

INTERVIEW

Resignation is Not a Solution

— Arefin Siddique

Dr A A M S Arefin Siddique joined the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka in 1980 and was the chairman of the department from 1993 to 1996. A science graduate from Dhaka College, he did his master's in journalism from the University of Dhaka in 1977 and went on to obtain PhD from the University of Mysore, India in 1986. His area of specialisation is Interpersonal Communication and Instructional Communication. In 1989, he went to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA as a visiting fellow.

A former member of DU Syndicate, Dr Siddique who is a member of the DU Senate too, is the General Secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA). With a view to giving fillip to the on-going process of ensuring peace on the campus. The Daily Star interviewed Dr Siddique for an insider's view on the issue. Following are excerpts from the interview conducted by Fakrul Islam Chowdhury.

The Daily Star (DS): Please tell us what would you like to see as the top priority of the new VC?

Arefin Siddique (AS): The first thing the new VC is expected to do is to take necessary steps to restore a congenial academic atmosphere at Dhaka University. The two main purposes of the university are providing proper education for the students and conducting research. So, the priority should be to ensure a favourable academic environment to pursue knowledge. And in the present context of DU to ensure a suitable academic atmosphere, the VC must ensure improvement in the law and order situation prevailing on the campus.

DS: As the chief executive of Dhaka University what qualities should a VC have?

AS: Firmness in maintaining utmost neutrality. On several occasions in the past we saw VCs failed to maintain neutrality. The administrative neutrality is a must to continue a peaceful and favourable academic environment. One hopes, the new VC will have strong will and courage and would not wilt under pressure for compromise on the administrative neutral-

ity. If utmost neutrality could be maintained from the executive side, many of the problems now faced by the university would be automatically solved.

DS: Why this neutrality could not be maintained?

AS: For various reasons. Generally speaking, vested interest has always been the biggest enemy of neutrality. Sometimes it is personal interest, sometimes it is political and sometimes it is social identity.

DS: Do you think the ex-VCs did not have the required firmness to maintain administrative neutrality?

AS: I don't want to say this directly, because we are all colleagues, you know, but what I would say is that, firmness was wanting. You should understand from this what I mean. If firmness was there we could have avoided the problems that we are facing now.

DS: Are you saying that if VCs were firm enough and were neutral, pressures from different vested quarters would have not been able to tell on the congenial academic atmosphere on the campus?

AS: Exactly. Because you should remember the position of the VC of Dhaka University is an elected one and ours is an autonomous body. No one can force the VC to do anything. Even government cannot terminate him, once he has been elected. My question is: despite holding such a strong position why couldn't the VC maintain VCs' firmness? VCs need not yield under any pressure.

DS: Can Syndicate or Senate or any other body of the university terminate the VC?

AS: There is no directive on this matter in our University Ordinance. But no one can terminate VC on any trifling matter. According to the Dhaka University Ordinance, we appoint him as VC for four years and until his tenure expires no one can terminate him without strong reason.

DS: Then, is VC accountable to the Senate?

AS: In theory, yes, but in practice — no. Because according to the Ordinance, VC is accountable to the Senate. But if you study the minutes of several Senate sessions of Dhaka University you will find that during the reign of the former VC, a number of times there were incidents when he ignored the democratic norms and did not

bother about accountability to the Senate.

DS: Why could not the Senate do anything about it?

AS: Sometimes he had majority support from the Senate and on other occasions he made light of it through sheer autocracy.

DS: What is the power of the Chancellor?

AS: The overall controlling authority lies with the Chancellor.

DS: Is VC accountable to the Chancellor?

AS: Yes he is.

DS: Why can't the President of the Republic as the Chancellor do something about it when it comes to the autocratic behaviour of any VC?

AS: Though the Chancellor is the overall controlling authority, the convention is that he does not interfere. The guiding spirit of the University Ordinance was that the VCs would be accountable to their conscience.

DS: Can you tell us what the Enquiry Committees, usually formed after untoward incidents on the campus, do? Do they file any report? Has any action at all been taken on the recommendations, if any, of those reports?

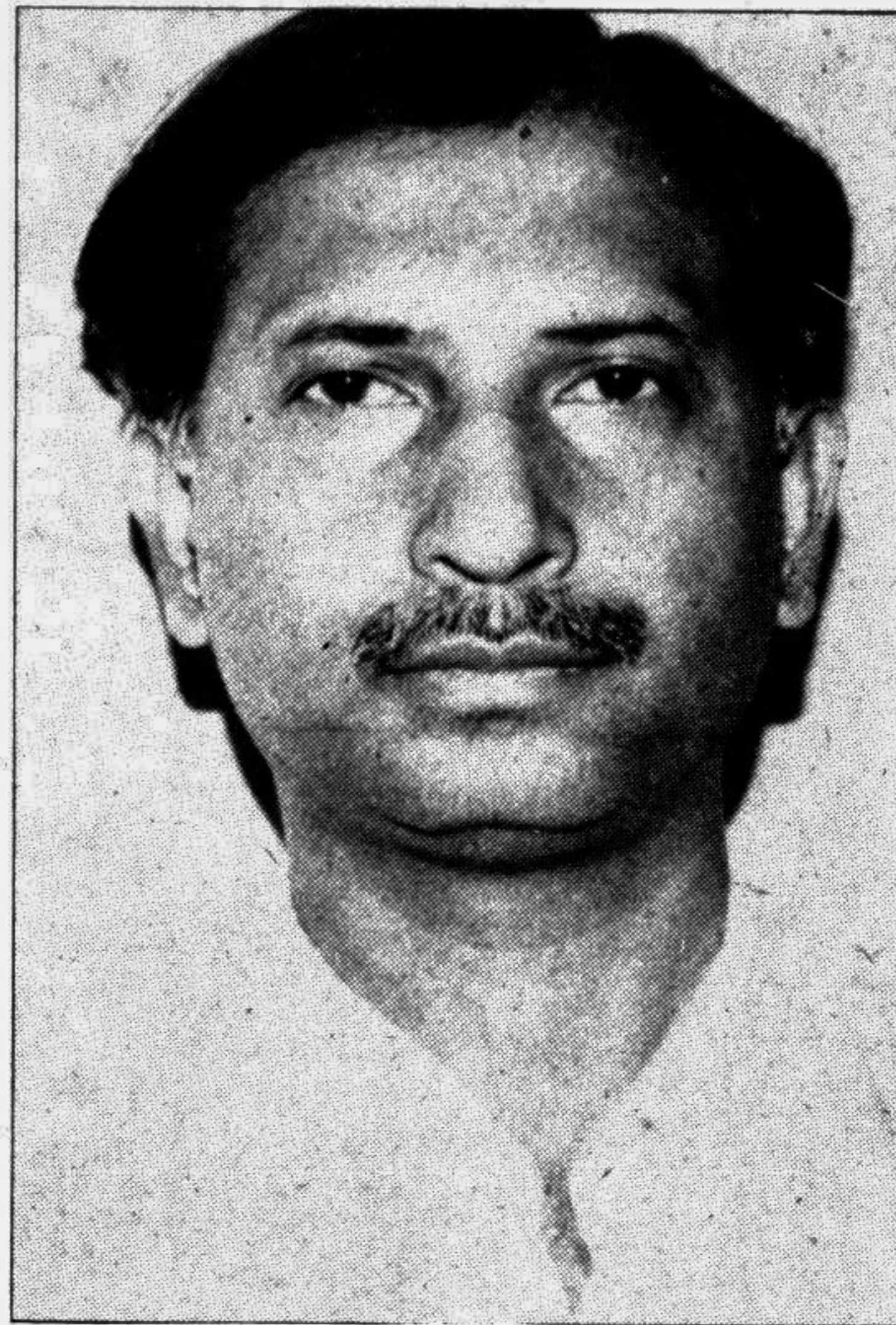
AS: Let me just cite two personal examples. On the 11th of April, 1991, a terrorist threatened me with my life, an enquiry committee was formed after that incident as usual. But I don't know whether it filed any report. No report was published, this much I can tell. And in 1994, a group of terrorists attacked my office when I was working inside. No report has been submitted yet on that incident too. Though, as usual, the formation of an enquiry committee immediately followed the incident.

