

UN Raises Alarm on Megacities and Food Security

by Raana Haider

THE failure of development to provide a humane quality of life, a basic standard of living to vast numbers of the global population is a substantial snarl on the face of the earth.

The vulnerability of millions of people worldwide is caused by their inability to compete on an equal basis for resources and opportunities. Vulnerability is often caused by marginalisation and exclusion from the socio-economic mainstream and decision-making processes.

Under this illusion of progress, it is indeed a poor reflection of our times that while entering the 21st century, the twin basic human needs of shelter and food still elude a vast proportion of the global population.

The first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat 1) was held in Vancouver in 1976. The twenty years since Habitat 1 have seen phenomenal changes in the political, social, economic, environmental and technological makeup of circumstances prevailing in human society.

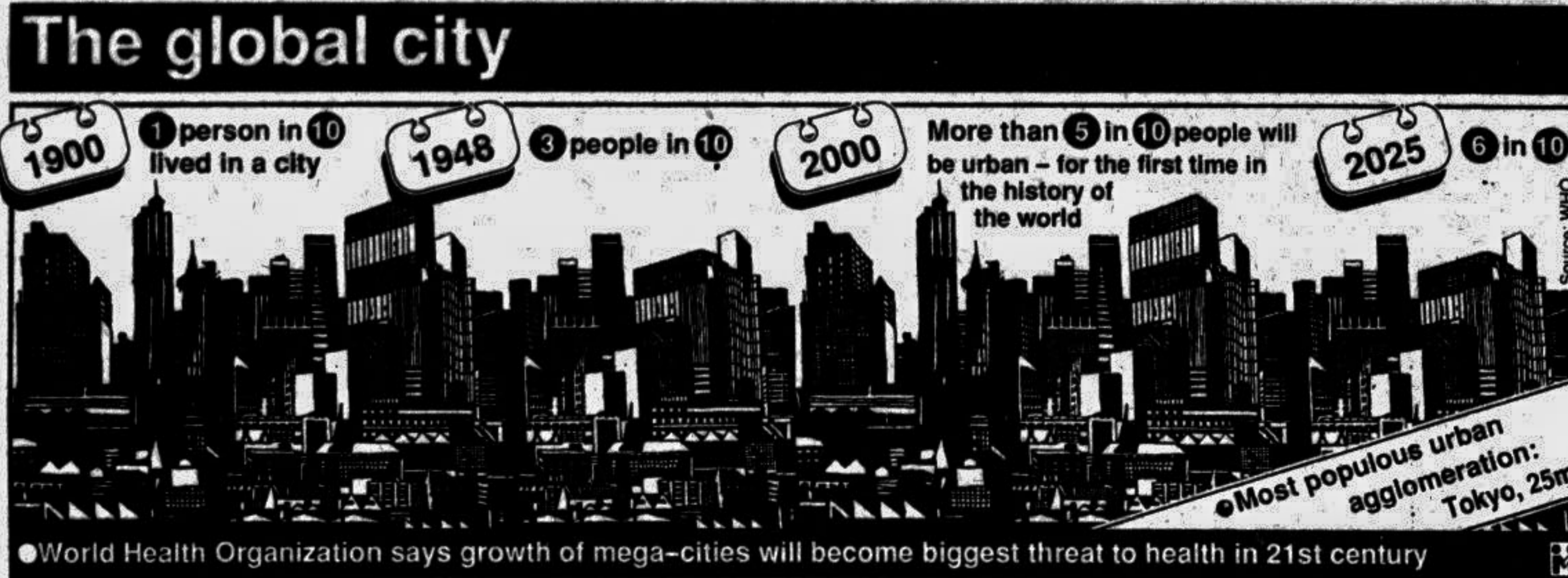
According to an Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) 1996 report, "the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific grew at an average 7.8 per cent in 1995 against a world average of 2.6 per cent, but unless development begins to reach the region's poor it will not be sustainable.

In 1991, countries with the poorest 20 per cent of the world's population enjoyed only 3.6 per cent of the world's income (down from 4.9 per cent in 1960), while the richest fifth enjoyed almost 64 per cent of the world's income.

Urban poverty, a spillover effect of rural poverty is also an increasing phenomenon and by all indications, here to stay. Characteristics of urban poverty do not differ greatly from rural deprivation either—the lack of life-sustaining means and services.

Desperate rural-urban migrants add to an urban labour force already bloated and increasing. Allen and Thomas in 'Poverty and Development in the 1990s', use Frantz Fanon's graphic term 'the wretched of the earth' to refer to the labour force in the manufacturing sector of the urban economy.

