

Early Education Needs Proper Care

by Siddiqa Taufiq Khan

THE country is going through an important social transition. Its effect is shared by all, even by young children. The world of Early Childhood Education in Bangladesh is also under going remarkable changes. What a wonderful time to be part of teaching profession. Especially with care of junior-most citizens.

Pre-schooling or early childhood education or primary education in Bangladesh is in private hands. It is taken care of by playgroups nurseries and kindergarten schools. The government has not full taken up the responsibility of our youngest members as yet, though Education Commission Report of 1974 recommendation says: Nursery schools and kindergartens must be established in our country in required numbers for pre-primary education in urban and industrial areas both parents in many families have to work for living. As a result, the children in such families stand the risk of being left uncared for and live a miserable life. Later the undesirable effects of this unfavourable environment are seen in the life of many such children. To counter this, we have to set up kindergartens in residential areas in our cities and industrial areas in accordance with particular needs of our labour force.

The responsibility of the child's mental social and physical welfare rests in many developed countries of the world combindly with the education, public health and social welfare departments. In our country the special responsibility for pre-primary education can be entrusted either to the local government department or jointly to public health, social welfare and family planning departments. In industrial areas the full responsibility for pre-primary education including the establishment of nursery schools and their administrative and financial management must rest with the industrial organisation concerned. In urban and rural areas, according to requirement, the primary responsibility for the establishment and management of such institutions may depend on the local population. Later, the public health, social welfare and family planning departments, the agricultural department, the etc, autonomous bodies can come forward with help and assistance for the proper functioning of these institutions.

The demand for care of the pre-schoolers is great and will continue to grow. The demand is coming from different sources, families where both father and mother work, single parents, changing family pattern and rising income of few urban people who can afford and are willing to spend for the education of their children.

Due to many reasons, young members need care of people other than their own parents and places other than their own homes. This kind of childcare can be provided in many places by many types of people and agencies. This may be in nurseries or playgroups of kindergartens. The care may be given by baby-sitter, or childminders or daycare staff or by pre-primary teachers. Nursery schools and playgroups accept children for a short period of time. These are formal institutions or part of a primary school. Daycare centres have longer hours and meet the working mothers needs. They are meant for smaller children whose physical well-being is the main responsibility of the centres. Their function primarily is

custodial in nature. Playgroups enrich quality of life for many pre-school children and their families. In a world in which there is less space for young children, playgroups offer the room to grow up and happiness. They give them a safe place to play with companions of their own age. This helps them to become social. Playgroups and nursery schools not only give opportunity to play they also create opportunity for self-expression, and hence language development takes place. All children are not mature enough to go to a pre-school before five. There are 'stages' of ages school entrance. No development can be forced. It has to come naturally. So it is wise on the part of parents to wait till a child is three in normal cases, and shows signs of maturity to leave home, before enrolling him/her to a pre-school.

Only very advantage families can offer at home what a pre-schooler needs for his or her physical, intellectual emotional and social development. Middle class families cannot think of it, not to speak of lower middle class. So pre-schools are helpful and essential for average families but crucial for the disadvantaged.

Enrichment of child's life experiences is to be made before he is six. And as all intellectual developments occur before the child is eight, teachers and parents have to team up to give him or her all the experiences and stimulations he or she needs at this early stage to lay a sound foundation for future learning. The child needs help to develop an inquisitive mind.

Though responsibility of pre-schooling to a great extent rests with parents and home, where ever they fail, out side agencies should come forward to fill up the vacuum. In the world of specialisation, specialists should be at hand. Nation's children need their care and attention.

The awareness of the need for early childhood education has resulted in emergence of pre-schools in cities. The gradual increase in their enrollment is proof of public interest in child education. This interest must increase and parents should know what their child requires for his or her intellectual development.