DS: What about the Enquiry Committee on the Jagannath Hall incident?

AS: I don't know anything about it. No report has been published yet, this much I can tell.

DS: What happened when the enquiry committee submitted their report on the infamous attack on female students' procession? Did the university take any action? Or was any report submitted at all?

AS: I don't remember whether or not any report was submitted. But I don't think any



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He could have taken some initiative to solve the crisis before tendering his resignation.

which are used during the gun-fights usually come from the nearby areas and are returned to their sources once the battle is over. It is also learnt from the informed sources that both the rival factions often rent these arms from the same outside sources in exchange of a certain amount of money. I don't know whether it is true or false. But one thing is for sure if the sources of the arms and ammunition cannot be stopped, mere raids into the residential halls will not bring any result.

DS: Do you think DUCSU election should be immediately held?

AS: Yes. Because new leadership will not grow among the students if DUCSU elections are not held regularly. Practice of a democratic culture within and among the students' organisations depend much on a gradual development of the new leadership. Without regular DUCSU election, one cannot expect the development of new leadership.

DS: Does the present DUCSU have any legitimacy?

AS: You have to take two things into consideration before coming to any conclusion on this point. First, according to the DUCSU regulation, DUCSU executive body will remain in the office until the next DUCSU election is held. In that sense, the present DUCSU has legitimacy. But on the other hand, no one can hold any position in the DUCSU if his or her studentship expires. In that sense, most of the present DUCSU leadership has lost legitimacy. The present VP Amanullah Aman, MP, and GS Khairul Kabir Khokon both have long lost their status as students. So questions can be raised about the legitimacy of the present DUCSU. Anyway, a fresh election for DUCSU is long over due.

DS: How do you respond to the resignation of the former VC?

AS: Resignation is not a solution. He could have taken some initiative to solve the crisis before tendering his resignation.

DS: What do you think of the 10-point peace agreement brokered by the acting VC?

AS: It's a good attempt. I hope all the students' organisations concerned will honour this contract. They have a great responsibility now. The leaders as well as the activists of the students' organisations have shown maturity by signing this contract. Now all quarters should be alert so that peace prevails on the campus.

DS: How would you evaluate the activities of the present acting VC?

AS: He has been there only for a short time. There is not much to say. All I can say is that he has taken some initiative and we all extended our support to restore a congenial academic atmosphere.

DS: Can the present VC conditions concerned will honour this contract. They have a great responsibility now. The leaders as well as the activists of the students' organisations have shown maturity by signing this contract. Now all quarters should be alert so that peace prevails on the campus.

AS: So far I know, they did not take any previous permission. You see, there are a lot of rules and regulations but the important thing is to implement them. The university came to a standstill recently. So, we have started a process. A process, hopefully, which will lead us to a congenial academic environment. Then gradually we hope all the provisions, rules and regulations will start to be implemented. Let us all hope that the present peaceful situation is retained for some time.

DS: Thank you very much for your time.



A campus scene! It should not be like this. — Star photo

stringent action was taken against anybody. Because if it was, it would have been published by the media.

DS: What about the enquiry committees formed with a view to investigating in the murders that took place in the university during last two decades?

AS: To put it simply, a good number of the enquiry committees did not submit any report, and even when some did, the reports in most cases were not published. And it was not known if actions were taken against those who were found responsible.

DS: Do you agree this practice encourages unlawful activities?

AS: You may say so.

DS: Why enquiry committees do not work seriously?

AS: Because there is a tendency on the part of the university authority to suppress the unlawful activities by turning a blind eye to those incidents. Sometimes, they thought if things were probed in and those responsible were to be punished, the situation might deteriorate further. Sometimes they bent under pressure from various vested quarters. Sometimes, it was just banal optimism that things would improve with time. The essence of all this is procrastination.

DS: Who comprise the enquiry committees?

AS: Usually the representatives of the university authority.

DS: If they do not submit any report, can any action be taken against them?

AS: I think the point here should be, we must make the enquiry committees effective. Otherwise these committees are meaningless.

DS: Who is responsible for the inefficiency of these committees?

AS: Senate or Syndicate do not come into consideration in this respect. The VC is responsible, because it is to him the enquiry committees are accountable.