Human settlements this century have been particularly characterised by the fast pace of rural-urban migration and the spillover effects of the density of the urban population into megacities (settlements that are home to more than 10 million people).



World Health Organization says growth of mega-cities will become biggest threat to health in 21st century

1996, by the turn of the century, more than 3 billion people — one half of the world's population — will live and work in urban areas.

Such a scenario has prompted United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali to describe the Habitat-2 conference as "essential for the future of our planet" and Secretary-General of the Habitat-2 Conference, Wally N'Dow to warn that "the

task ahead was nothing less than negotiating the survival of the human species."

Food Security

The paradox of availability versus accessibility may be the key dilemma in development. An area where the paradox is most visible is food security or of more relevance in many countries — the hunger issue.

The irony of the situation has been referred to by a number of researchers. While agriculture still constitutes the main economic sector the uneven distribution of the fruits of production does not allow a reasonable nourishment note Bondstad and Bergstrom in 'Poverty and Population Control', 1980, Jan K Black in 'Development in Theory and Practice', 1991 remarks that hunger normally does not reflect lack of food production or productive capacity but rather maldistribution of land, income and opportunities.

The lack of access to enough food — food insecurity — has been categorised by the World Bank into two types; chronic food insecurity and transitory food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity is the state of a continuously inadequate diet caused by the inability to acquire food.

persistently is unable to produce or buy sufficient food. This form of food insecurity resulting in malnutrition is widespread and on the rise. Transitory food insecurity is a condition of a temporary decline in a household's access to enough food.

Famine is often the result of natural disasters, wars, crop failures. Transitory food insecurity is globally isolated in occurrence but increasing. Nowhere is civil strife more rampant than in sub-Saharan Africa where it is a principal factor behind the critical food situation.

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2300 kcal/day 30 years ago. At one extreme, Western Europe per capita food availabilities stand at some 3500 calories and in North America at some 3600 calories.

For the developing countries as a whole, average per capita food supplies are expected to reach 2730 calories in 2010 — a substantial increase from 2520 in the period 1990-1992.

The countries of Algeria, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, North and South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia have all increased their per capita calorie availability by an impressive 40 per cent over the past thirty years reports a FAO study in 1994.

Despite the considerable progress achieved in increasing per capita food supplies, more than 800 million people were undernourished in the early 1990s. The two regions with the highest prevalence of malnourishment are South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

The countries with the highest incidence of malnutrition, with a daily per capita intake range of 1700 to 2000 and falling, include Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Zambia reports the 1994 FAO study.

While there are significant differences in resource for food security between individual countries in different regions, they share a number of common issues and problems.

MANAGEMENT OF SCARCE RESOURCES: availability of land and surface and ground water are vital issues. UNEVEN RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION AND LABOUR MIGRATION: some countries are resource-endowed and others are labour-endowed and the resulting labour movement has repercussions on remittances, agricultural production and women's participation in the agricultural production and labour shortage in sending countries.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR FOOD SECURITY: a rampant critical feature plaguing all regions is the serious degradation of natural resources as a result of soil, wind and water erosion, desertification, water logging and salinity.

MARKET LIBERALISATION: the current process of market-oriented economic reform has in many countries broken away from the previous system of centralised and inward-oriented systems of macroeconomic management. Reduced subsidies and increased private sector retailing are common

features which have affected negatively poor farmers and consumers and the vulnerable population.

FOOD INSECURITY AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: rural households and the urban poor are vulnerable populations and for many countries, these two groups together constitute the majority of the population. Targeted food subsidies, food stamps and targeted feeding programmes are to be favoured, a difficult task in the current economic climate.

DEPENDENCE ON FOOD IMPORTS: commercial food imports account for a large percentage of critical foreign exchange expenditure. Almost all developing countries satisfy national food needs by importing food, of which the staple cereal, rice or wheat is a bulk buy.

PROSPECTS FOR ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY THROUGH EXPANDED FOOD PRODUCTION: the emphasis is on increasing agricultural production through changes in cropping patterns, yield improvements, mechanisation and importantly, equipping women with the means to enhance food production.

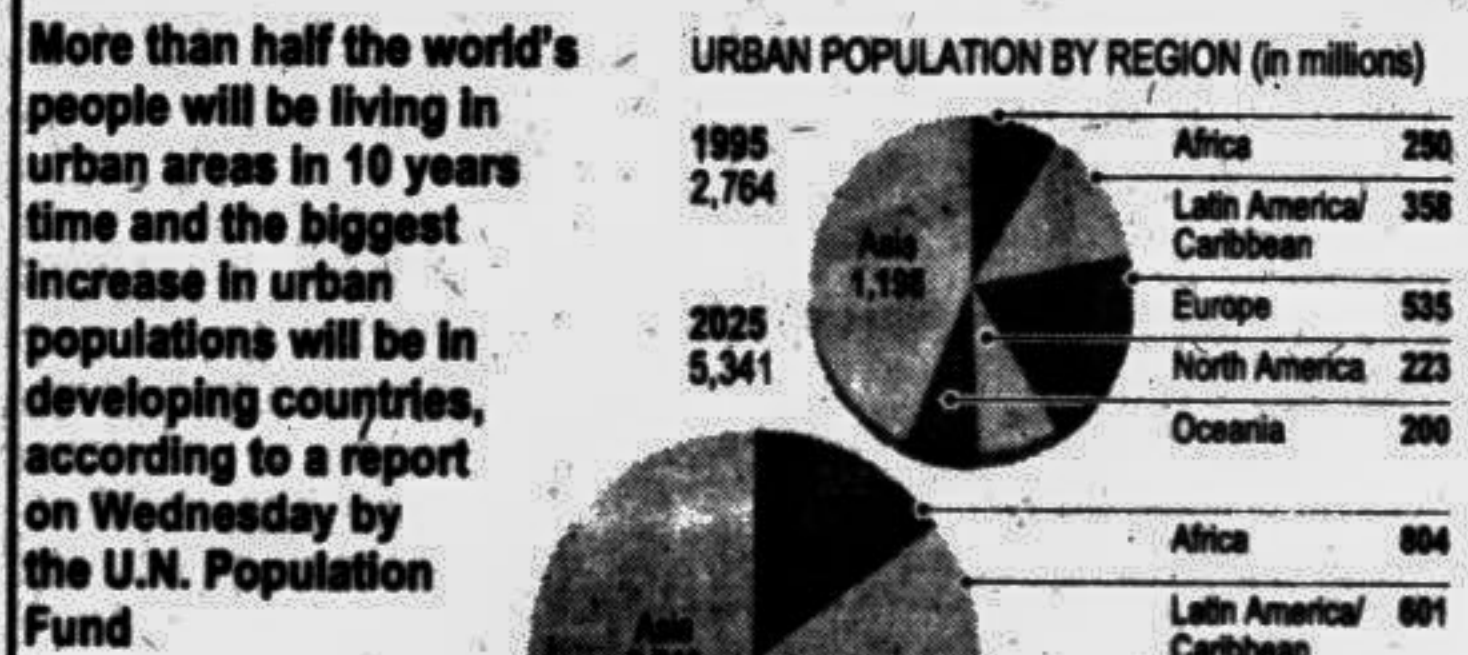
However, increased food production will not ensure increased consumption without an increase in purchasing power. The inability to buy food is the critical factor in poverty. The gap between availability and accessibility has to be reduced in order for people to have food security. Today many food needs can only be met by cash income and the lack of purchasing power is the downfall of human progress.

A CONDITION ALSO KNOWN AS 'A CLIMATE OF POVERTY': Further-more, in this 'climate of poverty', it is no coincidence that worldwide rural areas of low-income food-deficit countries account for 3.2 billion people whose life-sustaining needs have not been met by development at the close of the 20th century.