The information obtained from Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) shows that kindergartens schools existed much before the Liberation of the country. A survey in the cities of Dhaka and Narayanganj in 1982 shows that there were more than 150 primary schools in these two cities which had nursery and kindergartens sections in their institutions.

As a result the term 'kindergarten' is very familiar to us. The father of this system of education, a German educationist and philosopher Froebel, advocated teaching young learner through 'play' and emphasized in natural 'unfolding' of child in adult care. Children to him are like seeds, school a garden and teachers (adults) just like gardeners. They are there to create environment for natural, healthy growth of seedlings. They will weed out what is not wanted (bad habits etc) and let grow what is healthy and desirable. Unfortunately we named our pre-primary schools kindergartens but we could not import the other related concept of its founder, intact.

regular examinations like primary classes of the school. While in true spirit of the system it should be treated as readiness stage for formal education. Enough time should be given to children (through play) to mature physically and mentally and be ready to benefit from appropriate instruction at later stage. Lack of readiness in a child to learn indicates that natural process 'unfolding' had not occurred. Teachers have to wait till it occurs. There is no need to hurry it up.

In our country pre-primary education is divided into two stages: i) 3-5 years - pre-kindergarten - nursery or playgroup age. Prior to the entrance in KG; ii) 5-6 years - primary - Kindergarten age. Prior to the entrance to Class-I.

There is another positive side of improved quality of childcare. Growth of early childhood education centres, whether in the form of daycares or nursery schools, will definitely improve the supply and the quality of women workforce. It will relieve women from constant care of children. It will also relieve working women from the anxiety of left behind children resulting in better performance. Children will spend most important and formative period of their life in proper care and environment. Moreover children of less-educated mother will benefit from quality care offered in quality pre-schools

by trained personnel.

Though mentioned above there is a demand for pre-schooling, it is neither enough nor it is properly met. It is high time that educationists specially child educators should educate parents and guardians about the significance of right kind of early education. Public opinion has to be built. Demand for quality education is to be forceful in nature. So that people at the helm of affairs wake up and improve their performance.

The voice and affairs of both parents and schools, should be made heard through general media, women's magazines and mother's clubs. This will help convert the demand for pre-schooling, both from parents and school side into a movement, resulting into improvement of quality in programmes and curriculum.

As long as quality pre-school services are not available, homes may serve and meet the needs of early education. When homes, not schools are the places (for the time being) to be used for childhood education, issue of mother education and training comes to the forefront.

Educationists agree that parents need help and training 'before' they are parents and 'while' they are parents. They agree that there is no substitute for mothers' education. They say that parents need material and training to do good job. Parenthood does come biologically (naturally)

but it brings responsibility. Proper training facilities for teachers as well as for mothers are to be provided in large scale. This is what Froebel himself insisted.

Dr Maria Montessori whose famous Montessori method is claimed to be followed by many schools in many countries, advocated freedom of children in selecting learning activities but wanted them to learn in "Prepared Environment" under knowledgeable and trained adults. She also believed in training of teachers.

Pre-schools or infant schools are to enhance the home experience. They will never replace homes. The role the family plays can never be undervalued. It is the home care, love and security, what a child needs, to grow into a desirable person.

A child needs care of high quality both at home and school. Schools and homes are to compliment and supplement each other. Parents and involvement in their child's education is not only desirable but also essential.

It is in the interest of the children, parents school owners and the nation that proper pre-schooling is provided to the nation's children. All-out efforts are to be made to make pre-school facilities available to all along with primary education which must be available to all the children.

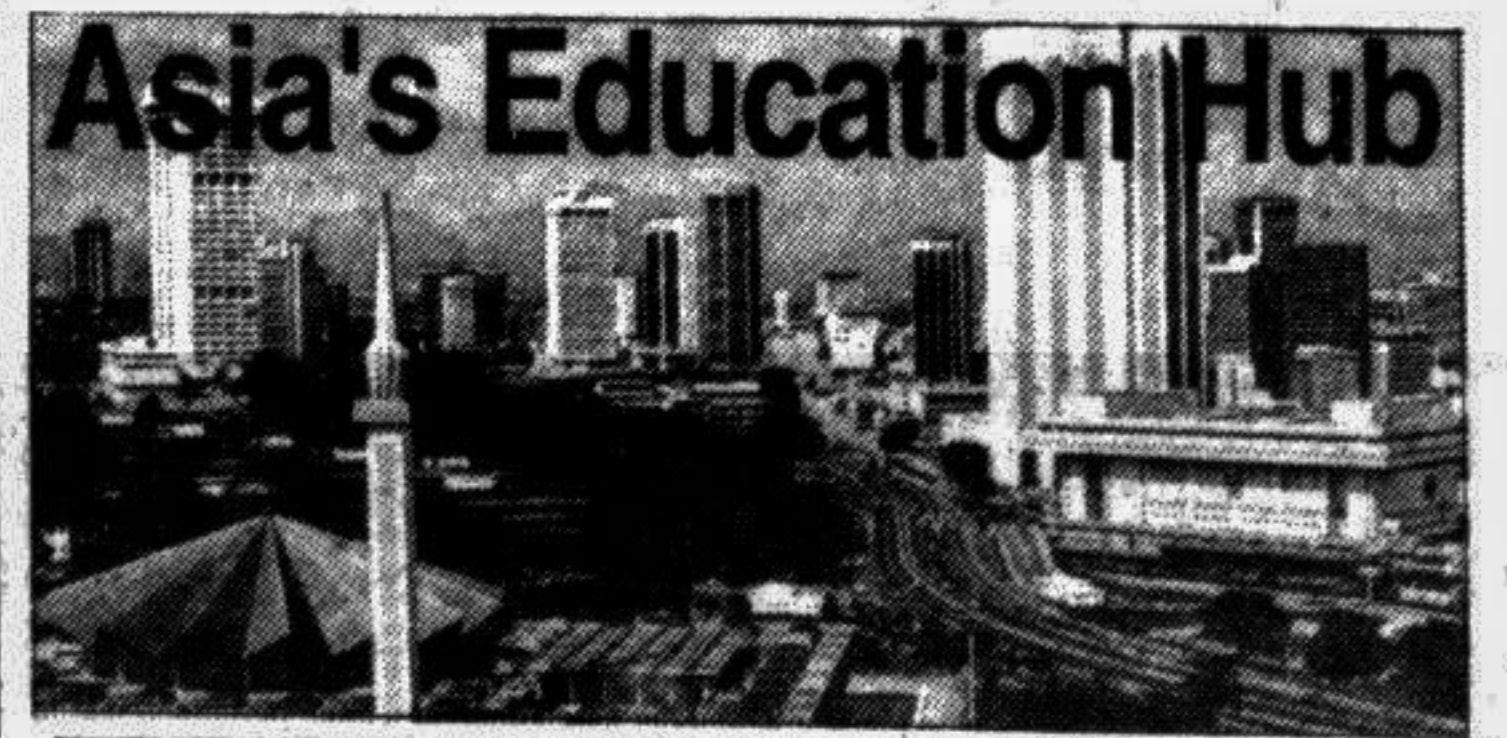
Another form of daycare facilities are popular in many countries. These are employer sponsored daycare centres. We need it more. It may be pro-

vided to children of female workers or where both the parents work. It may be located in the factory premises or near parents place of work. Female school teachers also need childcare arrangements in or near the institution they are employed to teach.

A few low-cost childcare centres are run by the government for children of mothers doing unskilled jobs. These should be staffed by qualified and trained teachers. Number of such institutions to be increased and quality of services offered to be improved. They should not look like orphanages. These children need greater care and protection. Because these centres are the only places where some education, which the parents and homes are unable to provide, can be provided to them during the day.

To conclude we can say: a) Children need early education by going through readiness programme before they step into the threshold of regular schools. They benefit more from formal instructions if they are well prepared; b) Early education may be imparted at home or at institutions. But opportunities for socialisation, learning discipline and interaction for language development are more at schools; c) Pre-schoolers are to be under the guidance of persons who understand children - how they grow, develop and learn. Mothers are pre-primary teachers must undergo appropriate training before they handle the pre-schoolers. Training facilities are to be made available to those who are already in service or intend to take up teaching; d) All pre-schools should be constantly supervised. Only licensed persons to be allowed to run them. Minimum standard to be maintained through staffing by trained persons at all levels; and e) Private entrepreneurs are trying to meet the need for pre-schooling. If their efforts are supplemented by the state, cost of running these may come down and it may bring down their fees to make their facilities accessible to more people.

Can efforts be made to meet the need of nation's children at the national level?



Kuala Lumpur is aiming to become the region's centre for excellence in education. Kalinga Seneviratne of Inter Press Service reports from Kuala Lumpur.

MALAYSIA, a leading proponent of doing things the 'Asian Way', is moving to make itself a regional centre for educational excellence so that Asians can complete their studies in the region without going to the West.

The plan is aimed at both preserving the Asian cultural identity and saving Malaysians - and by extension parents in the rest of the region - from having to spend large sums of money to have their children educated in North America and Europe.

"One of Malaysia's advantages is the ability of most of our academic staff to be able to communicate in English," says Anuar Ali, director of the Department of Higher Education. "Most of the programmes offered in our universities respond positively to the needs of ASEAN."

Every year, about 100,000 Malaysian students apply to enter the nine local public universities, but there is room for only about a fifth of this number, so that those who can afford it, send their children overseas to complete their studies.

Education minister Najib Abdul Razak says that it costs a Malaysian student about US\$ 24,000 a year to study in Britain, while for those attending university at home, the cost is less than US\$ 4,000 per school year.

To make it possible for more students to stay home as well as to attract others in the region, the government plans to build more universities and offer more courses. Regional lecturers will also be invited for teaching and training purposes.

Under a new Private Higher Education Act which came into effect this year, major Malaysian corporate enterprises like telecommunication giant Telekom Malaysia, the electric power company Tenaga Nasional Bhd and the multi-national oil company Petronas will be allowed to establish their own universities.

The new legislation will also permit established overseas universities to set up branch campuses at the invitation of the education ministry.

In a newspaper interview, Ali said that Malaysia is well placed to be competitive in the fields of engineering, medicine, humanities and economics.

"The ability of the International Islamic University to attract foreign students shows that Malaysia has great potential to be a regional centre of education," he said.

Currently, there are 1,367 foreign students from 80 countries enrolled at the Islamic university. Most are from Indonesia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Thailand with the majority studying humanities, economics engineering and law. Classes are conducted in English with Islamic studies and Arabic compulsory

courses. "We have 80 nationalities represented (among them) the creator of the Third World," Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, rector of the Kuala Lumpur-based institution told IPS. "This university is equally good in all academic aspects. Our academic staff need a minimum Phd and they come from 40 countries."

But not everyone in the academic community is happy with how the government is pursuing its new educational thrust. There are those who are sceptical about encouraging corporate business to open universities, while others are concerned about permitting branch campuses.

"All of this is quite worrying because people who are setting up these new institutes are profit-motivated," said KS Jomo, professor of economics at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. "Profit-based" educational development may not necessarily fit in with the needs of the students, he says.

The arrangement that worries political scientist Dr Loong Wong concerns the branch campuses with foreign universities being able to set up institutes in conjunction with Malaysian partners.

"The very worrying thing about setting up branch campuses here is that the local partners will have no say on the design and administration of the courses," charged Wong, who taught in an Australian university for ten years before returning to Malaysia to help set up a private higher education institute.

Moreover, he said that in many instances the fees are paid overseas so that the cash outflow continues, while the local partner merely provided the building and support staff. "It is very much a neo-colonial agenda," he says.

He is not surprised that several universities from Australia, Britain, United States and Canada had expressed interest in setting up branch campuses in Kuala Lumpur.

"If you look at the process of colonisation, it's cheap labour and extraction of surpluses. Here you would have cheap labour with local lecturers hired at about a third of Australian salaries and extraction of surpluses in terms of revenue sent to Australia," Wong explained.

What Malaysia needs to do if it wants to create Harvards of the East in Kuala Lumpur, is to first ensure that its present teaching staff is upgraded, to encourage more creative thinking by promoting academic freedoms. "A large proportion of this is either muted or non-existent in this country," he said.

"Whether we like it or not, Malaysia is playing a catch-up game," Wong went on. "It is trying to imitate the West and at the same time subvert the West in order to redeem itself. That kind of post-colonial psychology is very strong here."



Pupil at rural school



Drill class at an urban school

Trains and River Vessels Produce Tons of Human Excreta

by Abu Sayed

IN Bangladesh trains and river vessels perform more than just carrying passengers and goods. They produce tons of human excreta every day.

Is Bangladesh Railway a government organisation? The answer is: yes. Is it helping the government in promoting sanitary latrines? The answer is, no.

Thus the railway is not only going against the government's goal of ensuring Health for All by the Year 2000. It is also contributing in polluting the environment.

There are enough facts and figures to support the above statement. Some 60,000 passengers travel by trains everyday in the country, according to a Railway official. If even 20 per cent of those passengers use toilets while travelling they discharge at least 6,000 kilograms of wastes along country's 2746 km tracks.

The human waste being disposed off by the passengers directly fall on tracks, polluting the spots and spreading germs of diseases. It is not only the envi-

ronment which is being harmed. Such uncontrolled open toilet system also poses danger to public health," said a health worker.

Doctors said infectious diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera were spreading in the areas alongside the railtracks.

Said environment expert Prof Nurul Islam: "Human waste discharged by the passengers easily pollute the environment and harm public health. Wastes directly fall on the railway tracks, quickly spreading germs."

It becomes a horrible experience to passengers waiting at stations for train. The air stinks making the wait unbearable. Many keep their faces covered by handkerchief or saris.

"Because people use toilets even when the trains are stationary by the platforms," said a porter at the city's Kamalapur railway station.

Floating people roam on platforms. That's a common scene in Bangladesh. They use the toilets in rail carriages

whenever they get the opportunity. They make their entry easily into the stationary trains because doors and windows remain rarely locked.

It is even difficult to travel in trains accepting a few intercity ones. There is no water supply in most of the local trains. Unpleasant odour emanating from water-less toilets, keep haunting a passenger longer after a journey is over.

When asked, an official at Kamalapur railway station said they could not ensure water supply to the local trains as most of the bogies of the trains were too old to be provided with water supply.

Railways authorities do not know how and when they would improve their archaic mode of sanitation.

Similar story goes with riverine transports. Millions of passengers, travelling by river vessels like launches, steamers and boats, use the rivers as toilets (some of these transports have open toilets like in the trains, some have none), and thus contaminate the water.

According to a statistics,

some 50,000 passengers travel from Sadarghat terminal everyday. During their long journey many of them respond to the nature's call and thus they unknowingly contribute to the rise of water-borne diseases when they use latrines.

Though there are now more tubewells than in the past, people along the river banks also use river water for washing, bathing and other household chores. Many, including boatmen, even drink river water. This section particularly is being exposed to various water-borne diseases.

Commenting on the situation, Dr Mirza Muhammad Myeenuddin, an Assistant Director of Bangladesh Public Health Institute, said it would be difficult to attain the programme "Health for All By 2000" without improving the sanitation system in trains and water transports.

He said the cases of many infectious diseases will decrease remarkably if open toilet system in trains and river vessels is changed to healthy ones.

