

Promoting Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh

by Syed Masul Hasan Tito

If you see a baby drowning you jump in to save it; and if you see a second and a third you do the same. Soon you are so busy saving drowning babies you never look up to see there is some one throwing these babies in the river."

— David C Korten

LIVING in a state of perpetual poverty and dependency in Bangladesh, like saving those babies in the river, we are constantly underestimating the fact that illiteracy is paving the highway to poverty. Disappointing 37 per cent literacy rate of Bangladesh mentioned in recently published UNDP's Human Development Report '95 testifies to this realisation. In fact, macro economic development of a country depends largely on the massive increase of literacy rate. Bangladesh, with its limited resources, is committed to accomplish this gigantic task. The government has given special emphasis on the fast expansion of primary education and removal of illiteracy in the country. The Compulsory Primary Education Act passed in the parliament on February 20, 1990 enjoins all the families and households in Bangladesh with primary school age (6-10 year) children to enrol their children in the school. Following on the act, in January 1992, 68 thanas spread over 64 districts of the country were brought under Compulsory Primary Education (CPE). In January 1993, all the thanas covering the whole country were brought under CPE.

Primary education in Bangladesh in the last couple of years saw impressive growth. In 1990-1995 number of schools increased from around 44,000 to 54,861 raising teacher-student ratio from 1:64 in 1990 to 1:53 in 1994. The number of teacher increased from 1,89,508 in 1990 to 3,12,128 in 1994.

To promote the universal primary education, the Bangladesh government signed an agreement with the IDA in May 1990. This project, known as General Education Project, is aimed at increasing the primary school enrollment and finding new methods to attract

and retain poor and disadvantaged girls. Cost of primary education per student was expected to be reduced through reduction of dropout and repetition and more efficient deployment of teachers. Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED), the highest body for policy formulation, planning, evaluation and execution of plans and instituting legislative measures relating to primary and mass education was formed in 1992. Directorate of Primary Education was shifted from the Ministry of Education to PMED. Female participation is a key factor in achieving the desired goal of literacy. Over the years female participation in the education programme has increased to a large extent. From 44.7 per cent in 1990 this rate is expected to be 47 per cent in 1996.

The government of Bangladesh in 1993-1994 has launched another programme called Food for Education in 460 unions of 460 thanas. Under this programme, poor parents of primary school students get food grains like wheat if their children attend school. Government is also trying to involve the community in school management activities. So far the Food for Education Programme has been introduced in 15,509 schools of 1,193 unions. Bangladeshi government has also drawn up a National Plan of Action (NPA) to promote universal primary education in the country. BPA targets enrollment at 95 per cent, completion rate at 70 per cent and adult literacy rate at 62 per cent by the year 2000.

Despite the government's Herculean effort in full scale implementation of the plan of universal primary education, it can't accomplish this arduous task alone. It requires the spontaneous participation of people from all walks of life. Realising this fact, national

NGOs like BRAC, DDM, CAMPE, CMEs and a lot of other NGOs have come forward. 'Grassroots' a quarterly journal of ADAB in a special issue to mark the 20th funding anniversary of ADAB mentioned that more than 400 NGOs are directly involved in this programme. Majority of them are linked to mainstream programmes of literacy including the mass education and compulsory primary education programme of the government. These NGOs have been carrying out their literacy or education programme in 400 thanas covering 64 districts. About 30 lakh males and females were provided literacy facilities in 44,000 adult education centres and about 18 lakh children are getting education in non-formal primary schools established by the NGOs.

BRAC, since its inception in 1972, has been working for socio-economic well being of the rural poor with special emphasis on education. Initially BRAC's education programme was mainly based on adult literacy which later on expanded to functional education. These programmes although addressed the educational needs of the rural poor but it was not designed to cater to the needs of their children. Consequently, BRAC started receiving feedback from its programme participants that they no longer intend to make their children as illiterate as they themselves are. The programme participants demanded quite a new project which can address the educational needs of their children. These feedbacks coupled with BRAC's commitment to remove the curse of illiteracy from the country led BRAC to start a new programme namely the Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programme in 1985. The basic premise behind this programme was to develop a replicable primary education model which could provide, in a three year period, basic literacy and numeracy skill to the poorest rural children who have as yet remained un-

Bangladesh by the year 2000, has to enrol and sustain 19.9 million children of school going age in the country. In a country of 120 million, it is difficult for a government to accomplish the desired goal of education depending only on the governmental agencies. Conscious citizens, development organizations and private agencies should come forward to share this great national responsibility. Only the coordinated effort of the government and the people can lighten the torch of universal primary education and can ensure the prospects of a better, prosperous Bangladesh.

