnership only delayed the inevitable and it was great a ball from Ojha that sent back Ashraf and then Zaheer came back to send the rest packing. From 290 for 3 to 312 all-out tells you how well he bowled. He was deservedly the man of the match and the series and against the backdrop of the disappointing results of 2009.

"As this process unfolded and remedies were sought, Mickey expressed the very honest and humble view that he did not believe that at this

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Truckload M&M's color 5 Bill 8 Bat a gnat 12 Celestial bear 13 In olden times 14 Apiece 15 Clarinet insert 16 Sleep phenom 17 Ersatz swing 18 Lasso 20 Piece of lumber used for flooring (Brit.) 22 Ostrich's cousin 23 Apiece 24 Desire Under the 27 Stronghold 32 Con-strictor 33 Dillinger's foe (Abbr.) 34 Old French coin 35 Strength-en 38 Capri, for one 39 Former M&M's color 40 Discoverer's call 42 Back-related 45 Less of a mess 49 Help a hood 50 Chic no more 52 Notion 53 Got up 54 To and 55 Coach Chuck, who won four Super Bowls 56 "Untouchables" the 57 "— the season... 58 Other-wise 60 Farm fraction 61 As a result 62 Suite table 63 Recede 64 Brock of baseball 65 Place to settle? 66 Old, like a wd. 67 Rice dishes 68 Scale member 69 Seek damages 70 Genetics abbr. 71 Common antiseptic 72 Greeting 73 "Nuts!" 74 Bassoon kin 75 Barn section 76 "Ameri-can —" 77 Congers, e.g. 78 Rough breathing sound 79 Spoon-bender Geller

Solution time: 25 mins. SPUD PIP SPOT AONE ALA TARO SHOTBELLY ANEW SHOOT SLIPON SALT ANI ROPE EWES PAT ADD AVAST EAR DDT NINA ASHY RIO GULP THORNS SPOIL SOAK PANDOWDY APSIE AGO SEER REITD RED ESSE

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-74 indicating starting positions for clues.

CRYPTOQUIP

NOCI WCLCZGB IGSXUIW GZC QXPOXIP ULCZ WCCHBCWW UZGIPCW, NUEBH MUE WGM SOGS XW IGLCB NGZQGZC?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE TWO FASHIONABLE WOMEN TEAMED UP TO INVENT A REVOLUTIONARY NEW FABRIC CALLED POLLY-ESTHER. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals Y



STAR Sports Australian Open Semifinals Live from 8:30am ESPN Sportscentre India Sports News Live at 8:30pm



National Cricket League (Four-Day, Day Three) Rajshahi v Dhaka Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong Chittagong v Sylhet Venue: Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium, Rajshahi Barisal v Khulna Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium