

Khulna, A City of Shattered Dreams, Getting Poorer Day by Day

Text and photographs by K R Zakhmi



Teenage Irina : Acrobatic tricks

admission in colleges after passing the SSC examination due to non-availability of seats in colleges. Their parents who mostly belong to lower middle class group cannot afford to send their wards to other cities and towns. Thus the number of unemployed youths have increased. These frustrated youths are found in groups here and there. They also smile and laugh, make fun, but all appear to be simply mockery. Their dirty clothes, sunken eyes, withered faces and empty pockets tell only grim stories. Their parents are helpless. They can't meet their expenses. Some of these youths, albeit unwillingly, indulge in minor crimes while a good number of them are doing odd jobs, in shops and establishments where they do not get more than six or eight hundred taka a month. When the election campaign began, huge number of these unemployed educated youths and girls rushed to earn some money, visiting door to door under the scorching sun and in the bitter rain. Not an easy job, still their engagements as political workers by different candidates of the parliamentary election they got some relief. They are young and they can only wait and see. They can't suppress their temptation, hopes and aspirations and natural desire to live a better life. They will surely revolt today or tomorrow, if let deprived of opportunities. Their disobedience to parents, and strange manners are sufficient forecasts.

He told me that he was in urgent need of a few Takas for medicine for his daughter who had developed diarrhea. He was out to borrow the amount from his friend. At one place he found some boys with bicycles shouting: "Is there anybody for Khalishpur, Daulatpur, Rupsha, Gallamari?" "It was strange, I had never thought of such odd job. I thought for some moments and finally joined them. Fortunately the first passenger was known to me, a teacher. I told him about the sickness of my daughter. I carried him upto his house as asked for by him. He entertained me with a cup of tea and gave me Taka fifty instead of my normal charge which was not settled. What was more important, he appreciated my boldness in adopting this odd job though temporarily. He wished me a bright future. That day will be remembered by me throughout my life." Rafique told his story passionately in a choked voice. A drop of tear rolled down his cheek which he hastily rubbed with his handkerchief. Still there was a glow of dignity on

his face which only honest labour bears. I too encouraged him to go on with this job for the time being.

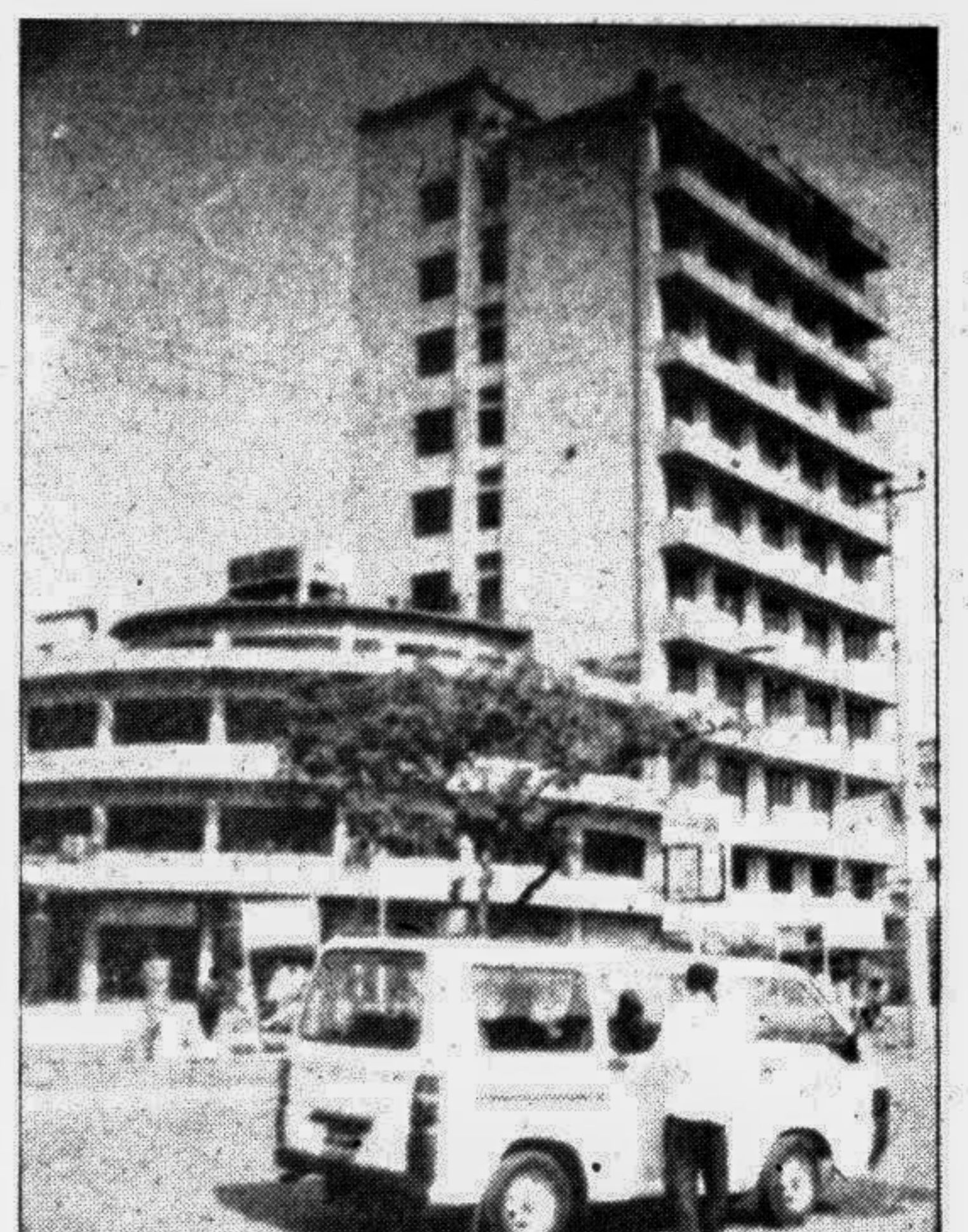
"Yes" Rafique said and smiled. "Whenever hartal is called I like others manage to earn some more money. Sometimes I feel ashamed, sometimes depressed and sometimes I feel an intense urge within me to leave this country which cannot afford me two square meals and a humble job in spite of my education and honest desire to live a clean, life without any lust for luxuries....." In the meantime he got a "passenger". He gave me a warm salute and left the place with his passenger on the back carrier of his bicycle. The road was almost deserted. More deserted were our hearts. I kept looking at him until he vanished from my sight. Suddenly I remembered a couplet of Dr Iqbal: *Naheen Iqbal naummid Apni Kishte uran se zara num ho to yeh mitti bahut zarkhez hai 'Saq'* (Iqbal is not totally disappointed with his barren fields: A little moisture may turn it into a fertile land)

approached her wearing a gentle look of a loving elder brother. "Don't mind, may I know your identity's I asked her very politely.

"Of course," she replied courageously. Within a few minutes she narrated her story precisely. At one time her father was a joker in a circus party. He has now one monkey and this unique girl with a bicycle. They earn their livelihood by demonstrating some fun in the remote villages, mostly enjoyed by the village women, old and young alike. This girl, Zarina, is very bold, fearless, honest, who dresses herself like boys and performs some acrobatic tricks to the much delight of the spectators. But she is fully aware of her sex. She is strictly cautious in maintaining her chastity. She will not hesitate in killing or being killed for the sake of her modesty and character. It is known to all and sundry in her area and that is her biggest safeguard.

After a while she told me confidently, "Sir, you please give me Taka five only and I will drop you at some distance from here on my bicycle. I am going there to bring my father back. Nobody would say anything. This is a routine affair for me. All the neighbourhood people know me well. They love me for my hard labour and morality. Even miscreants don't dare to tease me..." She spoke without break. I agreed and sat on the front rod of her bicycle instead of back carrier.

When we reached the spot, I gave her Taka ten and took a snap shot although it was not a suitable time for photography. In the meantime she caught sight of her father coming towards her and left the place quietly. I do not know, perhaps



Up, up: But is it away?

she also doesn't know where these odd jobs will land her finally. I prayed for her.

Powerful Urchins, Scarecrow Police Constable

At one point of the city I found four police constables. The urchins were engaged in burning an empty bus as it to their pleasure while the police constables appeared to be only silent spectators.

After waiting for a few minutes I approached them. Two of the urchins said in one voice, "Today we feel very important. We are masters and not slaves. We can burn cars of even big

persons without any fear. These "Baro Lok" (Rice men) are responsible for all our miseries. We take revenge by burning their cars and property..." They seemed satisfied from within!

"I do not want to be a 'shahed' a police constable on duty frankly told me justifying his inaction as I asked him why he didn't take any action against the urchins engaged in arson. The reply of the police constable was sufficient to suggest that he was at his wit's end. It was useless to argue with him. The situation had already unhinged me. I felt tired and jaded. I took a glance of the circuit house maidan with the singles store building of red bricks, standing witness to that magnificent gathering of half a million people just after victory of independence movement in 1971 where not only the crowd but the whole nation had dreamt of a wonderful time which remains unfulfilled even after 25 years.

Who will change the fate of millions of Rafiques, Zarinas and their likes? With whom the faults lie? Not only politicians and bureaucrats but the intellectuals and general public are also responsible for the politicians and the bureaucrats are exploiters, and the intellectuals are escapists then the people have accepted the deep rooted poverty and all sorts of malice as their fate.

A radical political and social movement is required to bring reforms revolutionary in character. History repeats first in tragedy and then in farce as Marx had said, but whenever it repeats, it cost double. The nation must come out of the 'make-belief' world and face the realities to catch the tune of time. A few islands of stupid luxuries in the vast ocean of poverty are anthems and not blessings to feel proud of.

THIS article is not intended to be an in-depth review of the total economic-industrial-commercial condition of Khulna, the so-called third major city of the country, which is, however, getting poorer day by day. It is a modest collage of some snapshots day-by-day of Khulna, the place I live in.

During the last twentyfive years, not a single heavy or even medium size industry has been established, except a small textile mill at 'Sathakra'. At the same time, the oldest textile mill of Khulna city which was established in mid-thirties has been closed down, perhaps, for ever. Two years have already gone by and their hardly any sign of its reopening either in public or private sector, while more than 400 industries of various sizes have emerged in Dhaka division and about 250 in Chittagong division. Khulna, and, for that matter, northern and southern districts of the country seem to have been deprived of their rights to development by the successive governments. And the people of this neglected region are too tired to make any 'fruitful' protest.

Mongla has turned into a casual port. It handles only a fringe of total import and export business of southern and northern districts. People tend to believe that there is an intention never to allow Mongla Port its share of shipping business! Shipping companies and clearing and forwarding firms have almost vanished from Khulna town. All the barges which once kept the rivers Bhairab Passur vibrant and congested round the clock have gone with the wind. Only some launches and country boats are seen plying in the rivers which also speak of the dicey condition of the city.

The old industries are running at loss and have been kept

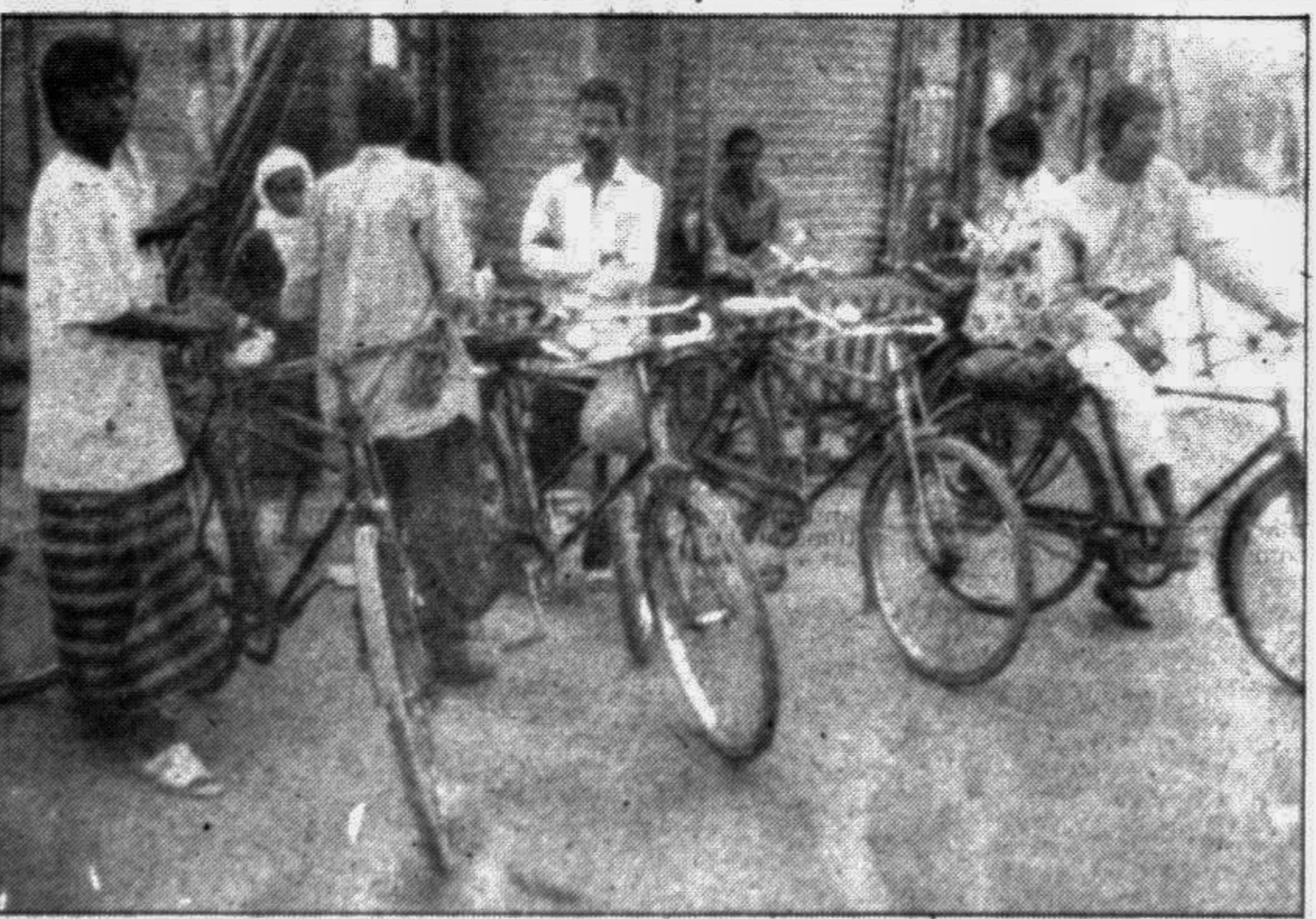
Prisoners of Poverty

Young educated youths are the worst sufferers. Last year more than a thousand students of Khulna proper, could not get

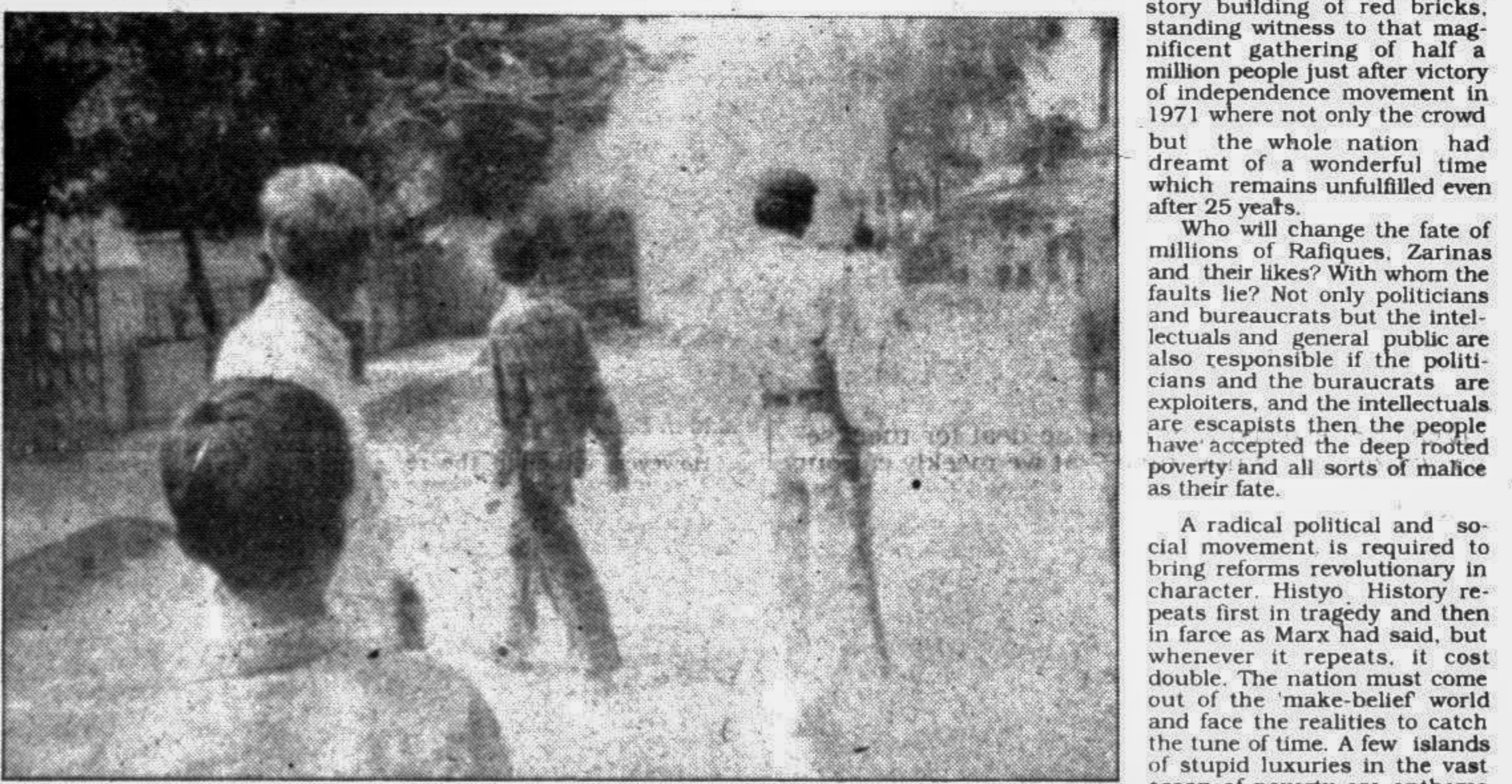
A New Hard-labour for the Prisoners of Poverty

Let me now tell of a few specific cases observed by me during the recent months. I was passing through an important street of the town on foot when at one junction I espied a few

young boys, each with a bicycle. At first I apprehended some trouble ahead, but when I reached the spot I found them snaling but not without a feeling of sarcasm.



Youths with bicycles: Awaiting passengers



Urchins burning bus: Police on duty

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Tuesday 17th September
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BT

- 3:00 Opening Announcement
- 4:00 Ai-Quran Programme Summary
- 5:00 3:15 Documentaries Film: Cinema Europe 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Esho Para Shikhi 4:45 Cartoon Series: The Animals of Parthwood 5:00 News in Bangla 5:20 Sangeeta: Modern Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla
- 6:05 National Television Debate Competition 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Comedy Series: Seinfeld 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Drama Serial 10:00 News in English 10:30 Ghare Bairey 10:55 Mini Series 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Wednesday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC

- 6:00am BBC Newsroom inc. World/Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 7:00 BBC Newsroom/Asia Today/24 Hours 8:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:00 Panorama 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00 BBC World News 1:15 Panorama 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: The Farmborough Air Show 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 5:00 BBC World News 6:15 The Money Programme 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newshour Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 Panorama 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Film 96 11:00 The World Today 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Panorama 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: The Clothes Show 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 4:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newswright

CHANNEL V

6:30am Frame By Frame 7:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Jump



Vibe on Channel V. Today at 10:00 PM

Start VJ Trey 9:00 Frame by Frame 11:00 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Frame by Frame 2:30 First Day First 3:00 The Indian Top 10 4:00 Planet Ruby 4:30 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophiya 6:30pm Big Bang VJ Alessandra 8:00 Planet Ruby 9:00 The Vibe/10:00 First Day First Show 10:30 Soul Curry 11:00 Speak Easy 11:30 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00mm Over The Edge VJ Sophiya 12:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 1:00 Haysah 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 Bill Board US Countdown

STAR PLUS

6:30am Voltro 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 G I Joe 8:00 Saber Rider And The Star Sherrif 8:30 The New Adventures Of Black Beauty 9:00 Aerobics Oz Style 9:30 Charles in Charge 10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30 Yan Can Cook 11:00 El TV 11:30 Gabrielle 12:30 Noon Santa Barbara 1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 3:00 Remington Steele 4:00 Yan Can Cook 4:30 El TV 5:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5:30 The New Adventures Of Black Beauty 6:00pm Lost In Space 7:00 Home and Away 7:30 Charles in Charge 8:00 MASH 8:30 Chicago Hope 9:30 The Extraordinary 10:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 11:00 Santa Barbara 12:00mm The New Twilight Zone 12:30 Baywatch 1:30 Krikket 2:30 El TV 3:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 4:00 Hooperman 4:30 Home and Away 5:00 The Sullivans 5:30 Gabrielle

STAR Sports

6:30am India v Malaysia Test Series From Chandigarh 8:30 Tiger Cup 1996 3rd/4th Place From Nat. Stadium 10:30 Tiger Cup 1996 Final From Nat. Stadium 12:30 Formula Nippon From MINE Circuit Japan 2:30 US PGA Tour President's Cup Day 2 Highlights 4:30 World Rally Cham Neste 1000 Lakes Rally 5:00 Gillette World Sport Special 5:30 Squash Super Series Cathy Pacific Premier Open 6:30pm US Mountain Challenge 1996 7:30 Formula Nippon From MINE Circuit Japan 9:00 Indian Field Hockey Test Series India v Malaysia From Delhi 11:00 Castrol Turf Club Trophy 11:30 Prime Boxing Jose Vela Ramos vs TBC 1:30 The Kickboxing Highlights 2:30 Australian Football League Highlights 3:30 Inside PGA Tour