Holocaust in Bosnia — Reminiscent of Nazi-style Extermination

by Md Asadullah Khan

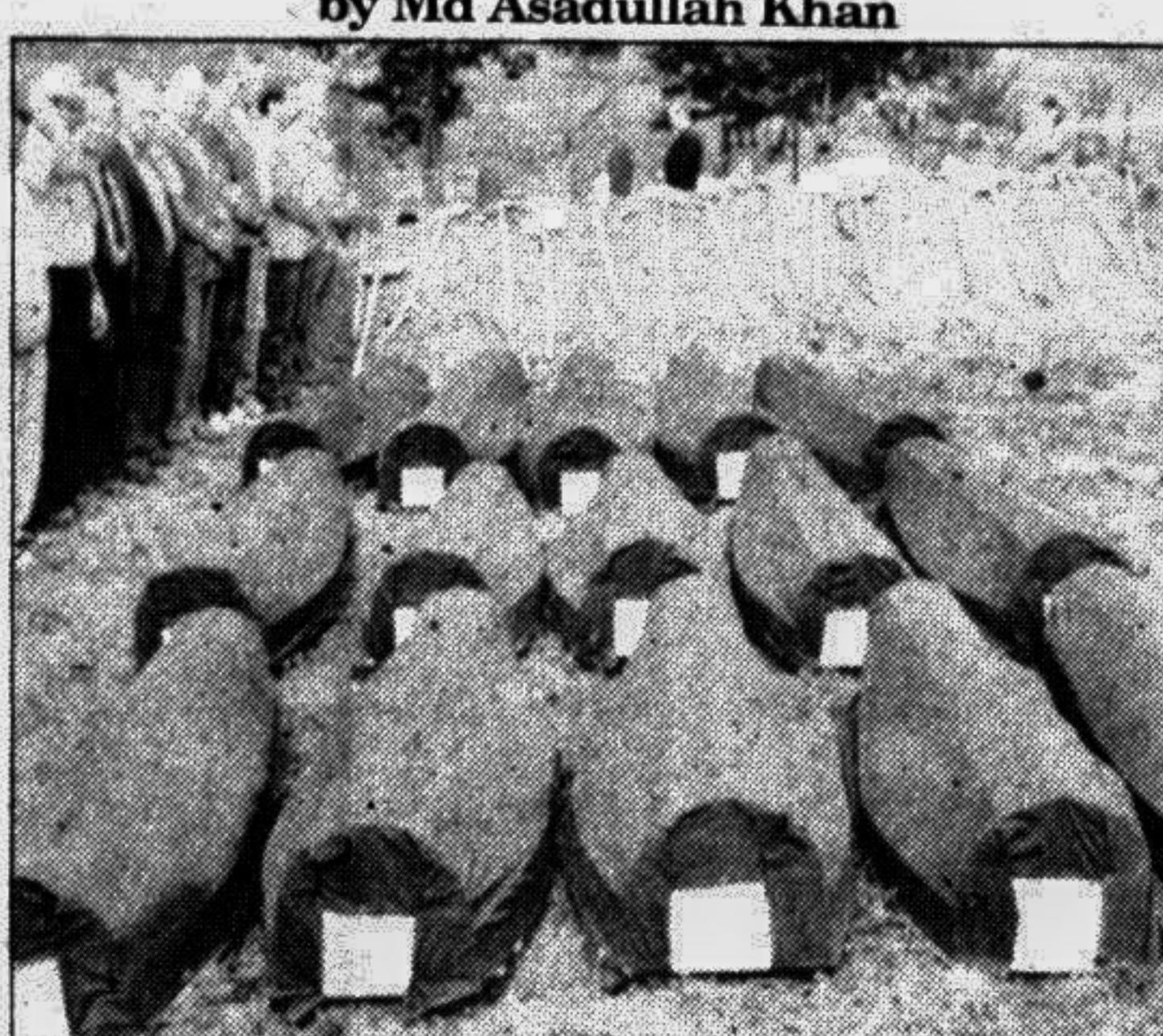
After about four years since the Serbs started the "ethnic cleansing" operation in Bosnia, it is only in recent months that the world body, the UN war crimes tribunal, targeted the villains who designed and master-minded this despicable cleansing operation. The tribunal issued international arrest warrants only recently against the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his army chief Ratko Mladic.

