

Indemnity Ordinance : A Rejoinder

by M Amir-ul Islam

The author responds to some points raised by Barrister Rafiqul Haque in his article published on 23 and 24 August, regarding his, the author's, piece published earlier.

THE nation owes gratitude to The Daily Star for having initiated the debate on the Indemnity Ordinance 1975. Former Attorney General Barrister Rafiqul Haque, has also written a piece in The Daily Star on August 23 and 24, 1996.

It is heartening to note that my learned friend, Barrister Haque, has agreed with Mr. Mahfuz Anam and myself that the Indemnity Ordinance is black law, and this must be repealed and or declared as ultra vires to the Constitution. He further contends that this is against human rights and contrary to the rule of law. Barrister Haque also agreed with me that the Ordinance was beyond the scope of Article 46 of the Constitution. He however, differed with me as I consider the Ordinance, in any case has come to an end, the same not having been laid before the Parliament under Article 93(2) of the Constitution.

The reason given by my friend was that since the Ordinance was ratified by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, it is not necessary to lay it before the Parliament. He further said that since the matter has been ratified by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution and the new paragraph 18 has been added to the Fourth Schedule, this Ordinance has had the effect of law notwithstanding the fact that it was void ab initio, and despite the fact that it was not laid before Parliament under Article 93(2).

I would in this context like to raise three basic questions for the consideration of my learned friend as well as the other members of the legal community and the concerned citizens interested in the constitutional governance.

Firstly, to understand the meaning, purport and the context of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution, before making any comment or relying upon the subsequent insertion therein of certain illegal and unconstitutional acts and instruments for validation. The 4th Schedule is a schedule which was annexed to the original Constitution by the framers of this sacred parchment adopted by the constituent Assembly by the exercise of its plenary power. Certain transitional and temporary provision set out in the Schedule like those provided in any other new Constitution (i.e. Indian Constitution or in 1956 Constitution of Pakistan) were protected. Those laws and the holders of office were given continuity notwithstanding any other provisions of this Constitution. Article 150 appears as the last part (Part XIX) of the Constitution under the heading MISCELLANEOUS which reads as follows:

"The transitional and temporary provisions set out in the Fourth Schedule shall have effect notwithstanding any other provisions of this Constitution."

Obviously the laws and validation as was necessary was for transitional and temporary purpose fixed in the schedule for the purpose of their continuity till the Constitution comes into the full play. Once it has come into operation there is scope for any other transition nor validation thereof.

The Original Fourth Schedule

related to the protection of electoral rolls and the existing delimitation of constituencies already prepared during the pre-Constitutional days and for protecting all the laws passed since 26th March, 1972 and for continuation of the power and the office of the President and of those holding other constitutional offices and those in the public services, providing for continuity of taxation, audit and for interim financial arrangements, vesting of property, assets, rights and the liabilities of the Republic and the provision for the adaptation of laws and the removal of difficulties in order to bring the provision of laws in force into conformity with the Constitution.

The object of giving those saving and powers to bring about the order and continuity so that everything can conform to the Constitution but not to break the Constitution. So by looking at Article 150 and the Fourth Schedule, it is very clear that laws which were protected were a one shot legislation. It is time bound for the period starting from 26th March, 1971 till

The most fundamental of all fundamentals of the Constitution is that all powers belonging to the people, their exercise can only be made by the people and to be effective only under and by the authority of this Constitution, and the constitution being the supreme law, the other law to that extent of the inconsistencies is void. Therefore, the Fifth Amendment and the Seventh Amendment, both being violative of the constitutional continuity and being inconsistent with the Constitution cannot be validated by mere insertion of some Martial Law Formans in the Fourth Schedule.

the new Parliament started functioning and the Constitution came into full swing. This is merely a transitional and temporary provision. The Constitution never contemplated, nor it can that there would be another method of governance through.

Unconstitutional means or that such steps or act could ever be validated. Otherwise the whole efficacy and the credibility of the Constitution will be jeopardised. Therefore, Article 150 is limited within itself. It cannot give validity of any other law not to talk of those which were promulgated or enacted in manner other than the procedure prescribed by the Constitution and being in violation of the Constitution.

Hence by amending the Schedule or by inserting any provision given to any unconstitutional law it cannot validate any act or law which is otherwise invalid. The savings as were given under Article 150 refer to Fourth Schedule classifying then as list as specific and unalterable are the usual temporary and transitional provisions attached to any new Constitution. (i.e. Indian Constitution or Pakistan 1456 Constitution both transiting from 1935 Act and 1947 Indian Independence Act).