4:00 WTA Tour 1996 Toshiba Tennis Classic From San Diego 5:30 Goodwood Festival of Speed

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Film Club: Amos 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Adventure Miracles PG (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Adventure Slipstream 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Comedy Buffy The Vampire Slayer 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Film Club: The Last Wave 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Family Shattered Family 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Classic: African Screams PG (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Hollywood 1 On 1 9:30 Action: Killer Instinct 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:15 The Bulletin 11:30 Thriller: Ambition 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 1:30 Comedy: Desperately Seeking Susan 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 3:30 After Dark: Lake Consequence 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Thriller: Unlawful Entry 18 (Arabic Subtitles)

ZEE TV

5:30 Suno Bhai Sadho 6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 Hum Honge Kaamyab 9:00 Insight 9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00 Namaste India 10:30 Graviera Ki Ummed 11:00 Close Up: Anilash 11:30 Nirma Aaha 12:00 Toi Moi Ke Bol 12:30 Mr Minto 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:30 Kurukshetra 3:30 Zalka Ka Safar 4:00 Nerolic: Aashiyana 4:30 Aur Ek Minute 5:00 ZED 5:30 Cartoons 6:00 Positive Health Show 6:30 Through The Gears 7:00 Captain Cook Shaahi Dawat 7:30 Gaane Anjaane 8:00 Aap Ki Pasand 8:30 Hum Paanch 9:00 Salaab 9:30 Tara 10:00 Hasrateen 10:30 The News 11:00 Gharounds 11:30 Dastan 12:00 Daraz 12:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 1:30 Galaxze 2:00 Arabic Programme 2:30 THM 4:00 Sultaak 4:30 Hum Zameen 5:00 Jagran

EL TV

00:30am Helen Special 01:30 Music Time 02:30 Ched Chad 03:30 Jazbaat 04:30 Bacche Man Ke 05:30 Helen Special 06:30 Music Time 07:30 Ched

PTV

8:00 am Tilawat Aur Tanujama/Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabrain 8:45 Beauty Care 8:50 Fun Kadha 9:10 Dhanak & Health Tips 10:05 Har Taan Heli Despak 10:30 English Film: Home Improvement 10:55 Milli Naghma 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Anis (Serial) 12:00 Sports Hour 12:55pm Quran-e-Hakeem 1:02 Basmallah 1:15 The Science Show 2:00 Yeh Jahan (Music video) 2:25 Animated Classics 3:15 Geography & Sammar School 4:20 Mithi Sons 5:00 Alah Huma Labbaik 5:25 Qabhi

SONY ET

8:30am Gaane Jaane Maane 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf-

Mein Soochta Hoen (Drama Serial) 6:25 Aou Courses 7:00 Dhanak 7:45 English News 8:15 UN Quiz 8:45 Jab (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabrainama 11:20 VCD Top Tan (Pakistani Video Countdown) 12:30 Dr. Qun: Medicine Women (Jean Seymour) 1:35 Khas Khās Khabrain/ Close down

Wheel Of Fortune 11:00 Pa-hkhar 12:30 Kismat 1:00 Zamin Asman 1:30 Jai Bir Hanuman 2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 4:30 Jar Bir Hanuman 5:00 10 Civil Lines 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 Cine Prime-Hindi Feature Film 11:00 The Young And The Restless 11:30 Chamatkar 12:00 Apne Jaise Types 12:30 Jeevan Mirtu 1:00 Sunday Ki Sunay 1:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 2:00 Premier 2:30 Closed

DD 7

10:00 Janmadin 10:35 Classical Music 11:00 Ghare Baire 12:30 Prachin (Serial) 1:00 Janani (Serial) 1:30 TBA 2:00 TBA 2:30 Batayian (Serial) 3:00 TBA 3:30 Dik Bigran Prasang 5:30 News 6:00 Pali Katha 6:30 Chitrangli 7:00 Amake Dekhun 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dinindan 8:00 Naram Purush Ramkrishna 8:30 Naram Purush Ramkrishna 9:00 Naram Purush Ramkrishna 9:30 Jeeban Setu 10:00 Bangali Movie Club Film Show

Garfield® by Jim Davis



Tom and Jerry