Glancing at the gory past, one could see that in Bosnia two voracious combatants Serbs and Croats did almost chew on Muslim bones. A relief official after his tour through the area commented, "There may be nothing left to negotiate". In a grim report on the plight of the Muslims, another journalist covering the area in March, 1992 says, "Since the fighting in March, 1992, Muslims have suffered the majority of deaths, anywhere from 8,000 to 50,000 and make up the bulk of Bosnia's 1.3 million refugees." Evidently, the fighting in Bosnia has gone on for years, and shocking pictures from Serbian detention camps caught the world's attention.

In a heinous policy known as "ethnic cleansing", Serbs drove millions of Muslims and Croats from their homes, torturing and killing some, abusing and terrorising the rest. Pictures of a walling baby beside a bullet punctured widow, the emaciated bodies of prisoners in the camps, an old woman shot down in her grand child's funeral bear the conscience of the world. The struggle in Yugoslavia did not turn out to be just a civil war but a ruthless campaign by Serbian soldiers to ethnically "purify" the land by driving another ethnic group out from their homes. Horror stories abound about Serbian atrocities that one often feels reluctant to believe and that pales all atrocities committed earlier and is only comparable to genocide perpetrated in Bangladesh in 1971 by the Pakistani marauders.

In the North Bosnian town of Tronopolje, it was learnt Serbian irregulars rounded up 100 prisoners for a move from one detention camp to another. Along the way they pulled about 30 men out of the column and shot them. At a makeshift camp in Prijedor in early 1992 the family of one starving prisoner brought him a food parcel. The guards took the food and beat the prisoner in front of his relatives. In Doboj, Serbian irregulars sprayed insecticide on loaves of bread and fed the hungry Muslim boys who became violently ill and some of them died. Reports have it that near Tuzla in eastern Bosnia, three Muslim girls were stripped to the waist and chained to a fence "for all to use". After three days of rape, they were dosed with gasoline and set on fire. Doctors have reported that many Muslim and Croatian girls had been held for months as sex slaves and when they became visibly pregnant, they were set free to "have Serbian babies".

Serbian detention camps, literally speaking, were "death camps". Packed 600 to a stable that measured about 200 ft. long by 30 ft. wide. Foreign media exposed these camps as places of starvation, torment and death. As revealed from the report of Joel Brand Karen Breslau and Rod Noland — media persons who got into Manjaca centre during the turmoil —, civilians died by



Remains of Muslim victims of Serb execution exhumed from a mass grave near Sarajevo.

— AFP/UNB photo

thousands at the camps, some from beatings and torture and others from neglect, starvation, disease and dehydration.

Unlike other war situations, civilian population was not an indirect target. They were the targets of direct military aggression in the name of ethnic cleansing. The drive for national "purity" tore apart former friends who once lived side by side and now only "reunited" under the most appalling conditions.

In one such detention camps, Omarska, life was a wretched mixture of deprivation, terror, and boredom. Packed together so tightly, the men had room only to crouch. At night they slept on the floor, using their shoes or shirts as pillows. During the day, in stifling 100-degree Fahrenheit, the men were forbidden to wash. The only toilet soon became clogged, forcing inmates to relieve themselves on the floor. As hygiene deteriorated, every one had diarrhea. Because of the drinking water contamination with lead by the only tap they had, inmates started passing blood with urine.

In the words of Hasan Mahmudagic whose house in Bosnia was burned by Serbian fighters sometime in August 1992 that forced him to flee to Prijedor after escaping from the detention camp. It was like a "cleaning". In the words of Milan Panic, Yugoslavia's Prime Minister at that time, "this cleansing is despicable". It portrays the Yugoslavs as the barbarians of the 20th century reminiscent of the Germans and their super race. The analogy is fitting. In scenes disturbingly evocative of the Nazi's deportation of European Jews, thousands of Muslim refugees from north western Bosnia were packed into railroad boxcar. In one such case 4000 people were trapped for hours in the blistering cars without food or water or toilets, many so weak that they collapsed.

The other tactics resorted to was murder as a crude effort to frighten the survivors into fleeing. Some time in April, 1992, Serbian forces attacked the Bosnian city of Bijeljina, shot 27 residents and then kept kicking the corpses of several middle-aged women for all to see. All told, within Yugoslavia itself, Serbia was bent upon completing the sinister process of "ethnic

cleansing" in the hapless public of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For 44 months, steady bombardment from the Serbian gunners almost savaged Sarajevo and its people. Eventually the shattered masonry and glass will be hauled off and replaced but the human scars, so obvious, won't disappear at all. People around the world now believe that the atrocities and deadly persecution perpetrated on Bosnian Muslims, if smaller in degree, they do seem similar in kind to Nazi holocaust unleashed by Hitler. It was a deliberate, organised effort motivated by a nationalist ideology, to liquidate a distinct people through actual murder, then culturally through mass deportation and destruction of homes.