News Network

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Thursday 22nd 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 Geeta. 3:15 Rerelease of selected programme from TV Archive. 4:00 News in Bangla. 4:15 Parashram: 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 Esho Para Shikhi: Mass Education. 7:00 The News. 7:05 Jiboner Alo. 7:25 Nazrul Songs. 8:00 News in Bangla. 8:40 E-Shapla: Natok. 10:00 News in English. 10:25 Janmabhumti. 10:35 Film Show: The Equalizer. 11:30 News in Bangla. 11:40 Close down.

BBC

6:00am BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours. 9:00 BBC World Headlines. 9:05 White Heat. 10:00 BBC Newsday. 1:00 BBC World Headlines. 1:05 Madness. 2:00 BBC World News. 2:30 Time Out. Airport. 3:00 BBC World News. 3:30 Time Out. Jeremy Clarkson's Motorworld. 4:00 BBC Newsdesk. 6:00pm 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. Raymond's Blarc. 9:00 BBC World Headlines. 9:05 White

CHANNEL V

6:00am Frame By Frame. 7:00 Rewind VJ. 8:00 Jump Start VJ. 9:00 Frame by Frame. 11:30 The Vibe VJ. 12:00 Rewind VJ. 1:00 By Demand VJ. 2:00 Frame by Frame. 2:30 First Day First Show. 3:00 BPL. 4:00 Planet Ruby. 4:30 By Demand VJ. 5:30 Music Update. 6:00 Rewind VJ. 8:00am Big Bang VJ. Alessandra. 1:00 Haysah. 2:00 By Demand VJ. 3:00 Big Bang VJ. Alessandra. 4:30 BPL. 5:30 Frame by Frame.

STAR PLUS

6:30am Voltron. 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. 7:30 G.I. Joe. 8:00 Saber Rider and the Star Sherif. 8:30 The Adventures Of Black Beauty. 9:00 Aerobics. 9:30 Nanny and the Professor. 10:00 Mr Belvedere. 10:30 Burt Wolf's Menus. 11:00 E! Features: Hunchback of Notre Dame. 12:30noon

STAR Sports

6:30am 1996 Pro Beach Soccer Rotterdam, Holland. 7:30 1996 World Motorcycle Championship. Czech Republic GP. 9:30 Bud Pro Surf Tour. 11:30 Lombard U15 World CKT Championships. From Lord's UK. Via Sky Grand Final. 4:30 1996 Pro Beach Soccer Rotterdam, Holland. 5:30 Asian Sport Show. 6:00 Marlboro League HL-13. 6:30 World Wrestling Federation Raw. 7:30pm World Cup Classic Matches. 1970 Brazil v Italy. 9:00 Thai Kickboxing. 10:30 G.I. Joe. 11:00 US PGA Tour Sprint International Day 4. 1:00 Same Day Delay. Malaysian Open Day 2. 5:00 Thai Kickboxing Highlights.

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Action: Alien Nation. 18

SONY ET

8:30am Yaadon Ki Baar. 9:00 The Three Stooges. 9:30 Dennis The Menace. 10:00 Dream Of Jeannie. 10:30 Ek Rang Lamhe. 11:00 Ghaav. (Serial) 11:30 Cine Matinee. Hindi Feature Film. 2:30pm Kismet. (Serial) 3:00 Zama Asma. (Serial) 3:30 Mere Mes-sage. Meri Geet. 4:00 Sur. Wheel of Fortune. (Game Show) 4:30 Easle. (Serial) 5:00 O'Maria. 5:30 The Three Stooges. 6:00 Mere Message Meri Geet. 6:30 Dennis The Menace. 7:00 Premier. 7:30 Dream of Jeannie. 8:00 Sur. Wheel Of Fortune. (Game Show) 8:30 Serial. 9:30 Hospital. (Serial) 10:00 Cover Story. 10:30 Taak Jaak. 11:00 Dekh Tamasa. Dekh. 11:30 Yeh Sadi Nahi Ho Sakti. (Serial) 12:00 Pehli Mulakat. 12:30am Sunday Ki Sunday. 1:00 Nilrop. Raso. Show. 1:30 Jo Winner Wohi Sikander. 2:00 Yaadon Ki Baar.