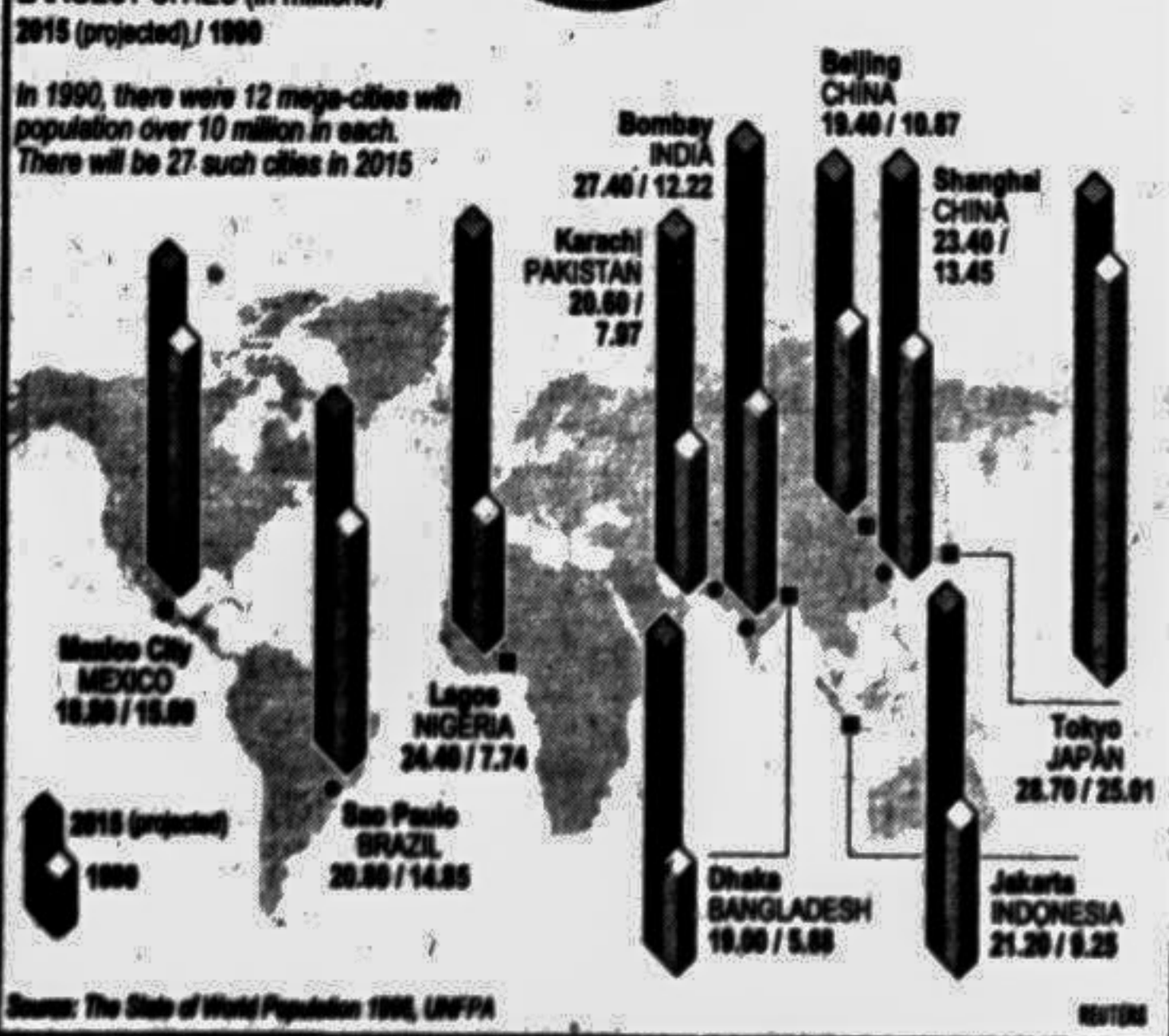
The United Nations in addressing the vital global concerns of shelter and food by holding the last two international gatherings of the 20th century recognises that a sophisticated, increasingly affluent world currently coexists with a marginalised global underclass. Global security demands that the have-nots also prosper and share in the benefits of development.

Raana Haider is the author of 'Gender and Development' published by the American University of Cairo Press.

WORLD'S URBAN POPULATION RISES



More than half the world's people will be living in urban areas in 10 years time and the biggest increase in urban populations will be in developing countries, according to a report on Wednesday by the U.N. Population Fund.



Source: The State of World Population 1996, UNFPA

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Thursday 18th July (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes)

BTV 2:50 Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme: Sufyana 3:10 Recitation from the Quran 3:15 Retelcast of selected programme from TV Archive 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Khatir Jugar 4:45 Cartoon Film: Tom and Jerry 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 National Television School Debate 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Echo Para Shikhi: Mass Education 7:00 The News 7:05 Jhoner Alp 7:25 Nazrul Songs 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 E-Shapthar Natak 10:00 News in English 10:25 Jannabuni 10:35 Film Show: The Equinox 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Friday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC 6:30am BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Inside Burma: Land Of Fear 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Under The Blue Flag 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Top Gear 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00 BBC World Headlines 6:05 Horizon 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC NewsHour Asia and Pacific 8:30 Time Out: Food and Drink 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Inside Burma: Land Of Fear 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: The Contenders 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Correspondent 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newsnight

CHANNEL V 7:30am Repeat VJ Sophia 8:30 Jump Start VJ Trey 9:00 Frame by Frame 12:00noon The Vibe VJ Luke 1:00 VJ Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Repeat VJ Sophia 3:00 Big



ton Steele 4:00 Burt Wolf's Menu 4:30 El Features Twister 5:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5:30 The Adventures Of Black Beauty 6:00pm Lost in Space 7:00 Home and Away 7:30 Charles in Charge 8:00 MASH 8:30 21 Jump Street 9:30 The X-Files 10:30 The Bold and the Beautiful 11:00 Santa Barbara 12:00pm The New Twilight Zone 12:30 Beverly Hills 90210 1:30 The Fall Guy 2:30 El Features Twister 3:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 4:00 Hopperman 4:30 Home and Away 5:00 The Sullivans 5:30 Gabrielle