The brutal efforts by the Serbs to create their own "ethnically pure" territories by terrorizing civilians defied centuries of cultural development, during which different nationalities settled in neighboring villages and cities, and often intermarried. "Ethnic cleansing" was, in effect, a crude attempt to reverse history. Shockingly, the Serbs even suggested that the international community connive at the policy of "purification" by resettling the Muslim Bosnians they have uprooted and whose property they have plundered. Cristopher Cvitic, a Balkans specialist at the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London even suggested "that the Bosnians have already lost and all that remains for the international community to do is to arrange the formalities of a Serbian victory". In an atmosphere of collective guilt, Western leaders accused one another of failure to deal effectively with the carnage. Most shockingly true, the continuing slaughter in ex-Yugoslavia wreaked havoc not only in the civilian populations but also on Western aspirations for a better, more secure world after the fall of communism. For almost 44 months the Western allies differed over how to deal with the issue.

True to the expectation of the civilised world, the UN war crimes tribunal issued international arrest warrants for Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his army chief Ratko Mladic, the two toughs who envisaged and designed a plan at the highest political and military level, to set up a

new state through the use of violence. The tribunal, as well as the world, is in possession of evidence that Milosevic, the Serbian President, communicated with Karadzic in September 1991, instructing him to contact the Yugoslav army to take stock of the distribution of arms with a view to carrying out this plan. Lawrence Eagleburger, then US ambassador in Yugoslavia and later Deputy Secretary of State, admitted that he had misread Slobodan Milosevic. He says, "I thought him fairly sensible for a Marxist economist". Eagleburger's analysis goes so far in revealing that he misjudged him by not realising that on the political side he was clearly a Serbian nationalist of the worst sort.

That brings us to compare Milosevic and Karadzic. They shouldered their way into politics as resentful, hate-filled egotists. There was something inhumanly dark and cold in both leaders that made them willing to do literally anything to fulfil what they felt was their mission. Both Milosevic and Karadzic are either Hitler or Stalin of this time. There is something as much common in the Serbian leaders as one can find in Hitler and Stalin who were, to all perceptions, paranoid and insensitive to humanity, that is, unable to accept that other people were as real as they.

Speaking about Hitler, he began as no more than an idle, self-deluded, uneducated young man who liked World War I army life because it gave him a sense of purpose. He could make a good speech and it was his hypnosis of the masses through speech that made him the Führer — the unchallenged leader. Stalin, on the other hand, rough, conspiratorial, despising authority was a Marxist revolutionary. As for Stalin, once he became the master, he ruthlessly annihilated all those who once were loyal to Lenin, his earlier master, and all who might consider questioning his authority. Both despots, like the present day Serbian leaders, believed utterly in themselves and were indifferent to the suffering and destruction they caused to achieve their ends.

The perspectives of the Serbian leaders are a bit different from either Hitler or Stalin although the means to achieve it remains literally the same. Hitler had three enemies: Slavs, Marxists and Jews and to eliminate them, he had an ultimate plan to conquer Ukraine and European Russia for colonisation by racially pure Aryans. The original Slavic population would be deported or kept as slaves, educated only enough to understand the "highway signs".

Despite the fact that Stalin had more people put to death, Hitler's hand remains tainted for the Holocaust that was unleashed by him, almost unique in history, because mass murder became not an instrument but an end in itself. In 1941, Hitler in going to war with Soviet Union carried out his programme of extermination of European Jewry as a final solution to Jewish problem.

Shockingly true, only a confluence of violent upheavals can produce leaders like Hitler or Stalin. Contrary to people's expectation, it has happened again within just 50 years (Karadzic, Milosevic) and it would be quite unwise to conclude that it cannot happen again.



