

Bangladesh at 25

A Three-Day International Conference on Bangladesh Held at Columbia University, 5-7 December, 1996

Star Report

To mark the 25th anniversary of independence for the nation of Bangladesh a series of events were held throughout 1996 at Columbia University. New York which included lectures video presentations, a symposium on independence day, March 26, and finally a three-day international conference on Bangladesh from December 5-7. Nearly 100 participants from Bangladesh, other Asian countries, Europe and North America attended the conference which was the first such multi-disciplinary academic endeavour on Bangladesh organised by an Ivy League university. The conference was organized by the Southern Asian Institute, Columbia University cosponsored by the Center for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh and funded by the Ford Foundation. Professor Rounaq Jahan of Columbia University was the chief organizer of the conference.

The major objective of the conference was to promote greater understanding of Bangladesh in North American academic institutions. Though Bangladesh has by now gained some visibility in development agency circles, it is largely neglected in North American academic institutions even in those with long standing interest on South Asia. By bringing together scholars from different disciplines and continents the three-day conference succeeded in generating unprecedented enthusiasm about Bangladesh scholarship.

The conference emphasized critical analysis of issues, and free exchange of ideas rather than rushing to quick-fix solutions of problems that many conferences on development tend to do. It sought better understanding of forces causing the last 25 years of different economic-political changes with a view to identifying the major challenges facing the nation as it embarks onto the 21st century. A special effort was made to give participation to women and younger scholars to the conference.

The conference covered a wide set of themes and issues. The inaugural session which explained the purpose of the conference was addressed by Professor Douglas Chalmers, Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs. Professor Philip Oldenburg, Director of the Southern Asian Institute, Professor Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of the Center for Policy Dialogue and Professor Rounaq Jahan, Director of the Bangladesh at 25 Conference.

Following the inauguration there were three academic sessions on the first day. The first session on Nationalism, Movement and Identity Politics was chaired by Professor Ralph W Nicholas of University of Chicago. Two papers were presented by Professor Anisuzzaman Ahmed and Professor Salahuddin Ahmed of Dhaka University and the two discussants were Professor Rafiqul Ahmed of Elmira College/Cornell Uni-

versity and Dr. Dina Siddiqi of University of Pennsylvania. While Professor Salahuddin Ahmed traced the historical and cultural origin of the emergence of Bangladesh, Professor Anisuzzaman highlighted the continuing shifts and debates surrounding the identity question and its impact on Bangladesh politics. The second session on National Identity: Construction and Contestation was chaired by Professor Ainslie Embree of Columbia University. Papers were presented by Professor Willem Van Schendel of School of Social Science Research, Amsterdam and Prof. Habibul Haque Khandkar of Singapore National University. The two discussants were Professor Peter Bertucci of Oakland University, Michigan and Professor Enayetullah Khan of Georgetown University. Professor Van Schendel argued that the debate between Bengali vs Bangladeshi nationalism conceptualized nationalism in a limited way; the non-Bengalis who are Bangladeshi citizens e.g. the indigenous people in Chittagong Hill tracts and other parts of Bangladesh need a pluralistic definition of nationalism that will be broad enough to accommodate the different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Professor Habib Khandkar in his paper described the process of construction and contestation of national identity in Bangladesh; and explored the impact of the globalization on this process of construction and contestation.

The two sessions on national identity generated a lively debate about the reasons for contestation of national identity in the last 25 years. Many argued that the debate was in many ways a false debate, religion was reintroduced in affairs of state after the military take-over of state power in 1975 to create a sense of division amongst the population, a tactics military rulers have pursued in many third world countries to keep their hold on state power.

The third session of the first day was on social change. It was chaired by Professor William Van Schendel of School for Social Science Research, Amsterdam. In this session three papers were presented by Abu Abdullah of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Professor Shelley Feldman of Cornell University and Roushan Jahan of Women for Women. Professor Nazli Kibria of Boston University was the discussant. Abu Abdullah described the process of social change in Bangladesh by giving examples from three sectors e.g. modernization in agriculture, women's participation as labour in garment industry and rapid rise of contraceptive prevalence amongst women. Roushan Jahan argued that though gender roles have changed in the last quarter century and women's participation in the economy has significantly increased, there has not been a commensurate change in gender relations. Professor Shelley Feldman in her paper

described how the global forces were influencing the local forces in Bangladesh and stressed the need for a strong state in protecting the interests of the underprivileged. The session produced a lively debate about the process of modernity, agents of modernity and outcomes of modernity in Bangladesh. It was argued that modernity was not necessarily a unidirectional phenomenon. Lack of accountability of different actors claiming to bring about modernity e.g. the business sectors, NGOs, and so on, were highlighted in the discussion.

Four academic sessions were organized on the second day. The first session on State and Civil Society was chaired by Professor Rehman Sobhan of the Center for Policy Dialogue in Bangladesh. Papers were presented by Professor Harry Blair of Bucknell University, Professor Stanley Kochanek of Pennsylvania State University and Professor S.M. Hashemi of Jahangirnagar University. Dr. Gowher Rizvi of the Ford Foundation was the discussant. The session generated a lively debate about the definition and role of civil society, state and

donors. Professor Harry Blair put forward a narrow definition of civil society, highlighting primarily the role of the NGOs and argued that democracy in Bangladesh could not be institutionalized because political parties malfunctioned and autonomous civil society organizations were few. He, however, was cautiously optimistic about the growing strength of the civil society as demonstrated by the advocacy NGOs. Professor Stanley Kochanek described the growing power of the business community in the last quarter century as well as in influencing the national political agenda.

In contrast to professors Blair and Kochanek who emphasized the role of the NGOs and the private sector, Professor Hashemi highlighted the role of the traditional cultural and professional organizations in the struggle for democracy in the country. He also argued that the hegemony of the donors and the NGO's dependence on donor funds created a serious problem in ensuring accountability of NGOs to their national constituents.

The second session on Poli-

tics and Governance was chaired by Professor Phillip Oldenburg of Columbia University. Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies presented a paper tracing the changing profile of parliamentarians and voters in the last quarter century. He argued that though national level politics has seen many upheavals, there has been a remarkable stability in local level politics. Professor Zarina Rahman Khan of Dhaka University presented a paper describing the last 25 years' experiments with local level governance. She argued that despite promises by different regimes, there has been little decentralization and devolution of power to people's representatives at the local level. Lawrence Lifschaltz, an independent author and journalist, traced the history of coups and assassinations in the 1970s and early 1980s and posed the question: whether or not Bangladesh would set up a Truth Commission in the same manner as it was done in many of the Latin American countries and South Africa to investigate state sponsored killings and violation of human rights. He

also presented new and primary data regarding the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and offered to provide a set of his data and documentation to Columbia University and appropriate institution in Bangladesh for further scrutiny by researchers.

The third session of the day was on the Economy. It was chaired by Professor Nurul Islam of the International Food Policy Research Institute. Papers were presented by Professor Azizur Rahman Khan of University of California Riverside, Dr. Binayak Sen of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and Dr. Kirsten Westgaard of Center for Development Research Copenhagen. Professor James K. Boyce of University of Massachusetts was the discussant. Professor A.R. Khan highlighted the achievements e.g. maintenance of reasonable rate of growth, reduction in fertility, growth of exports and stability in price levels. He also pointed out the failures e.g. poor performance in human development, savings and investment; worsening of the distribution of income, absence of institutional reforms

and incentives for growth and investment. Above all he cited the failure of governance as the major constraint on economic development. Dr. Binayak Sen's paper presented data on growth, poverty and human development in the first quarter century and argued that despite modest improvements in poverty and human development, the high level of mass poverty calls for more urgent action than simple reliance on trickle down mechanism from above. He argued for policies to reduce absolute poverty as well as faster rate of growth in order to bridge the relative inequality. Dr. Kirsten Westgaard presented data from a restudy of a village after two decades and concluded that income from non agricultural occupations have increased but while all groups have improved the standard of living, a simultaneous process of polarization has also taken place indicated by proportionately higher income of the landholding class.

The final session on the Regional and the Global Context was chaired by Professor Hower Wriggins of Columbia University. University Professor Elist Jepper of Cornell University talked about the achievement of SAARC and the potentials of North Eastern Sub-region of South Asia as a region of growth. Professor Peter Rogers of Harvard University, currently at the World Bank, discussed the problem of water sharing between Bangladesh and India and the innovative ways Bangladesh had provided for water for her population in the last twenty-five years. Dr. Sajada Amin of the Population Council discussed trends in fertility declines in the South Asia region. Questions from the audience centered around wide ranging issues related to the regional security and cooperation and the process of liberalization.

Professor Amartya Sen of Harvard University spoke at the reception in the evening. Several former and current Ford Foundation resident representatives in Bangladesh also spoke on the occasion which included Ms. Adrienne Germain, Vice President International Women's Health Coalition, Mr. Raymond Offenheiser, President, Oxfam USA, and Mr. David Chiel, Acting Resident Representative, Ford Foundation, Dhaka.

The Final day consisted of three plenary sessions. The first session titled State, Society and Economy was chaired by Professor Leonard Gordon of City University Columbia University. Professor Nurul Islam and Professor Rounaq Jahan summarized the major issues presented in the first two days of the conference. Professor Islam stressed the need for diversity of the economy in order to be able to compete in the global market; he also elaborated on the problems of unbridled global market. Professor Rounaq Jahan highlighted the dichotomy between steady progress in people's struggles for democracy and the repeated

failures of institutionalizing democratic institutions and practices. She identified the gaps in research in the last 25 years particularly on social, historical and political issues and urged younger researchers and activists to play a socially responsible role following the excellent example set by some of academic activists of the last fifty years.

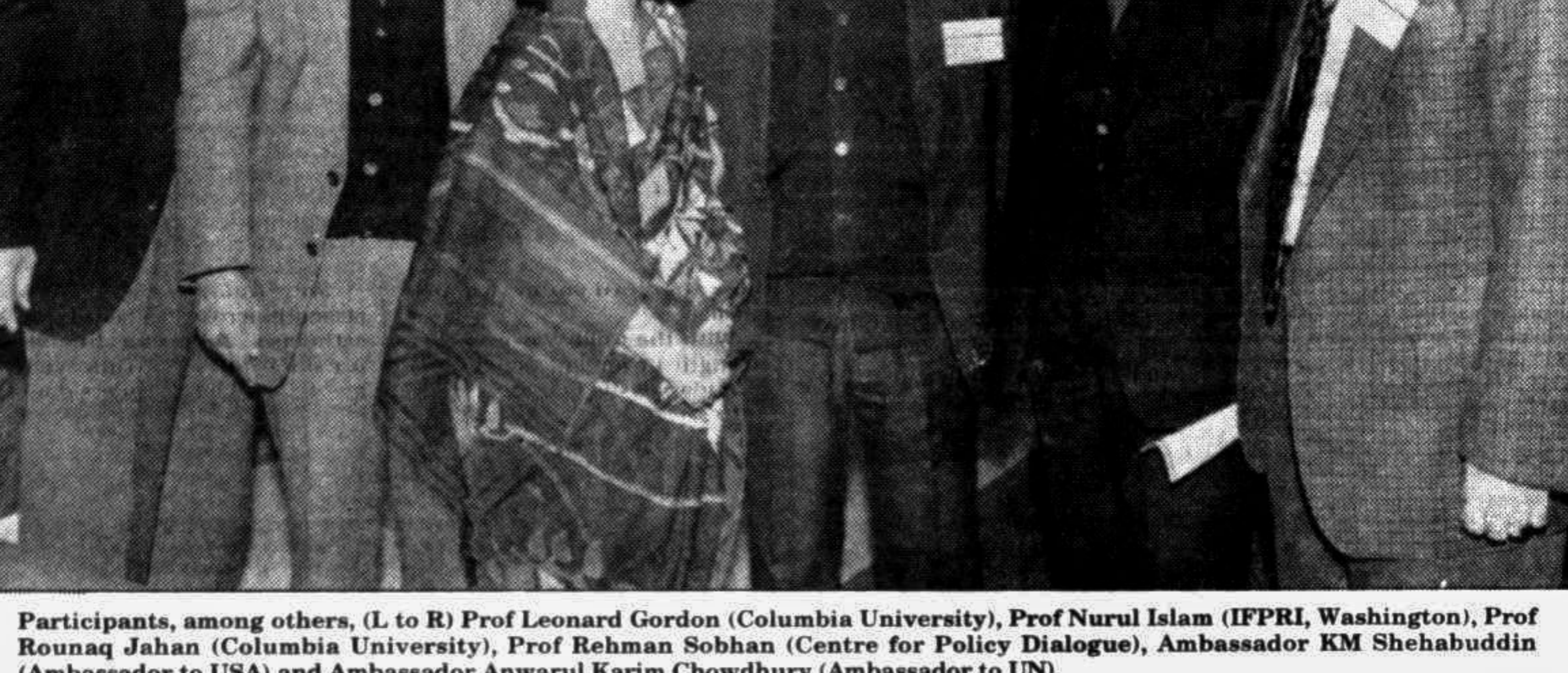
The second plenary titled Moving Forward: Agenda for the Next Decade was chaired by Professor Jack Chowley of Barnard College/Columbia University. Four speakers representing different backgrounds and age presented their visions for the future. Mr. A.M.A. Muhith, a former minister of finance and planning spoke about his vision of local government for the 21st century. Mr. Mahiuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star talked about the need for building Bangladesh concentrating on the positive qualities we have as a nation and not dwelling on the negative; Ms. Sara Hossain, Attorney at Bangladesh Supreme Court emphasized the need for keeping human rights above narrow partisan considerations and called for establishing accountability measures for violation of human rights. Professor Rehman Sobhan of the Center for Policy Dialogue was the final speaker. He evoked some of the memorable events of 1971 liberation struggle, enumerated the unfinished tasks and identified the major challenges lying ahead. He particularly emphasized the need for establishing rule of law and good governance.

The final plenary was an open forum chaired by Professor Rounaq Jahan. Participants raised several issues including the need for networking amongst researchers and activists working on Bangladesh in different continents.

The conference was attended by a large number of faculty and students of Columbia University and other universities as well as officials from the UN and the diplomatic community including Ambassador K.M. Sheliabuddin, Ambassador to U.S.A., Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Ambassador to UN, Mr. Muhi Khan, Member of Parliament, Mr. Moudood Ahmed, a former prime minister, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed of UNICEF, Mr. Arnold Zeitland, a former AP correspondent and Ms. Susan David of WEDO.

A book exhibition was organized by the University Press Ltd. of Bangladesh to project 25 years of publishing in Bangladesh.

The conference was a highly successful event combining high academic excellence with a strong emotional commitment to the future of the nation. The presence of different generations of scholars and the mix of academics and activists enlivened the discussions. It was by all accounts an inspiring and memorable event that will be remembered for a long time by faculty and students of Columbia University and those who attended the conference.



Participants, among others, (L to R) Prof Leonard Gordon (Columbia University), Prof Nurul Islam (IFPRI, Washington), Prof Rounaq Jahan (Columbia University), Prof Rehman Sobhan (Centre for Policy Dialogue), Ambassador KM Shehabuddin (Ambassador to USA) and Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Ambassador to UN).

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Tuesday 7th January
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BTV
3:00 Opening Announcement
Al-Quran Programme Summary
3:10 News in Bangla 3:15 Patriotic songs
3:20 Recitation from the Gotta 3:25 The Album Show
3:50 Cartoon Film 4:15 Umesh 4:50 Coach 5:00 News in Bangla 5:22 Sangeta
6:00pm National Television Debate Competition 6:50 Open University 7:00 The News 7:25 Silver Jubilee of Freedom Fighter-A Documentary
8:00 News in Bangla 8:25 Silver Jubilee of Freedom Fighting-Mujibnagar Govt 9:00 Drama Serial: 10:00 The News 10:25 Those days of Freedom Fighting
10:30 sur Laharie 11:35 Wednesday's programme summary 11:40 Close down



Baywatch Nights on Star Plus, Tonight at 1:00

STAR PLUS
6:30 The Sullivans 7:00 Aerobics Oz Style 7:30 Star News 8:00 Sky News 8:30 Star News 9:00 Sky News 9:30 Aerobics Oz Style 10:00 Yan Can Cook 10:30 El For Your Entertainment 11:00 Kate & Allie 11:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:30 The X Files 1:30 Santa Barbara 2:00 The Bold & The Beautiful 3:00 Imthin 3:30 Khandaan 4:00 Home and Away 4:30 Lost In Space 5:30 Adventures of Black Beauty 6:00pm Kate & Allie 6:30 Yan Can Cook 7:00 Cyberworld 7:30 Star News (Hindi) 8:00 Small Wonder 8:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 9:00 Meri Awaz Suno 9:30 Star News 10:00 British Comedy: Some Mothers Do 10:30 Beverly Hills 90210 11:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 12:00 Santa Barbara 1:00 Baywatch 2:00 Dynasty 3:00 Quincy 4:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 5:00 Barnaby Jones

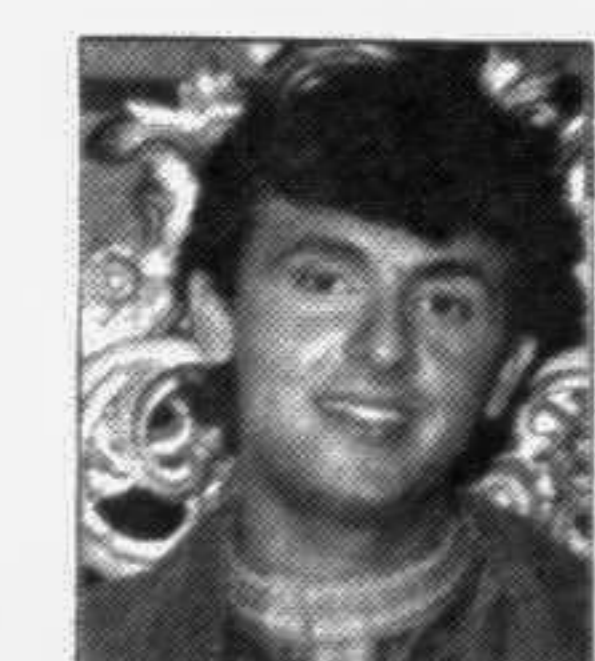
ZEE TV
5:30 Suno Bhai Sadho 6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 Hum Honge Kaamyab 9:00 Insight 9:30 Inad/Chutki Baji Ke 10:00 Andaz 10:30 Graviera Ki Umeed 11:00 Close Up Antakshri 11:30 Chutki Baji Ke 12:00 Commander 12:30 Suno Suno Tring Tring 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:00 Hum Paanch 2:30 Tara 3:00 Raahat 3:30 Dhara 3:45 Beauty Care 4:00 Haathi Zaike Ka Safari 4:30 Aur Ek Minute 5:00 ZED 5:30 Cartoons 6:00 Lijjat Khana Khazana 6:30 Through The Gears 7:00 Gaane Anjaane 7:30 Raahat 8:00 V3+ Zara Si Jhalak 8:30 Hum Paanch 9:00 Salaab 9:30 Tara/Shapath 10:00 Hasratein 10:30 News 11:00 No Problem/Tara 11:30 Dastan 12:00 Dastan 12:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 1:30 Raahat 2:00 Love Stories 2:30 TMM 4:00 Surtaal 4:30 Hum Zameen 5:00 Jagran

EL TV
00:30 Love Love Love 1:30 RD Burman Special 2:30 Asha Bhonsale 3:30 Guzra Hua Zamana 4:30 Sur Sangam 05:30 Love Love Love 06:30 RD Burman Special 07:30 Asha Bhonsale 8:30 Guzra Hua Zamana 09:30 Sur Sangam 10:30 Moov Usha Uthup Show 11:00 Zandu Balm Dance Meri Marzi 11:30 Atco Ru-Ba-Ru 1:00 Snowchem Kal Bhi 1:30 Fat Or Fit 2:00 Ankhen 3:00 Karz 3:30 Yeh Duniya Gazab Ki 4:00 Siyaram Kamal Kombina 4:30 Uppanyas 5:00 Kinetic It's My Choice 5:30 Chalti Ka Naam Gadi 6:30 Shikayat 7:00 Peoples Club 7:30 Number One 8:00 Filmi Chait 8:20 Kinetic Pride Hasen Pal 8:30 Teri Bhi Chup Mery Bhi Chup

DD 7
10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Classical Music 11:00 Ghare Baire 12:30 Monorama Cabin (Serial) 1:00 Janani (Serial) 1:30 Trishna 2:00 Balayan 2:30 Prachir (Serial) 3:00 Bhangran (Serial) 3:30 Bigapti 5:05 Science Program Prasange 5:30 News 6:00 Palti Katha 6:30 Taran Kanya 7:00 Pallisamb (Serial) 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dinandan 8:00 Bakul Katha 8:30 Darpan 9:00 Janani (Serial) 9:30 Monorama Cabin (Serial) 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

