

When Mob Justice Takes Over Established Legal Processes

by Md Asadullah Khan

Recent incident (June 25) of a police van with two suspected child-lifters in it being torched and the suspected child-lifters burnt alive in the Badda area of Dhaka city points to the deteriorating law and order situation, growing public impatience and, above all, the futility of the police administration in the country.

It happens in the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and other places in the country almost with a sickening regularity: a shabbily dressed man clutching a purse, a hijacker robbing a woman of her ornaments, often inflicting injuries, or a suspected child-lifter racing through the crowds of startled and dumb-founded pedestrians. An enraged mob follows hard on his heels screaming, 'hijacker, hijacker, kill him, kill him.' They trap the man or his group in an alleyway and if he is lucky, police will come to his rescue. But often the 'hijacker' is beaten to death or burned alive by the frenzied mob.

Mob justice, a most common phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa has taken hold in this country. In few countries is it meted out with such disturbing frequency or such brutality as ours in recent times. Media reports reveal that in the last one month at least 30 persons suspected of being child-lifters have been beaten to death, and three among these 30 persons have been doused with gasoline and burnt. Recent incident (June 25) of a police van with two suspected child-lifters in it being torched and the suspected child-lifters burnt alive in the Badda area of Dhaka city points to the deteriorating law and order situation, growing public impatience and, above all, the futility of the police administration in the country.

Despite the fact that law enforcing agencies are now equipped with all modern gadgets including cellular phones and fast moving vehicles, they have sadly failed to report to the troubled-spot for containing the violence. It is learnt through media reports that in the recent past four suspected cow-lifters in a village in Demra were hacked to death before the arrival of police. In most cases atrocities are fueled by some over-zealous masterminds and provocateurs who leave the troubled-spot after troubles have intensified. Shockingly, on the other hand, in absence of police inaction people seem to have accepted 'mob-justice' as the only effective way to punish child-lifters and hijackers, sometimes for in

most cases? Just on suspicion! True, the problem of abduction of school-going children has acquired such an alarming proportion that schools in the capital city and other places, it appears, will have to be turned into fortresses with guards on patrol. In cities such as Delhi and Mexico, remote control alarms have replaced chewing gum and chocolates in the pockets of the wealthy students. So said a horrified and worried mother in the Dhaka city. 'If the situation does not improve, I'd rather let my child remain illiterate.'

Understandably, much of the street justice is a reaction to the country's ineffectual criminal-justice system. There is a crisis of confidence in the police administration as evidenced by many a report carried by the media. One such report said that the gang leader who masterminded the episode of brutality inflicted on Shanta, a young newly-married girl in Sreepur, Gazipur and was later arrested by the police had been set free just within 24 hours, allegedly because of political interference. People tend to feel that police take their cue from politicians, while politically-sponsored thugs are accused of burning down houses and murdering people in clashes.

Winning court cases, convictions and prison sentences against even the notorious traffickers and offenders 'is a Herculean task,' say legal experts. Society faces an uphill struggle in a judicial system devastated by years of neglect. Even the IG, police admitted in a recent statement to the press that about 75 per cent of the criminal cases end up in acquittal of the offenders because of weak and flawed investigation report. Many of the hit men, even if can be identified are often untraceable in the courts as well as outside. They routinely terrorise witnesses and thwart investigations. Sensible citizenry say in disgust: 'the administration need to be reminded that there is a basic right that comes before any other: the right to live in peace. If we can't secure this right nothing else matters. Convictions are hard to get because the offenders rarely leave witnesses.

In cities and villages all

across the nation, gangs operate with near impunity practising fraud and extortion, conducting illegal trade, bribing and corrupting officials and murdering anyone who gets in their way.

Mugging and robbery are soaring. One may recall that a businessman-cum-garments factory owner in Mirpur, ward commissioners in Agargaon and Lalbagh area of the city were shot down some time in last year in what people believed was paid-for assassination. The recent incidences of lynching one to death just on suspicion have overwhelmed citizenry while criminal-justice experts in the country opine that police inaction and apathy are much to blame for this deteriorating trend. When most of the identified accused roam the streets freely evading police arrest and the court cases that drag for years end up in acquittal of the criminals, people mostly of poor-means, who other than the mortal shock they suffer can hardly afford the cost of court cases often vent their frustration and apathy to the administrative failure in such frenzied expression of disgust and anger.