The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 5th August
(All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Bible 3:15 Cartoon Film: Macron 3:45 Drama series: Retelcasts of Selected Dramas 4:00 News in Bangla 4:45 Esho Gan Shikhi 5:00 News in Bangla 6:25 Nazul Songs 5:50 Sports Programme 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Shikkhangan 7:00 News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Antara-Antara 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthasthara 10:35 Sukher Thikana: Family planning programme 10:55 Comedy series: Coach 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00pm BBC World News 1:15 The Money Programme 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out/Top Gear 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Raymond's Blend/Mango 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05 Assignment 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newsbeat Asia & Pacific inc. World Olympic Report 9:00 BBC Time Out: Earth Report 9:00 BBC World

CHANNEL V

7:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 9:00 Frame by Frame 10:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:30 Moon By Demand VJ Trey 1:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 2:30 First Day First Show 3:00 Sansas! Manga Ha 3:30 (v) 4:00 Planet Baby 4:30 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 6:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 8:00 Planet Baby 8:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 9:00 BPL Oye! 10:00 First Day First Show 10:30 Launch Pad VJ Sophiya 11:30 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00m Over The Edge VJ Trey 12:30 Music Master Bos Shoot 1:00 Hayashi 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Asian Top 20 VJ Nonie 5:00 Frame by Frame

STAR Sports

6:30 Brickyard 400 8:30 Castrol St. Leger Race H: 9:00 Cricket Week 9:30 Inside PGA Tour 10:00

1996 Pre Beach Tour De Panne, Belgium 11:00 Umbro International Soccer Manchester United vs Ajax

12:30

Umbro International Soccer Chelsea vs Nottingham Forest 2:00 Tri Nations Series South Africa vs Australia 3:30 ATP Tennis Leg Mason Tennis Classic 1st Sem Final 5:30 Asia Sport Show 6:30 Indoor Mountain Bike Racing 7:30 Trans World Sport 7:30 World Superbike Championship 1996 Europe Grand Prix From Brands Hatch 9:00 Indian Football Kalyan Black Label Federation Cup Semi Final Fm Calcutta 11:00 The European Tour Volvo Scandinavian Masters Day 4 11:30 Raja Rani 12:30 Shun Shung Trong Tong 12:30 Celeste 1:00 ZED 10:30 Gopala 12:00 Shun Shung Trong Tong 1:00 Asian Sky Shop 2:30 Tara 3:00 Film Chakkar 3:30 Mere Ghar Ane Zindagi 3:30 Mano Ya Na Mano 4:30 Lata Khana Khaizana 5:00 ZED 5:30 Akbar Babel 6:00 Cartoon Show 6:30 Love Stories 7:00 ZED 7:30 Gaane Anjana 8:00 TMKB 2:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 9:30 Campus 10:00 Daraar 10:30 The News 11:00 No Problem 11:30 Close Up Antakshari 12:00 Parwantrant 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9 Mahalakshmi Hills 1:30 Tumhare Lye 2:00 Commander 2:30 TMKB 4:00 Index 4:30 All our 5:00 Jagran

ZEE TV

5:30 Surtal 6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 Dream Merchants 9:00 Hum Zameen 9:30 Gaane Anjana 10:00 Shubh Sair 10:30 Gopala 12:00 Shun Shung Trong Tong 1:00 Asian Sky Shop 2:30 Tara 3:00 Film Chakkar 3:30 Mere Ghar Ane Zindagi 3:30 Mano Ya Na Mano 4:30 Lata Khana Khaizana 5:00 ZED 5:30 Akbar Babel 6:00 Cartoon Show 6:30 Love Stories 7:00 ZED 7:30 Gaane Anjana 8:00 TMKB 2:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 9:30 Campus 10:00 Daraar 10:30 The News 11:00 No Problem 11:30 Close Up Antakshari 12:00 Parwantrant 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9 Mahalakshmi Hills 1:30 Tumhare Lye 2:00 Commander 2:30 TMKB 4:00 Index 4:30 All our 5:00 Jagran

SONY ET

8:30am Yaadon Ki Baat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis 10:00 The Menace 10:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 11:00 Raja Rani 12:00 Manjiri 1:00 9 Mahalakshmi Hills 2:00 Parwantrant 2:30 Andaz 3:00 Tumhare Lye 4:00 Commander 4:30 TMKB 5:00 Index 5:30 All our 6:00 Jagran

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Educ Prog 11:00 Nagragedi 11:15 Folk Songs 12:00 Padabali Kirtan 12:30 Ek Sidi Diner Gaan 1:00 Janan 2:30 Pracheer 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

DARPA 3:30 Irsha 5:05 Nepali Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Dash Bidesher Khele 6:00 Pali Katha 6:30 Batayan 6:55 Arati 7:30 Bangla Samabd 7:55 Dinandan 8:00 Ok Darshan 8:45 Saptahik 9:00 Janan 9:30 Pracheer 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

EL TV

00:30 RB Burman Special 01:30 Tarani 02:30 Ghungaro 03:30 Jeevan Ke Bang 04:30 Lata Daane Anan Ke 1:00 Meen Nashe 05:00 Folterne Chalo Cinema 06:30 Tarane