Therefore, there is no scope for a new insertion purporting to undermine the Constitution itself and thus attempting to put the clock back in history. The constitutional supremacy is the basis of our governance which

is provided as follows under Article 7:

All powers in the Republic belong to the people, and their exercise on behalf of the people shall be effected only under, and by the authority of, this Constitution." (Article 7(1))

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It is indeed violative of the very concept of the constitution that the Ordinance be allowed to supersede or dilute the constitutional provision in any manner.

Even during the days of colonial regime when there was no Constitution in existence, provision of the central legisla-

ture i.e. Defence of India Act was not allowed to be altered by the Ordinance-making power. It was thus held in *Srinath Vs. Porter by Calcutta High Court (AIR 1943 CAL 377)* that "When one legislative authority which is representative and democratic in form has expressed its will in the enactment, that will may not be nullified by introducing into the enactment, an expression of the will of another legislative authority which consists of one individual, e.g. the Governor General, who is the supreme head of the executive, and who must necessarily be constantly included by considerations of executive expediency. To permit the Governor General to vary, by direct alteration, an enactment which expresses the will of the Indian Legislature, in order to put the self-proclaimed killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members including women and children above the reach of law. What can be more malafide, grotesque and most perverse a motive than this to abet murder and genocide."

The creation of such an instrument is a crime itself, as it is a clear abatement to crime and to give protection to the crime and the killers is also crime.

Such a motive can never be validated if an iota of conscience and consistency is left with our Constitution and all that we trust as part of our basic commitment as a nation.

It was so said by Chief Justice Chandra Chud of India in a

judgement delivered by a Constitutional Bench of the Indian Supreme Court consisting of Mr. Justice Bhagwati and Mr. Justice Desai "As regards Article 14, 19 and 21 being reduced to a dead letter" (equivalent to our Article 27, 32 and other fundamental freedom contained in the chapter on Fundamental Rights), we are unable to appreciate how an Ordinance which is subject to the same constraints as a law made by the legislature can in its practical operation, result in the obliteration of those Article."

To even suggest that Fifth validated the Indemnity Ordinance is to suggest that the basic structure of our Constitution, the Rule of Law and the security of life and body and all the other fundamental freedom has been reduced to dead letter.

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ultra vires his powers. Such a provision would be illegal and would be discarded by Courts, on the principle that he would thereby be able to extend his power to make laws, which making Parliament never intended for him."

Fourthly, Ordinance as in any other Constitution is a temporary law and same is also and perhaps more so under our Constitution as Article 93(2) clearly and specifically provides that:

"An Ordinance made under Clause (2) shall be laid before Parliament at its first meeting following the promulgation of the Ordinance and shall, unless it is earlier repealed, cease to have effect at the expiration of thirty days after it is so laid, or if a resolution disapproving of the Ordinance is passed by Parliament before such expiration, upon the passing of the resolution."

Even if Barrister Rafiqul Haque is right that the Fifth Amendment has succeeded in validating the Ordinance, which I do not think it can, for a second such validation does not in any case confer the longevity of the law beyond the time the Ordinance can give. So even if the Ordinance is validated, it could not have prolonged its immortality or the longevity beyond the first session of the next Parliament.

particularly when the Constitution clearly states that it will come to an end on the expiration of 30 days after it is so laid. The Ordinance under our Constitution is a temporary law. It can be promulgated only when Parliament stands dissolved or is not in session, and when immediate action is necessary to legislate. Such law according to our Constitution must come to an end within thirty days of the first meeting following the promulgation.

Barrister Rafiqul Haque tends to suggest that the Ordinance which is protected under the Fifth and Seventh Amendments would not meet that mortal destiny though such claim is not made even by the Fifth and Seventh Amendments themselves. As to the question of laying down the ordinance in Parliament, Mr. AK Brohi in his book entitled "Fundamental Law of Pakistan" writes as follows:

"The question that arises for interpretation upon the language of ART 69(2) and 102(2) may be stated as follows: Is it the mandatory requirement of the Constitution that the Ordinance be laid before the Assembly? What happens if the Ordinance is not laid before the Assembly? Does it cease to operate as a law on the first day of the Assembly session, or is it that it continues to be the law till six weeks have elapsed from the first date of the meeting of the Assembly next after its promulgation? The answer to this question depends on whether the requirement of the Constitution is regarded as being an imperative or a mere directory provision. It is submitted that in the present author's view, the requirement of the Constitution is mandatory and that every Ordinance that is not laid before the relevant Assembly dies on the first day of the session of that Assembly. The period of six weeks' life is admissible to such an Ordinance only when it is actually laid before the relevant Assembly."

THE INDIAN BUDGET A Brief Review

Arun Ghosh writes from New Delhi

THE union budget has basically three important roles to play. First, it must ensure short term balance in the economy (and avoid inflation). Secondly, it must provide the thrust for economic development with equity. Thirdly, it must ensure that it is a means for transferring resources from the Centre to the States, which is its Constitutional responsibility, because the elastic revenues are essentially within the jurisdiction of the Centre while the development of the countryside is primarily the responsibility of the State governments.

This brief essay cannot be expected to cover all the above aspects of the 1996-97 Budget. Only some illustrations can be given, in regard to the likely impact of (a) the pattern of revenue raising, (b) the thrust in regard to expenditure, and (c) the transfers to the States.

In regard to revenue raising, three points need to be mentioned. First, the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) was certainly overdue, though it is essentially a revival of earlier provisions in regard to depreciation allowances permitted to corporate bodies, which had of late been given the go-by. Indeed, even the Finance Minister acknowledged that this would affect some 1500 corporate bodies. One must also note that the MAT works out effectively to a mere 12 per cent of the book profits to be paid as taxes — as against the corporate tax rate officially stated to be 46 per cent of profits till last year — while many companies have been declaring dividends of 40 to 80 per cent, and paying no tax at all.

One must also realise that the very high rate of dividends declared has been one of the factors that have been driving up the rate of interest in the country to unconscionable levels.

While the Finance Minister deserves bouquets for plugging this loophole — for some of the fastest growing companies have not been paying any tax — it must be added that he has done little to collect more revenues from re-enter income earners, or to really punish the habitual tax evader.

To cite but one example, avoidance of the tax on interest income has become endemic

through the 'splitting' of deposits. Why can the interest tax not be compulsorily deducted from all interest incomes at source? Also, since interest rates in India are extortionate — the prime lending rate in Japan is a mere 1.6 per cent against 17 per cent in India — why could the Finance Minister not order a reduction in all lending and deposit rates, offset by a small, compulsory, additional interest tax? That alone would have netted thousands of crores of revenue, at the same time bringing relief to all producers, without any adverse impact on savings.

The need for the raising of resources is obvious. We need significantly more public investment for the development of infrastructure. Even Adam Smith — the main inspiration behind the present day advocates of a 'free market' economy — had said that infrastructure development was one of the 'Duties of the Sovereign' or the 'Commonwealth'.

The continued whine for external capital to develop infrastructure is pitiable. There are two types of infrastructure — the first type of infrastructure — like roads, powers, irrigation, and the like require very large funds the direct returns on and the investments are low. (In fact, that is essentially the case for planning). If these facilities are to be constructed by private enterprise, what is the rate of return that we need to provide to the investor? The experience of the past four years in regard to power projects promoted by foreigners should open our eyes to this problem. A rate of Rs. 5 or more per unit to the power generators will totally cripple the State Electricity Boards, which are already running losses of Rs 12000-14000 crores per year. We have not even considered the recommendations of the NDC subcommittee (headed by Sharad Pawar) in regard to the need to make the SEBs viable by raising tariffs for agricultural use and for domestic consumption of power. A relatively modest increase could easily release the Rs 12000-14000 crores — currently lost annually — for making the required investments for power development.

The second type of infrastructure — like telecommunica-

tion — is less than 6 per cent when the Finance Secretary has gone on record to say that the increase in inflation during the year may be expected to be around 6 to 7 per cent. How will the States meet the additional liability that will arise as a result of the 5th Pay Commission recommendations? How will they meet any need for development expenditure?

To conclude, the Budget appears to have ducked the crucial issue of resource raising for development. Instead, by relying heavily on external resources for development, the 1996-97 Budget has opened up the Indian economy to fresh dangers of external imbalance, which is typified by the trade deficit of \$7 billion in 1995-96 (vide Economic Survey update), and net remittance of investment income of \$4.5 billion. But that is another story.

— Mandira

Table 1: Expenditure on Rural Development and Employment (Rs in Crore)

	1995-96 (Revised)	1996-97 (Budget)
IRDP	640	640
TRYSEM and other self-employment schemes	895	895
JAY	2955	1865
Other employment assurance schemes	1816	1970

Table 2: Transfers from the Centre to States and UTs (Rs in crore)

	1995-96	1996-97
1. Central Assistance for State & UT Plans	19854	21972
2. Loans to States and UTs against Small Savings	10112	11000
3. All other grants and loans	1111	814
Total	31077	33786
Less:		
4. Interest received from States	(-) 13131	(-) 15112
5. Recoveries of loans and advances from States	(-) 5350	(-) 5360
6. Net transfers to State	12596	13314

Finally, we come to the problem of transfers to States. Some transfers are compulsory (under the Constitution). Apart from transfer under \$275(1) of the Constitution, and transfers of income taxes and excise duties — as recommended by the Finance Commission — which are mandatory, take all other transfers; the net impact would be clear from Table 2.

