

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Urbanisation and Solidarity with Slum-dwellers

by Dr. Mohammed Mahbubur Rahman

DHAKA has world's several largest slums with an alarming growth rate. From 2156 slums within the metropolitan area in 1991, the number reached 2679 in 1996. 1024 new slums were formed within this period. Estimated slum population 720,000 in 1991 has increased to 1.1 million at a rate more than 1.5 times than that of the city. After the independence, landlessness and unemployment in the rural areas, and socio-political oppression resulted into fresh migration and rise of new slums. 173,000 *busti* bashes were forcefully evicted in 1975 and resettled in three destitute camps at the outskirts. But they soon started infiltrating the city in search of living as the camps had no job and no easy commuting facilities. Eviction denies the right to a decent living and creates more problems than it solves. However, many still believe in slum eviction as the uprooting of the problem.

On 25-26th March, 1971, Dhaka's slums were burnt to ashes by the Pakistani army killing thousands and forcing others to flee. Another major incident was the forced eviction of January, 1975 with the help of paramilitary forces at the will of the rule-makers. In November 1983, 12679 *busti* bashes were fenced up to hide the slums from the visiting dignitaries. In 1990, several inmates of Kalyanpur *busti* were burnt alive by the *mastaans* in a bid to control it. In August, 1990, one child was crushed by bulldozer in *Agargaon busti* while an eviction was on demolishing 20,000 houses in one day. Several *busti* in *Mohammedpur*, *Kamalapur*, *Telgaon*, *Babupura* etc., have been blazed to ground. In October, 1992, *Palashi busti* on a less utilised road was demolished by the Mayor on a rainy day for the third time. Immediately afterwards, fresh

busti were set up in nearby areas. HSD, the purveyor of poor's housing, informed the *Agargaon busti* bashes within weeks of the adoption of the National Housing Policy to remove the shanties to please the then PM who was due to pass by to open the National Science and Technology Week in February, 1994. Communication Minister evicted *busti* along the railway track in a 3-day notice in May, 1994 citing rail accident as an excuse. The DMC students, supported by the doctors, boycotted classes for couple of months in late-1994 to force the employees living in the college compound to give way to an auditorium. Though the Health Minister intervened and promised resettlement of the employees, no steps followed. In recent time, hawkers were also evicted from footpaths affecting over a million lives. They were promised relocation to government market which never materialised.

The government has no qualms about uprooting the squatter settlements; it has become a routine lately. There have been 30 evictions in Dhaka in 1990-92 which affected 200,000 people and destroyed 100,000 houses worth US\$2.5 million. Brutal means like cordoning off and beating the dwellers by hired goons, and putting arson are adopted for eviction. Fire breaks out every summer in *Shahidnagar-Islambug busti* killing innocent people. This year's fire roasted 7 people and destroyed many cottage factories. There are no regulations to carry out evictions, the dwellers are given little time to abandon their shelter. Criminals take advantage of the situation by extorting tolls from the inmates for negotiating with the absentee authorities before eminent eviction. There are *busti* where NGOs run various schemes with

the government approval. Even these are not spared which is a proof of lack of government's commitment and coordination among various organisations.

The government pledged top priority to the provisions of shelter for the urban poor. However, it ended up with subsidised sites-and-services plots for the rich, and staff-housing for the government employees. These were nowhere near the need; in the boom period of public housing (the 1970s), the government could make provisions for 2000 new housing plots annually though then Dhaka alone required more than 40,000 new units. Budgetary allocation to housing has been the lowest among the sectors. Housing has been added to the name of Ministry of Civil Works to emphasise its importance. However, until 1995, the government could not provide any new housing plots even to the middle- or upper-income groups despite having ambitious programmes. Since starting public housing in 1948, the government has ventured a limited number of sites-and-services and core housing projects concentrated mostly in Dhaka. After the independence, the new government took the policy of encouraging housing co-operatives without setting any proper strategy towards that. By the 1980s, it admitted that staff housing was a highly subsidised form of housing which the government should not have pursued. However, it continued to construct such projects ignoring its realisation.