DS: There is a tendency on the part of the university authority to suppress the unlawful activities by turning a blind eye to those incidents.

DS: Who you think is responsible for not making the enquiry committee effective?

AS: The university administration.

DS: Tell us specifically.

AS: The VC.

DS: Are you blaming any particular VC or are you speaking in general?

AS: I am speaking in general.

DS: Why the police fail to recover arms and ammunition from the residential halls?

AS: Because terrorists do not keep arms and ammunition in the dormitories nowadays. Most of the arms come from outside. Arms and ammunition

are used during the gun-fights usually come from the nearby areas and are returned to their sources once the battle is over. It is also learnt from the informed sources that both the rival factions often rent these arms from the same outside sources in exchange of a certain amount of money. I don't know whether it is true or false. But one thing is for sure if the sources of the arms and ammunition cannot be stopped, mere raids into the residential halls will not bring any result.

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DS: Can the present VC

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Saturday 14th September (All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes).

BTV

3:00pm Opening Announcement: Al-Quran Programme summary 3:10 Recitation from the Tripitak 3:15 Movie of the Week 4:00 News in Bangla 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Bannor: Folk Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla 6:05 Shamachar 6:30 Moner Mukure 7:00 News in English 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Math-o-Manush: Programme based on Agricultural Development 9:00 Shara Nadir Banka 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthakatika: Health Programme 10:35 Drama Series: Dynasty 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tomorrow's programme summary 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC World News 6:20 Britain in View 7:00 BBC World News 7:10 Newsnight 8:00 BBC World News 8:20 Window On Europe 9:00 BBC World News 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:20 Whicker's World: A Taste Of Spain 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 Window On Europe 12:00am BBC World News 12:05 Heart Of The Matter 1:00 BBC World News 1:05 White Heat 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 4:00 BBC World News 4:05 Britain 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 Britain in View 5:50 Earth Report 6:00pm BBC World News 6:05 BBC Global Report: USA 7:00 BBC World News 7:20 This Week 8:00 BBC World News 8:30 Time Out: Building Signs 9:00 BBC World News 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Airport 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 This Week 12:00am BBC World News 12:20 Whicker's World: A Taste Of Spain 1:00 BBC World News 1:05 Horizon 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Jeremy Clarkson's Motor World 3:00 BBC World News 3:25 Window On Europe 4:00 BBC World News 4:25 This