The net increase on total transfers is less than 6 per cent when the Finance Secretary has gone on record to say that the increase in inflation during the year may be expected to be around 6 to 7 per cent. How will the States meet the additional liability that will arise as a result of the 5th Pay Commission recommendations? How will they meet any need for development expenditure?

To conclude, the Budget appears to have ducked the crucial issue of resource raising for development. Instead, by relying heavily on external resources for development, the 1996-97 Budget has opened up the Indian economy to fresh dangers of external imbalance, which is typified by the trade deficit of \$7 billion in 1995-96 (vide Economic Survey update), and net remittance of investment income of \$4.5 billion. But that is another story.

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Monday 26th 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
3:10 Quran Programme Summary
3:15 Cartoon Film: Mowgli 3:45 Drama series: *Releasac* of Selected Dramas 4:00 News in Bangla 4:45 Rumhug 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Nazrul Songs 5:50 Sports Programme 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Tarunnya 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Shuk-Dhuker Nadi 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthattha 10:35 Sukher Tikana. 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 in 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: Jeremy Clarkson's *Motorworld* 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Raymond's *Blanc Mange* 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05 Correspondent 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC News: South Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: The Sky At Night 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 The Money Programme 1:50 Earth Report 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report 24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newsnight

CHANNEL V

6:00 Frame by Frame 7:00

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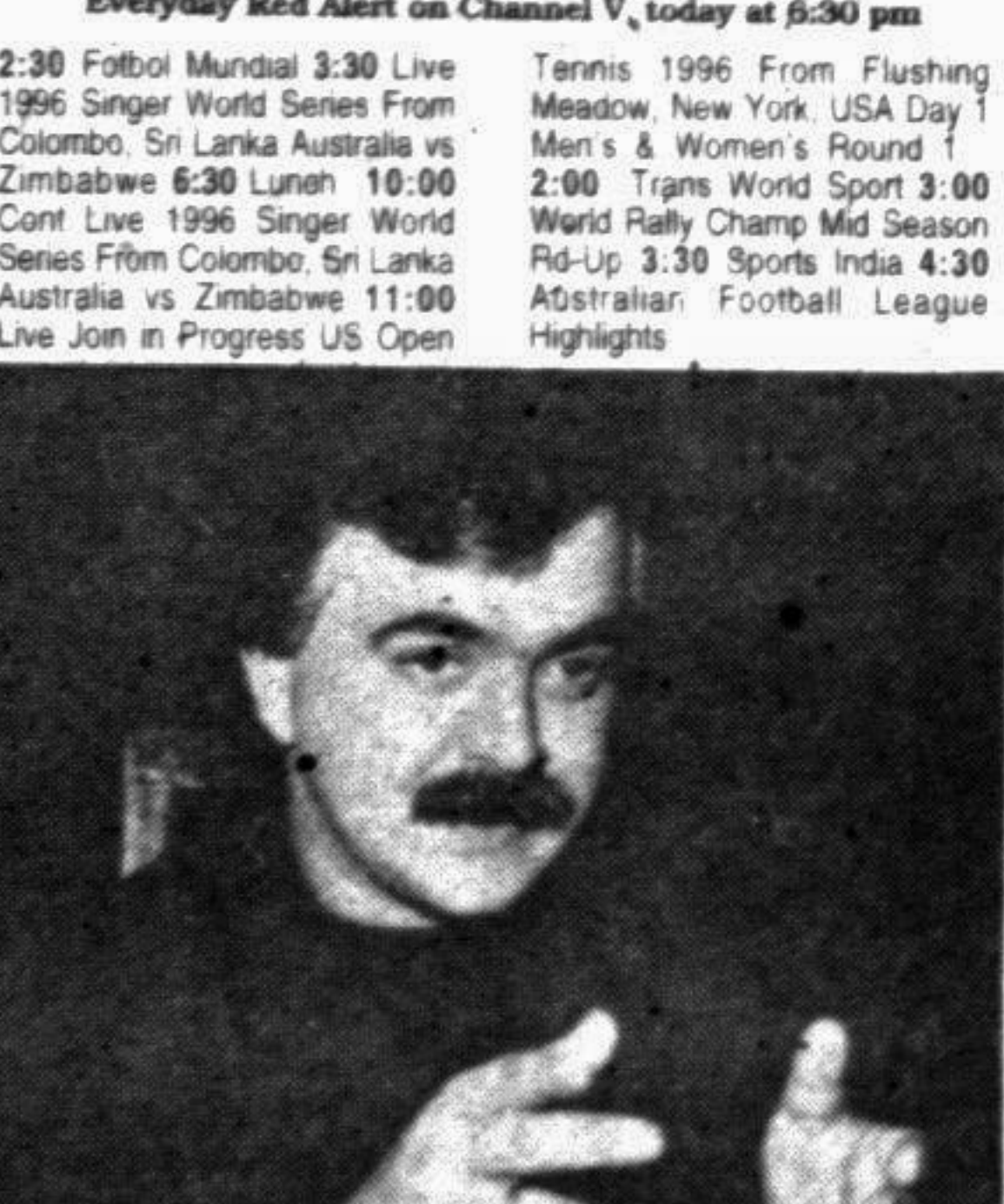
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CHANNEL V