SONY ET
8:30am Khoya Khoya Chand 9:00 The Tin Stoggles 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf Wheel Of Fortune 11:00 Ghaav 11:30 Zamana Badal Gaya 12:00 Boogie Woogie 12:30 Good Shot 1:00 Pehlul Mulakat 1:30 The Young And The Restless 2:30 Cine Matinee Hindi Feature Film 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Khoya Khoya Chand 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 12:00 Taj Mahal Taki Dhna Dr 12:30 Jeevan Mirtu 1:00 Sunday Ki Sunday 1:30 Surf Wheel Of Fortune 2:00 Premier 2:30 Closed

BBC
6:10am BBC World Newnight 7:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 10:00 BBC World Headlines 10:05 World Focus: Panorama 11:00 BBC Newsday 2:00 BBC World News 2:15 World Focus: Panorama 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm BBC World News 6:15 World Focus: 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 Holiday 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 World Focus: Panorama 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Top Gear 11:00 BBC World News 11:30 Time Out: Film '96 12:00am The World Headlines 2:00 BBC World Headlines 2:05 World Focus: Panorama 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: The Clothes Show 4:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 5:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours



TVS Sa Re Ga Ma on Zee TV tonight at 12:30



Dastan on Zee TV tonight at 11:30

STAR SPORTS
6:00am HK To Beijing Rally 6:30 Eisenhower Cup Day 1, 2 & 3 H/Ls Ft Philippines 7:30 India Tour Of South Africa India v S Africa 2nd Test Match Day 5 H/L 8:30 Trans World Sport 9:30 1996 Asian Club Championships East Asia Quarter Final Pohang Vs Yokohama Marinos 11:00 1996 Asian Club Championships East Asia Quarter Final Ilhwa Chunma Vs New Radiant 12:30 1996 Omega Tour Hugo Boss Foursumers H/Ls 1:30 India Tour Of South Africa India v S Africa 2nd Test Match Day 5 H/L 2:30 Indian Football National League Dempo Vs Salgoacar 4:30 Hu Trashion World Cup 5:30 Wild Bobsled Push Start Champs. H/L 6:00pm Futbol Mundial 6:30 Greatest Grand Slam Matches Of 1996 Chang vs Spadea & Sampas vs Corretja 8:30 ISU Skating Skate Canada 10:00 India Tour Of South Africa India v S Africa 2nd Test Match Day 5 H/L 10:30 HK To Beijing Rally 12:00 Prime Boxing 1:30 The Kickboxing Highlights 2:30 Wild Bobsled Push Start Champs. H/L 3:00 Calvert Centenary Expedition 4:00 International Motorsports News 5:00 ITU Triathlon World Cup-6

PTV
8:00am Tawwat Aur Tarjuma/HandiNaat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabrain 8:45 Beauty Care 8:50 Fun Katha 9:10 Dhanak & Health Tips 10:05 Har Taan Heli Deepak 10:30 English Film: Home Improvement 10:55 Milli Naghma 11:00 Khabrain 11:10 Ania (Serial) 12:00 Sports Hour 12:55pm Quran-e-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 The Science Show 2:00 Yeh Jahan (Music Video) 2:25 Animated Classics 2:15 Geography & Sammat School 4:20 Milli Sona 5:00 Allah Huma Labbaik 5:25 Dabhi Mein Soochta Hoen (Drama

Tom and Jerry
ITS FUN BEING THE CHASER INSTEAD OF THE CHASEE.

James Bond
BOND IS MET BY THE CHIEF OF MI-6'S ATHENS STATION...
"FRAID I'VE BAD NEWS, JAMES!"
THAT JEWELLERY DESIGNER, STEFANI DIDES, WAS MURDERED LAST NIGHT - AND HIS SHOP WAS RANSACKED!
YOU MEAN I'VE WASTED MY TIME COMING HERE?
NOT QUITE - THE KILLER OVERLOOKED ANOTHER SOURCE OF INFORMATION!

STAR MOVIES
7:30am Classic: The Eagle PG