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STAR Sports 6:00pm The Bahamas 6:30 Australian Football League Highlights 7:30 International Motorsports News 8:30 Cricket '96 Sunday League (AXA Equity & Law Sunday League) Warwickshire vs Lancashire Event Date 16:7-96 Via Sky Sports 1:30 Atlanta Games 1996 Preview 2:30 High 5 III 3:00 World Wrestling Federation Mania 4:00 Live Casket '96 Under 19 Youth One Day Int'l Series England vs New Zealand 1st One Day Int'l 7:30pm Lurch 10:00pm Continued Live Casket '96 Under 19 Youth One Day Int'l England Series vs New Zealand 1st One Day Int'l 11:30 High 5 III 12:00pm Asia Sport Show 42 12:30pm Football Mundial 1:00 World Wrestling Federation Mania 2:00 International Motorsports News 3:00 PABA Boxing Julius Frangis vs Gary Delaney British Heavyweight Title 5:00 The Kickboxing Highlights

STAR MOVIES 7:30am Actor: Six (Arabic Subtitles) 10:00 Family: Ferragelli The Last Rainforest PG (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Family: Season Of Change (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Comedy: The Dream Machine (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Adventure: The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Classic: The Grapes of Wrath PG (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Romance: The Women of Windsor (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 US Top Ten 9:30 Romance: The Women of Windsor

ZEE TV 6:00 The News 6:30 Joyan 7:00 A to Z of Computer: The Management Course 9:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindagi 9:30 Ghoosia Aaine 9:30 HFF 12:00 Commander 12:30 Rasna Spread Ek Minute 1:00 A to Z of Computer: Chota Byte 1:30 Asan Shi Shop 2:30 Tara 3:00 Film Chakkar 3:30 Captain Cook Shahi Dawat 4:00 Film Deewane 4:30 Jaanbar 5:00 A to Z of Computer 5:30 Hingri

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PTV 8:00am Tawar aur Tarjuma HandiNaat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabar 8:45 Cut Piece 9:20 Aahang & Reshma 9:45 Phool Chand 10:05 Sona Chand (Urdu Serial) 10:30 Buttons & Rustys (Eng. Film) 10:55 Mili Naigama 11:00 Khabar 11:10 Aabshar

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SONY ET 8:30am Yaadon Ki Baar 9:00 Music Programme 11:55 Fele Play (Drama Serial) 12:45pm Dawaah 12:55 Duran-e-Hakeem & Bismillah 1:15 Muqaddar (Drama Serial) 2:00 Puthar (Drama Serial) 2:45 Perspective & Health Forum 3:40 Taleem Maloomat 4:35 Aurat Aur Qanoon 5:05 Home Economics 5:25 Humaray Saath 5:55 Varna 6:25 Aloo Curries 7:05 Mughal Hi Aama 7:20 Anah Wala Jan 7:45 English News 8:05 Jawaan Sanget 8:45 Endhan (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabarname & Commercial News 10:35 Mast Mast Sanyo 11:15 Urdu Feature Film & Khas Khas Khabar: Close down

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EL TV 07:00 Music Time 8:00 Tarane Aur Fasane 9:00 Best Of The Best 10:00 Sargam 10:30 The Music Show Let's Countdown 11:00 Nazamka 11:30 Shatranj 12:00 Special 3:00 Amar Prem 3:30 Zaika Ke Safar 4:00 Hit Hi Hit 4:30 Advance Booking 5:30 Yonhazz 05:30 Shatranj 7:30 Shidhant 8:00 Sath Sath 8:30 Public Dimand 9:30 Gambler 10:00 Navaras 10:30 Sitsila 11:00 Special 12:00 Newshine

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ZEE CINEMA 9:30 Jinda Dill 12:30 Shadi Ke Baad 3:45 Acha Bura 4:30 Gonda 10:00 Pathar Ke Sanam 12:45 Malayalam Sayam Sanam 1:00 Bahi Behan

TOM and JERRY TOM and JERRY BLAGOONGA? ODIE NEEDS TUNING

JAMES BOND JAMES BOND WE'LL STEAM THROUGH THE CANE TO GREEN ISLAND - THEN A CHAMPAGNE LUNCH WITH GIRLS AND MUSIC, AND MOVE OFF ON A REAL CRUISE!

SONY ET ALL GOT YOUR GUNS? GREAT! GUNTA IS HERE AT ALONG THE WAY...

BIRDS, CROCS, BUSH RATS SORT OF TARGETS!