6:00 Frame by Frame 7:00



Everyday Red Alert on Channel V, today at 6:30 pm



This Week That Year on Star Movies, tonight at 9:30

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Film Club: 100 Yrs Of Cinema: Typically British 15: 8:30 Film Club: Martin and Lewis. Total Filmaker PG 9:30 Western: The Legend of the Lone Ranger 15: (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Family King of the Wind Adventure 13: (Hindi Subtitles) 13:30 Family: Just Ask For Diamond 12: (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Family: Falsely Accused (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Adventure: Lone Wolf 7:30 Film: Fiction: Gulliver's Travels PG (Hindi Subtitles) 9:30 Extreme Close Up: 9:30 This Week That Year 10:00 Comedy: Love Potion 15? (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 World Cinema: A 15 (English Subtitles) 1:30 Film Club: Fun 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 3:30 Thriller: The Vanishing 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Action: Article 99 18 (Arabic Subtitles)

ZEE TV

5:30 Sunai 6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 9:30 Dream Merchants 9:00 Hum Zameen 9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00 Seilab 10:30 Positive Health Show 11:00 Apsa Ghar/Dak Ghar 11:30 Gopaljee 12:00 Suno Suno Tring Tring 12:30 Celeste 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Ship 2:30 Tara 3:00 Film Chakkar 3:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindagi 4:00 Mano Ya Na Mano 4:30 Lijlat Khana Khazana 5:00 ZED 5:30 Akbar Birbal 6:00 Cartoons 6:30 Love Stories 7:00 ZED 7:30 Gaane Anjaane 8:00 TMKB 8:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 9:30 Campus 10:00 Daraz 10:30 The News 11:00 No Problem 11:30 Close Up Antakshya 12:00 Parivartan 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9 Maibabar Hills 1:30 Tumhare Lye 2:00 Commander 2:30 TMM 4:00 Index 4:30 All out 5:00 Jagran

PTV

8:00 am Tiwari Aur Tajmala/Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabran 8:45 Ab Pal Chala 9:05 Khat Farmaish 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Itaa-Bil-Quiza Pakistan 10:05 Shab Dagh 10:35 English Film: Gool Troop 10:55 Milli Naghma 11:00 Khabran 11:10 The Saint (Roger Moor) 12:00

SONY ET

8:30am Yaadon Ki Baarat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Raja Rani Aur Joker 11:00 Sunday Ki Sunday (Serial) 11:30 Cine Melrose-Hindi Feature Film 2:30 Kismet 3:00 Zamin Aasma 3:30 Mere Message Meri Geet 4:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 4:30 The Raasi Show 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Mere Message Meri Geet 6:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Taak Jaan 9:00 Dekh Tamasha Dekh 9:30 Yah Sadi Nahi Ho Sakti 10:00 Chamatkar (Drama Serial) 10:30 Cine Prime-Hindi Feature Film 1:30 Mere Message Meri Geet 2:00 Yaadon Ki Baarat 2:30 Closed

TOM and JERRY



DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Educ Prog 11:00 Naurupgeeti 11:15 Folk Songs 12:30 Ek Silpi Onk Gaan 1:00 Janani 2:30 Ek Onk Sultan 3:00 Gaan Nive Darpan 3:30 Ishra 5:05 Nepali Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Dash Bhedher Khela 6:00 Palli Katha 6:30 Batayan 6:55 Arath 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dinman 8:00 Dik Darshan 8:45 Saptahiki 9:00 Janani 9:30 Pracheer 10:00 Bengali Movie Club: Film Show 1:00 Closed

EL TV

00:30am R D Burman Special

DD 7

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