V J Sophiya On Channel V at 3:30 PM Today

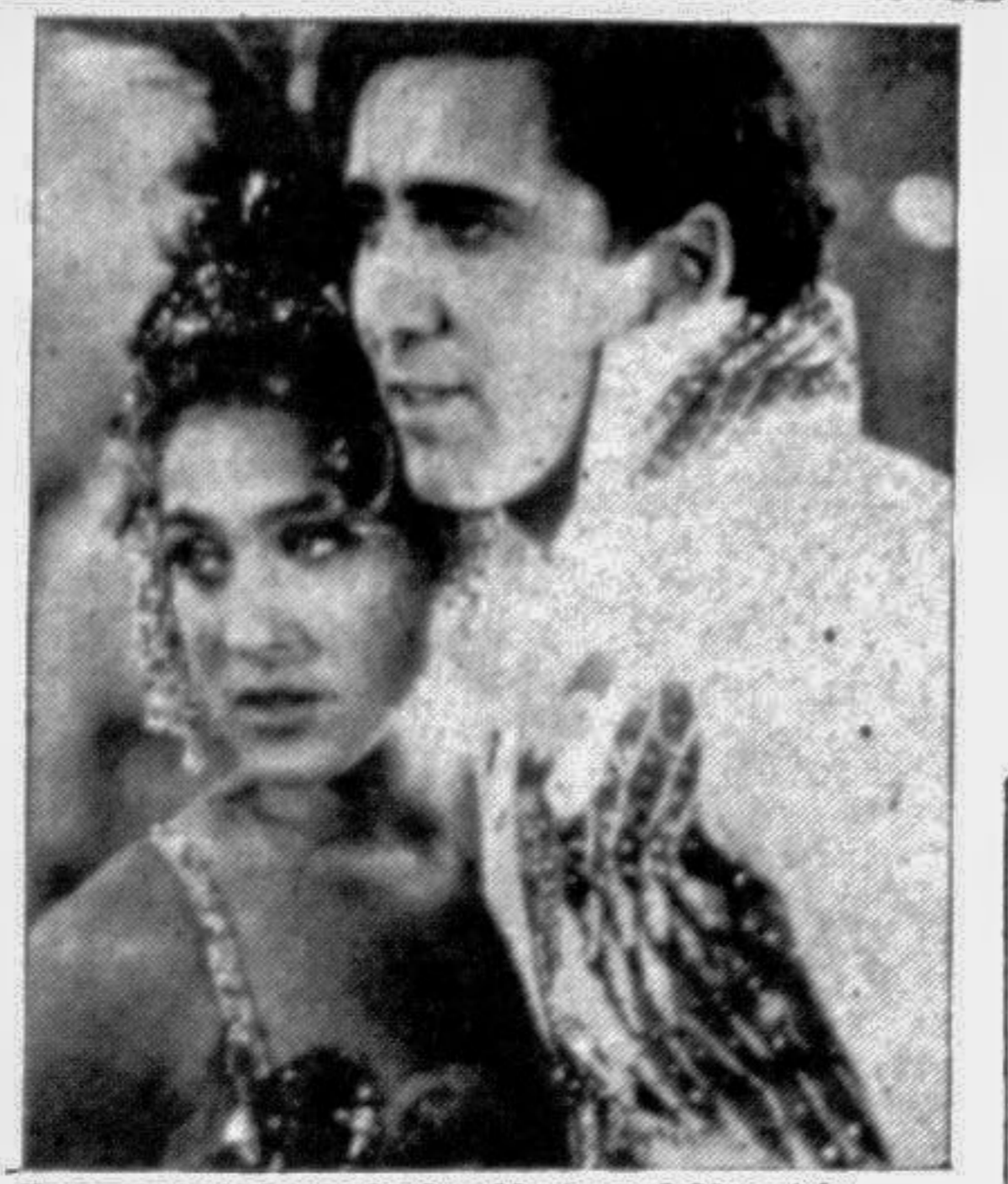
Week 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 Whicker's World: A Taste Of Spain

CHANNEL V

6:00am Frame by Frame 7:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Frame by Frame 8:30 Asian Top 20 VJ Nonie 10:30 Big Bang Week-end VJ Alessandra 12:30am Billboard US: Countdown 2:30 The Ride VJ Trey 3:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 4:30 House Of Noise VJ Luke 5:30 [V] 1's 6:00pm Classic Rock 7:00 Top of the Pops 8:00 BPL Oye! 9:00 The Ticket 9:30 Palmolive Extra 10:00 Time Pass 10:30 Rewind 11:00 V Spot 12:00am Big Bang VJ Alessandra 12:30 The Ticket 1:00 Over The Edge VJ Sophiya 2:00 Music Update Tokyo 2:30 The Ride VJ Trey 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 V Spot

STAR PLUS

6:30am Voltron 7:00 Kids Movie Gulliver's Travels 8:00 Around the World in 80 Days 8:30 Count Duckula 9:00 Sabar Rider & The Star Sheriff 9:30 Zoolite With Jack 10:00 Katts & Dog 10:30 Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea 11:30 The Wild



Honeymoon in Vegas On Star Movies at 9:30 tonight

PGA Tour Presidents Cup Day 2 4:00 World Cup Classic Matches Argentina v Peru 1978

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Comedy: The Night Before 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Musical: Mother Wore Tights PG (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Classic: The Seven Year Itch PG (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Adventure: The Trial 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Film Club Saturday The 14th 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:00 Film Club: Dottie Gets Sparked 5:30 Family Dutch PG (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Comedy: The Woman in Red 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 The Preview 9:30 Globetrotting Las Vegas, Honeymoon in Vegas 15 (English Subtitles) 12:00 Thriller Pacific Heights 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Fright Night: Sister, Sister 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Film Club Death in Brunswick 7 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Horror: Hellcracker 18 (Hindi Subtitles)