The government, with international assistance, sought improvement of existing squatter settlements, development of sites-and-services projects and minimum shelter schemes. There have been several attempts at improving *busti* with mixed results. The military-backed government decided to shift the *Bhasantek*

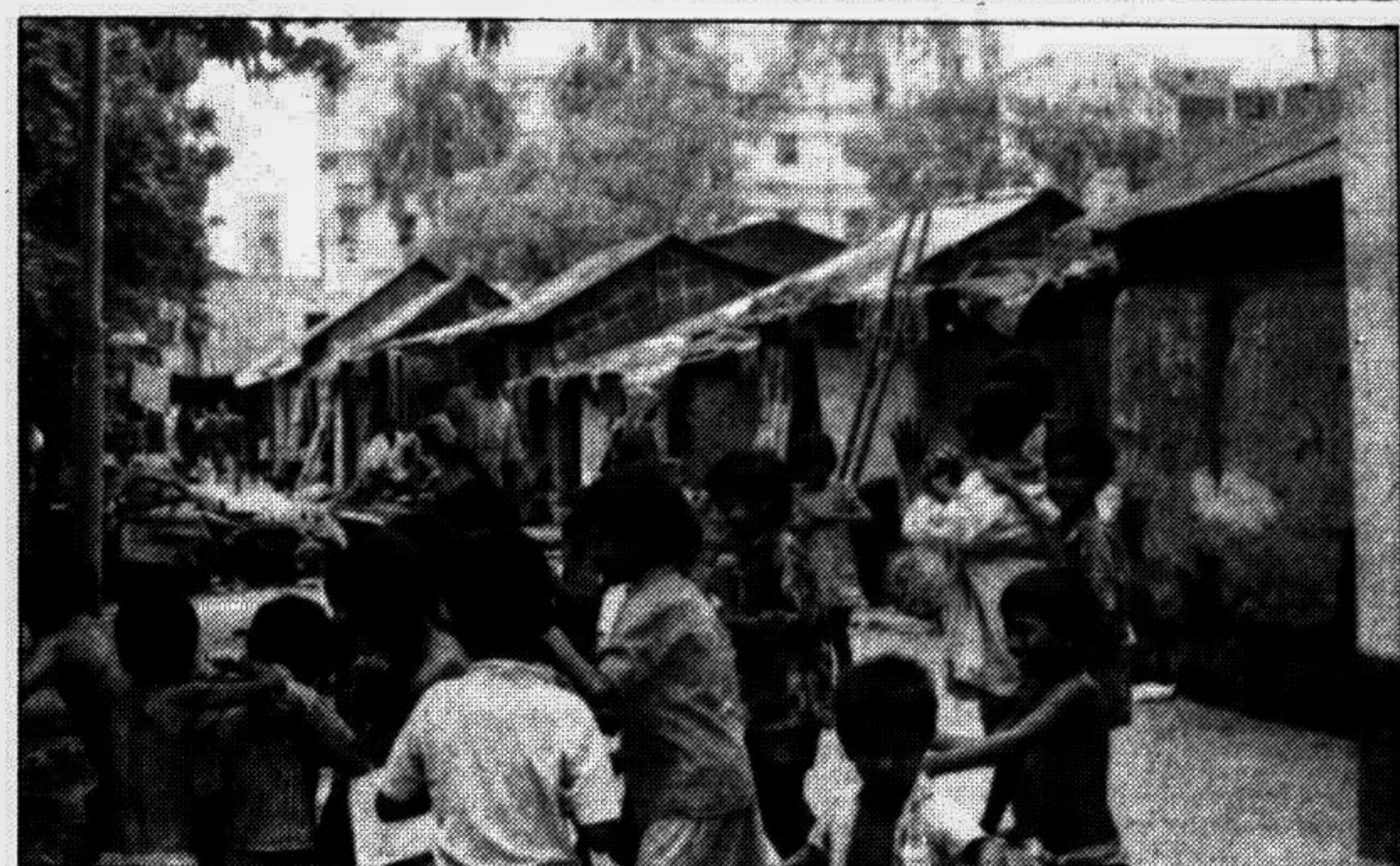
resettlement camp in 1979 with UNCDF fund. Plans were revised thrice because each time faults like costly land development strategy, collapse of the wrongly designed embankment, high management and operation cost of the pumps etc., were detected. At the end it became a strongly condemned highly subsidised project never to be replicated. *Shahidnagar-Islambug* upgrading scheme is yet to pick momentum after a decade of its initiation. *Kaibalyadham* project in *Chittagong* is facing delays in implementation.

The UNICEF-financed Slum Improvement Projects (SIP) in municipal towns by LGED since 1985 aims at environmental upgrading. Housing is to improve with the improvement of infrastructure, utility and income. It emphasises on women's participation, mobilisation of community resources and increasing access to formal services towards promoting self-reliant communities. *Pravati Sangha* has induced the *Khilaon busti* bashes to save regularly. They have invested in some income generating activities and purchased suburban land to build a new settlement. Different NGOs have shown that small easy term loans can provide capital for improving housing which in turn would increase productivity and the loanee repaying capacity. These have greater chances of recovery than those made to millionaire defaulters. Some of these schemes are now replicated even in the developed world.

Two sensible approaches to housing are the 1990 *Busti Samashya Nirasan Committee* Report recommending slum upgrading; and National Housing Policy. US\$1.70 million was in the process of being spent on 63 studies related to urban planning and infrastructure development in Bangladesh in 1993

though recommendations of such studies are usually not implemented. The objectives of the undergirding Urban Poverty Reduction Programme are to reduce the urban poverty through implementing physical, and socio-economic improvements in slum communities to achieve income and environmental benefits; to provide shelter to low-income urban families through innovative and replicable pilot programmes; and to contribute to the formulation of policies made to address the needs of the urban poor to improve environments, incomes, security and quality of life.

The year 1987, International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, asked to intensify efforts to improve shelter for all. The UN Human Settlement Commission's proposed to undertake a global strategy for Shelter for All by the Year 2000. It recognised that proper shelter is a basic right vital for the fulfilment of human aspirations. The resolution aiming at particularly the slum-dwellers can only be successful if framed within a complete strategy that lists priorities, identifies affordable approaches and makes provisions for the proper allocation of resources. It also affirmed that forced evictions constitute human rights violation. It urged governments to take immediate measures to stop that and to confer legal security of tenure to all threatened persons and to adopt necessary measures giving protection against evictions based upon consultation and negotiation with affected persons. It recommended that all Governments provide immediate restitution, compensation and alternative accommodation to persons forcibly evicted following negotiations. In August, 1991, a UN subcommittee on the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities



termined forced eviction a gross violation of human rights and urged governments to undertake measures to stop it. UNCHR states that every woman, man and child has the right to a secure place to live in peace and dignity.

Our Constitution states that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the state to attain a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people with a view to securing the provision of basic necessities of life, including shelter. National Housing Policy reiterates protection against forced eviction and ask the government would avoid forcible displacement of slum dwellers, encourage in situ upgrading, slum renovation and progressive housing development with conferment of occupancy rights, and undertake relocation with community involvement for clearing public interest sites. Thus, forcible eviction of squatters without proper notice and resettlement is a violation of the Constitution. The objectives of the Policy are to make housing accessible to every strata where the high priority target groups will be the disadvantaged, the destitute and the shelterless poor.

To develop effective strategies for reducing the need of forming slums; and to relocate them suitably. The policy, however, cannot give legislative protection; so, eviction without providing alternative accommodation continues.

The slum-dwellers are more organised and aware of their rights now. At many slums, NGOs have projects of environmental upgrading, improvement of infrastructures and hygiene, mother and child-care services, education, income generation etc. Coalition for the Urban Poor of NGOs working in Dhaka organises community resistance, provides legal aid, and seeks professional assistance against evictions. It aims at stopping evictions without feasible resettlement and assisting urban poor in housing. Rights Bangladesh, formed in August, 1993, is a lobby to facilitate urban poor's access to basic services and land and forming a platform for the slum-dwellers by holding workshops on related issues. Human right activists like An-O-Salishi Kendra, Nijera Kari, Manobik Sahajaya Sangstha etc., also defend the slum-dwellers against evictions.

Land is primarily a political issue, not a technical one. Dhaka is an unfairly structured city as the rich enjoy more opportunities and subsidies than the poor. The 1976 Vancouver Habitat Conference approved

governmental intervention in land markets. It recognises land as the first condition of allowing the poor to bargain in the market with a legitimate equity since without a form of secured tenure, no service agency and lending institution will cater for the slum-dwellers. Also, very few of them would themselves invest to upgrade the physical environment even if they could afford to. Urban poor should be given security of tenure on the land they are using through use rights, long-term lease etc., if there is no alternative site and no immediate public interest project there. Many countries have met squatters short of eviction; upgrading has been successfully implemented in many cities since late 1960s as an alternative to eviction.

In Calcutta, regular squatters cannot be evicted, street sleepers must be relocated. In Bombay, they have been provided with sheds and potable water for night sleeping. Similar ideas have been included in the Bangladesh National Housing Policy and the ongoing Poverty Reduction Programme. In Thailand, the government does not support eviction unless the landowner shares the use. Housing developments in Indonesia keep 40 per cent of the provisions for the low-income groups. Governments of Malaysia and Colombia sell subsidised developed sites to the developers so that they produce some non-profit housing as well. Similar projects were tried in DND area in 1992 which was blocked by vested quarters. In many East and South-East Asian countries, Plot Reconstitution is a popular method of increasing the supply of cheap plots.

Since poverty is the root cause of poor housing, the government should initiate, support and stimulate poverty alleviation programmes and housing loan schemes. It should support and create an environment to flourish the informal sector which provides large employment contributing to the urban economy. Migration cannot be stopped instantly, the process can only be retarded. Urban poor should be recognised as an integral part of the city who should have access to all services and resources. They can legitimately demand a proportionate allocation of city authority's budget though they do not pay taxes. DCC has several slum improvement and rehabilitation projects, yet its budgetary allocation in this area is not enough. In major Third World cities, municipal bodies have taken initiatives in undertaking environmental upgrading

including slum improvement. A lion part of DCC's allocation for road repairing could be saved by an inter-agency co-ordination and utilised for *baste* improvement.

Political parties should address this issue in manifestos; none of them has any idea of the ways to tackle the situation. The government neither has effective strategies to achieve the goal of housing for all by the year 2000, nor sufficient willpower to formulate those. It will take the government's entire annual budget allocated to the housing sector just to facilitate all in the capital city with decent housing. The government announced a programme of 2 million housing perhaps only to surpass on paper Sri Lanka's success of million housing programme as there is no progress towards that when the time is limited. Housing could be facilitated to all slum-dwellers in the 20 large urban centres of the country with only the fees of the expatriate experts of the urban infrastructure development and planning projects currently in preparation.

Without affordable means to provide land, materials and capital, any target would remain unfulfilled. No government can solve the housing problem by acting as a provider. But it can create an atmosphere conducive to the development of appropriate housing. Within its regulatory framework, it can operate advisory cells, material banks and small building credit schemes through NGOs and CBOs interested in social housing. Nationalised banks' idle money can be used for this purpose. Also zero to very low interest loans from international donor agencies are available which the country rarely sought. This could form part of a seed fund matched by government's allocation and peoples savings heightened by the prospect of home-ownership. The poor have demonstrated building capabilities which are affordable and suitable to their needs. Given impetus and legitimacy, they can reduce the government's burden to provide them with housing.

Eviction is not pragmatic in a country with severe resource constraints. Co-operation among policy-making machinery, NGOs and communities will provoke people's organisations to adopt pro-people policies. In Bangladesh, policies are made but never implemented due to the lack of political commitments and stability. The writer is Associate Professor, Dept. of Architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology

CHILDREN are the future

So it is the moral and legal responsibility of the parents, society and the state to help them grow up as ideal citizens. To create this awareness among all, the International Union for Children's Welfare has adopted a resolution in 1952 to observe the first Monday of October every year as World Children Day.

On 20th November, 1989 the UN General Assembly finally formulated a Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC). In the 1990 World Summit for Children in New York, 22 nations including Bangladesh have made a Declaration of Goals for Children's Survival, Protection and Development and called all nations to prepare a National Plan of Action to formulate programmes that will achieve these goals. 1991-2000 has been declared by them as the Decade for Children's Rights and the week from 29th September every year is to be observed as the Children's Right Week. Bangladesh ratified the Convention on 2nd September 1991, and since then is observing the Week and the World Children Day.

In Bangladesh, the overall condition of children is alarmingly critical. According to the census of 1991, the percentage of children upto 15 years is 45.15% of the population. Half of the total number of children are living in sub-hu-

WORLD CHILDREN DAY
The Priority is for Children

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

man standard. Half of the total number of deaths are from this group. Out of 1000 children, 125 die every year. About 8 lac 70 thousand children below 5 years of age die due to preventable diseases. Of them 30 per cent die due to diarrhoea, 90 per cent suffer from malnutrition, 100 children die everyday due to vitamin A deficiency. Due to iodine deficiency 38 per cent of children are attacked with various types of diseases. About half of the children are deprived of their basic rights to health, nutrition and education. Of the total number of labour force 12 per cent are from children, 42 per cent children do not take admission in any school and 65 per cent of those taking admission drop out from schools before completing their primary course. Many of the female child-labourers used to work in the garments industry. A large portion of the children work in some way or other to earn for their own living and for the family. Children living in rural areas work in agriculture small-scale family businesses. Children living in urban areas work mostly as street beggars,

hawkers, porters, rickshaw-pullers, brickbreakers, sales-boys and in factories.

According to the Labour Laws of ILO none of the above children are legitimate workers. The Child Labour Deterrent Bill 1992 was intended to eradicate both poverty and illiteracy by diverting all under-aged children from their work-place to schools so that after completing their education they can start a better living. The proposed Harkin's Bill was a step to that effect. Accordingly the US government had imposed ban on the import of garments from Bangladesh which exploited child-labour in garment industries. The garment industries came on the point of collapse and the large number of young girl-labourers have been put in great crisis. Lastly, a negotiation has been reached between the BGMEA and the US importers that children under 14 would not be employed in the garments industry and the import of garments continued.

A new National Policy on Children was formed in December, 1994 and some steps taken for its implementation. On 20th August, 1995 one National

Council for Children was formed under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The Council has been empowered to formulate new laws, if necessary, for the welfare of the children.

According to the Article 28 (4) of our Constitution of 1972 the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had formulated some laws on children wherein persons under 16 are to be declared as children. For the social and cultural development of the children one Shishu Academy has been established at Dhaka, 64 branches of which will be established in 64 districts in phases. The Academy organises literary, cultural and art competitions, and publishes many books for different age-groups, organises various programmes on such occasions as Children Week and on World Children Day every year. The Academy also supervises the activities of its branches outside Dhaka. To implement the Conventions on the Rights of Children a National Policy on Children has been formulated.

One Forum of Children's Rights has been formed consisting of 60 organisations. Every

year it arranges rally, Shishu Mela, cultural functions, art competitions etc. for the all round development of the children. But only the children of solvent and urban families can avail of opportunity to participate in these activities. For the large number of street-children have to work for themselves and for their families. The ILO laws and the Rights of the Convention are difficult to be granted for the children of the developing countries like ours, though there are many laws for the protection of their rights. Due to extreme poverty and lack of awareness these laws can hardly be applied for them. A recent report of BBC has stated that during the recent years exploitation of child labour and sexual abuse and violation of female children have greatly been increased here particularly within the home either by the employers or by the near relatives. Law enforcing authorities also sometimes are the offenders. Exploitation of child-labourers is found everywhere. Most children are underpaid, work overtime and are physically tortured by the employers.

However, it is expected that the Children Week and the World Children Day Programmes of every year will create awareness among the parents, employers, citizens of the society and the state to implement the Conventions on the Rights of the Children

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 7th October
(All programmes are in local time. 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: Rerelease of
Selected Dramas 4:00 News in
Bangla 4:45 Esho Gan Shik
5:00 News in Bangla 5:25
Nazrul Songs 5:50 Sports
Programme 6:00 News in Bangla
6:30 Tarunika 7:00 The News
7:05 Open University 7:25
Antara-Antara 8:00 News in
Bangla 8:40 Package Drama
10:00 News in Bangla 10:30
Shasthatattha 10:35 Janamat:
Family Planning Programme
10:55 Comedy Series: Coach
11:30 News in Bangla 11:30
Tuesday's Programme 11:40
Close down

BBC

6:00 BBC Newsroom Inc. World
Business Report/Asia Today/24
Hours 9:00 BBC World Head-
lines 9:05 The Money Programme
10:00 BBC Newsday
1:00 pm BBC World News 1:15
The Money Programme 2:30
BBC World News 2:30 Time
Out: Top Gear 3:00 BBC World
News 3:30 Time Out: Fat Man
in France 4:00 BBC Newsdesk
6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05
Correspondent 7:00 BBC World
News 7:15 World Business Re-
port/7:30 BBC Newsday Asia &
Pacific 8:30 Time Out: One
Foot in the Past 9:00 BBC
World Headlines 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 Pro-
gramme 1:50 Building Signs
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



Grace Under Fire on Star Plus, Tonight at 1:00

CHANNEL V

6:00 Frame by Frame 7:00
Rewind VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump
Start VJ Tre 9:00 Frame by
Frame 10:00 The Vibe VJ Luke
12:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 1:00
By Demand VJ Tre 2:00 Frame
by Frame 2:30 First Day First
Show 3:00 Sansui Mangla Ha
4:00 Planet Ruby 4:30 By De-
mand VJ Tre 5:30 Rewind VJ
Sophia 7:00 Big Bang VJ
Alessandra 8:00 Planet Ruby
8:30 The Vibe 9:00 BPL Oye
10:00 First Day First Show
10:30 Launch Pad VJ Sophia
11:30 The Ride VJ Tre
12:00mm Over The Edge VJ
Sophia 12:30 Big Bang VJ
Alessandra 1:00 Haysa 2:00
By Demand VJ Tre 3:00 Big
Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 Asian
Top 20 VJ Tre

STAR PLUS

6:30 Voltorn 7:00 Teenage Mutant
Ninja Turtles 7:30 G I Joe
8:00 Saber Rider And The Star
Sheriff 8:30 Adventures Of
Black Stallio 9:00 Aerobics Oz
Style 9:30 Charles in Charge
10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30
Cooking Secrets of the CIA
11:00 Videoflash News
11:30 Retro-Active 11:30 The Flying
Doctors 12:30 Santa Barbara
1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful
2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show
3:00 Remington Steele 4:00
Cooking Secrets of the CIA
4:30 Videoflash News
5:00 Retro-Active 5:00 Teenage Mutant
Ninja Turtles 5:30 Adven-

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Classic: All About Eve G
(Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Comedy:
Heavenly Pursuits 15 (Arabic
Subtitles) 11:30 Adventure:
The Trial 15 (Hindi Subtitles)
1:30 Action: Killer Instinct 15
(Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Comedy:
Sunset Limousine 12 (Hindi
Subtitles) 5:30 Western: Borderline
15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30
Film Fiction: Treasure Island 15
(Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Deccan
Dream 9:30 This Week That
ear 10:00 Comedy: The Book
Of Love 18 (Hindi Subtitles)
11:30 World Cinema: A Cause
D'Elle (English Subtitles) 1:30 At-
tention: Thrill 18 (Arabic Sub-
titles) 3:30 Comedy: Foreign
Body 18 5:30 Action: The
Long Good Friday 18 (Arabic
Subtitles)

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 Anjaane
10:00 Salaab 10:30 Positive
Health Show 11:00 Dak Ghar
/Aparna Ghar 11:30 Gopaljee
12:00 Suno Suno Tring Tring
12:30 Celeste 1:00 ZED 1:30
Asian Sky Shop 2:30 Tara 3:00
Kurusshetra 3:30 Meri Ghar
Ana Zindagi 4:00 Mano Ya Na
Mano 4:30 Lijlat Khana
Khanaza 5:00 ZED 5:30 Akbar
Bisbol 6:00 Cartoons 6:30 Love
Story 7:00 ZED 7:30 Gaane
Anjaane 8:00 Tol Mol Ke Bol
8:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 9:30
Campus 10:00 Daraar 10:30
The News 11:00 Shayad 11:30
Close Up Antakshari 12:00
Parivartan 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9
Malabar Hill 1:30 Apollite Arabic
Aap Ki Pasand 2:00 Arabic Pro-
gramme 4:00 Index 4:30 All Out
For No Loss 5:00 Jagran

PTV

8:00 am Tilawat Aur Tarjuma
-Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30
Khabraan 8:45 Ab Pal Challa
9:05 Khat Farmaish 9:20

SONY ET

8:30am Yaadon Ki Baar 9:00
The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis
The Menace 10:00 Dream
Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf-Wheel
Of Fortune (Game Show) 11:00
Cover Story-Hostel (Serial)
12:00 Mere Message Meri Geet
1:30 Baat Ek Raz Ki (Serial)
2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature
Film 4:30 The Rasoi Show
5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00
Mere Message Meri Geet 6:30
Dennis The Menace 7:00 Prem
7:30 I Dream Of Jeannie
8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune
8:30 Taak Jaank 9:00 Jevan
Mirtu (Serial) 9:30 Yeh Sadi
Nahi Ho Sakti 10:00 Chamatkar
(Drama Serial) 10:30 Ghaye
11:00 The Young And The
Restless 12:30 O M'ria (Serial)
1:00 Pehli Mulakat 1:30 Surf-
Wheel Of Fortune 2:00 Premier
2:30 Closed

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Educ
Folk 11:00 Nazrulgeet 11:15
Folk Songs 12:30 Ek Sipi Onek
Gaan 1:00 Janan 1:30 Mono-
rama Cabin 2:30 Ek Diner Sul-
tan 3:00 Gaan Niye/Darpan
3:30 Isha 5:05 Nepali Pro-
gramme 5:30 News 5:35 Desh

EL TV

12:30am Shamm Kapoor Spe-

Garfield®



Tom and Jerry



by Jim Davis