ZEE TV

5:30 Suno Bhai Suno. 6:00 The News. 6:30 Jagran. 7:00 ZED. 8:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindagi. 9:00 Ghoosia. Asina. 9:30 HFF. 12:00 17 Shipley Road. 12:30 Rasna Spread. Ek Minute. 1:00 ZED. 1:30 Asian Sky Shop. 2:30 Tara. 3:00 Film Chakkar. 3:30 Captain Cook. Shahi Dawat. 4:00 Helpline. 4:30 Natrat. 5:00 ZED. 5:30 Taer Kaman. 6:00 Hum Honge Kaamyab. 6:30 Ad-Mad Show. 7:00 Low Calorie Show. 7:30 Gaans Anjaane. 8:00 Rasna Kya. Scene Hai. 8:30 Colgate Gel. Yodlee. 9:00 Gopajne. 9:30 Dastaan. 10:00 Umeed. 10:30 The News. 11:00 Mano Ya Na Mano. 11:30 Hum Paanch. 12:00 Tara. 12:30 Parampara. 1:00 To Be announced. 1:30 Basaje. Ka. PG. 2:00 Celeste. 2:30 TMM.

EL TV

00:30 Rajesh Khanna Special. 01:30 Ched Chad. 02:30 Music Time. 03:30 Pyar Hi Pyar. 04:30 Asha Bhonsle Special. 05:30 Rajesh Khanna Special.

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin. 10:35 Classical Music. 11:00 Dance. 12:00 ETV Programme. 12:30 Kolkata Bishtra. 1:00 Janani. 2:30 Dapjan. 3:00 Eto Tuku Basha. 5:05 Nepali Programme. 5:30 News. 5:35 Santhiya. Samkriti. 6:00 Pali Katha. 6:30 Chakri. Khabar. 6:55 Ajab Saja. 7:30 Bangla Sambad. 8:00 Sur. Sanget. 8:30 Desar. 9:00 Janani. 9:30 Swaghar Bazar. 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film. Show. 1:00 Closed.

MUSIC

06:30 Ched Chad. 07:30 Music Time. 08:30 Pyar Hi Pyar. 09:30 Asha Bhonsle Special. 10:30 The Music Show. 11:00 Namaskar. 11:30 Shairanj. 12:00 Top Of The Pops. 12:30 Brigadier. Balwant. Bhawan. 1:00

ZEE CINEMA

6:30 Hit Hai. Fit Hai. 7:00 TGA.

Box Office

9:00 Box Office. 9:30 Daisy (Sonja, Harish, Kamal Hassan). 12:15 Bollywood. 12:30 Love And God. (Sanjeev K Nimm). 3:15 Songs. 3:45 Sauten Ki. Beti. (Jeelendra, Rekha). 6:30

Kaylug Sita

9:15 Songs. 10:00 Abhimaan. (Ami-tabh B, Jaya B). 12:45 Rakt Sakshi. (Malayalam). 3:30 Nana Kyan. 4:00 Kholwal Saab. (Shatughan Sinha, Aparna Sen).

Garfield by Jim Davis. A comic strip featuring Garfield the cat. The dialogue includes: 'HOW HAVE I BEEN? I'M FINE, THANK ME', 'WELL, I LOOK GOOD. THANK ME FOR SAYING SO', 'TELL ME, WHAT HAVE I BEEN UP TO?', 'I HATE IT WHEN HIS GUESTS DON'T SHOW UP'. The artist's signature 'JIM DAVIS 5-4' is visible.