EL TV

00:30 Mein Nashe Mein Hoon 01:30 Bacche Man Ke 02:30 Chad Chad 03:30 Devotional 04:30 Tarane 05:30 Mein Nashe Mein Hoon 06:30 Bacche Man Ke 07:30 Chad Chad 08:30 Devotional 09:30 Tarane 10:30 Dear E11:10 Ontam Hi Thi Hi Hai 11:30 Karz 12:00 Teen Do Paanch 12:30 Fauji 01:00 Hit Pairs 02:00 Rajesh Khanna Special 3:00 V3+ 3:30 Ajnabi 4:30 Nukkad 5:00 Ka-

maal Combination 05:30 Mein Nashe Mein Hoon 6:30 Sharmi Kapoor Special 7:30 Upanyas 8:00 Men Marz 8:20 Haseen Pal 8:30 Its My Choice 9:00 Kam 9:30 Kai Bhi Aaj Bhi 10:00 People's Club 10:30 Stand By 10:40 Liberty Public Demand 11:30 Ten Thi Chup 12:00 Hee Hee Ha Ha

PTV

8:00am Tilawat Aur Tarjuma/Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabrain 8:45 Visitors Book 9:10 Phool Khushboo 9:25 Dastarkhwan 9:40 Mehman 10:05 Aap Ki Anwar

Magsood 10:30 English Film Tarzan 10:55 Milk Naghma 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Meri Pasand 11:35 Janun 12:55 Quran-E-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 Grind 2:05 Lazwal Ep-43 2:55 Husool-E-Insaf & Sports Coaching 3:20 TV Encyclopaedia 3:40 Sports Time 4:05 Daastakar 5:05 Medicine 5:25 Computers 6:20 Aduq Courses 7:00 English News 7:20 PTV Music Library 7:30 Virsa Pakistan 7:55 Ghazali Us Nave Saree 8:25 Dentonic World Of Sports 8:45 Anita 9:00 Break No Problem 9:30 Paribartan 10:00 Guldasta 10:30 The News 11:00 Ghoomba Aaina 11:30 HFF - Sharafat Chod Di Manie 1:30 Colgate Gel Yoodle Yo 2:00 Arabic Programme 2:30 TMM 4:00 Gharoonda 4:30 Through The Gears 5:00 Ja-

Film Khas Khabrain-Close Down

SONY ET

8:30am Kuch Dil Ne Kaha 9:00 Yaadon Ki Baaraat 9:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 12:30 Chamatkar 1:00 Siddhi 1:30 Kaash 2:00 Sunday Ki Sunday 2:30 The Nirlep Khoyi Show 3:00 Khoya Khoya Chand 3:30 Movie Mania 4:30 Humse Barkar Gong 5:00 Rangela 5:30 Mere Message Meri Geet 6:00 Aama 6:30 Video CD Premier 7:00 Good Show 7:30 Jai Bir Humar 8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Cine Prime-Hindi

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Movie Club Film 1:00 Move Club Film 1:00 Nirjan Dupure Premier Gaan (Magazine) 1:30 Nier Sange Dekha 2:00 Pralithing-2:30 Bandhu Chale Bhalo 3:00 Kemon Aachen 3:30 Comedy Quiz 4:25 Movie Club Film 5:00 Jishu 5:30 Nier

ZEE CINEMA

06:30 Tarana 08:00 Film 10:45 Off Screen 11:15 Film 02:00 Ikke Pe Ikke 02:30 Film 5:15 Songs 06:00 Film 08:45 Box Office 09:30 Film 12:15 Trailers 12:30 Film 03:15 Songs 03:45 Film

Sange Dekha 6:00 Nirjan Dupure Premier Gaan 6:30 Pralithing-2:00 Nandanik 7:30 Bangla Sambad 8:00 Dhtang Dhtang Bole 8:30 UJALA-Surer Asar 9:00 TBA 9:25 Classical Music 10:00 Drama 10:30 News and Bengali Samb d

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06:30 Tarana 08:00 Film 10:45 Off Screen 11:15 Film 02:00 Ikke Pe Ikke 02:30 Film 5:15 Songs 06:00 Film 08:45 Box Office 09:30 Film 12:15 Trailers 12:30 Film 03:15 Songs 03:45 Film

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