In the recent past (May 2, 1997) taking cue from a source, police rescued three minor boys Sharif (8), Al-Amin (6) and Shaiful (7) from a certain slum in the Paltan area of the city along with their fathers Tajul Islam and Nazir Ahmed but the excesses carried in detaining the fathers in the court hazat for 11 days on suspicion of being traffickers triggered public resentment. The case of three students of Ideal School in Motijheel who played truant from school last Wednesday (25th June) with the motive of enjoying cinema but later played up a false drama of being nabbed by the traffickers was carried by a section of press without confirming the details. The mystery relating to the rescue of 16 minor boys including

three fathers by the Gulshan police in last April remains fuzzy till now. Supposedly that might have been a case of trafficking but those godfathers masterminding the episode could, possibly, never be brought to book. Child abduction and trafficking, without any contradiction, are not all a cock and bull story. During the past one month or so, as the media report goes, at least 13 children have been rescued by the police in the country. Three children kidnapped from the Lalbagh area were rescued from a Sylhet-bound train on 13th June. In another case one woman in Kapasia became a victim of mass-beating on suspicion of being child-lifter but the fact was that the woman was chasing her son on his refusal to go to Madrasah. In some cases, innocent Burkhada women suspected of being involved in trafficking are becoming victims of mob-frenzy.

But now people in the country are demanding to know what the government is going to do about it. A failure to bring crime of any sort under control could cost not only the image of the government but also its whole experiment with democracy. Peace loving citizens in the country hate chaos and the unremitting violence and lawlessness they see everyday have shaken them to the core. The growing loss of confidence could even produce sudden political swings most people do not cherish. A noted social scientist in the country says, 'Most people exhibit their frenzied behaviour as a protest against the helplessness and inaction of the government in dealing with the crime.'

Faced with a mushrooming crisis even the Prime Minister called for restraint and urged people not to take law in their own hands, assuring people of the steps to stem crime. Without a shadow of doubt, the Prime Minister also realises that the continued activities of organised crime were discrediting the

state powers and threatening the security of the country. But given the fact that little had been done until now to put teeth in the nation-wide crime-busting programme, the administration's full outlay of burst of energy would only vindicate the image that has eroded so much.

People even tend to believe that maybe, any infighting in the police administration has much to contribute in preventing or solving crimes. For that, the country needs a comprehensive new crime code to spell out violations of the law, a truly and determined professional and well-paid police force and a functioning judicial system. To make an arrest, the police must catch a criminal almost in the act of breaking law.

Precisely told, police officers now are part of the problem.

Until now they did not serve the public but protected the bosses. Now in a changed situation, some of them believed to have transferred their loyalties to the crime bosses. As it appears, some of the most honest and best professionals who seem to be increasingly frustrated might quit the service and opt for working for the private security companies that seem to be coming up these days. Most people now believe that the reforms will go nowhere because of crime and the situation out of it has definitely reached levels that warrant extra ordinary measures. People now almost with disgust and exasperation say that 'they will follow any one who promises them law and order.'

While analyzing the cause of such societal drift towards lawlessness and impatience in a

section of the populace, one also gets impression that fiscal deficits, and faltering GDP growth in the industrial sector, that generates employment and business, may yet cause prosperity to fizzle out and are responsible for the waywardness of the country's disgruntled youth force. And there is also a feeling that something is wrong with the 5.7 per cent GDP growth that we are preaching, that the hidden prosperity is not bringing as much of the good life as the rosy figures indicate.

In the past years, the rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer and those in the middle—that's most of us—have gotten squeezed. In fact, economic inequality has been growing through more than a couple of decades, it grew especially rapidly through the stagnation period of the late '80s.

Taking it for granted that the rich are getting richer and the poor have stopped getting poorer, and true enough that the gains made by the rich have been spectacular, those of the

middle class have been barely sufficient to get them back where they were some 20 years ago. So the gap between rich and poor are simply growing. And this trend is alarming. If influences the state of affairs obviously towards lawlessness, and terrorism and if the trend continues, it could threaten the 'Dream' of the party in power and the aspiration of the suffering people.

And the dream must be based on two simple articles of national faith: (i) that each generation will live a bit better than that of its parents and build a still better life for its children (ii) that the nation will slowly but steadily progress toward greater equality. These twin pillars of belief help create political and social stability and also economic dynamism. And the cure of the malaise lies in creating a society free from the scourges of unemployment and poverty of the educated youth force.

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UNAIDS and Partners Launch 1997 World AIDS Campaign Children Living in a World with AIDS

A report released June 27, 1997 by the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) documents the increasingly dramatic situation of millions of children worldwide who are living under threat from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Every day, 1,000 children become infected with HIV. UNAIDS estimates that, by the end of 1997, 1 million children under the age of 15 will be living with the virus and suffering the physical and psychological consequences of infection. Since the beginning of the epidemic, well over 2 million HIV-positive children have been born to HIV-positive mothers and hundreds of thousands of children have acquired HIV through blood transfusions and through sex or drug use. Over 9 million children are estimated to have lost their mothers to AIDS.

'AIDS is the most recognised disease in the world today,' said Dr Peter Piot, the Executive Director of UNAIDS in launching the campaign. 'But the disastrous impact it is having on children has not been given enough attention. If the spread of HIV is not rapidly contained, the gains made in reducing infant and child death rates, which are reversed in many countries.' Estimates quoted in the report indicate that, by the year 2010, AIDS may increase infant mortality by as much as 75 per cent and under-five child mortality by more than 100 per cent, in the most hard-hit countries in the world.

'Within a little more than a decade, AIDS will be a major cause of death among children,' stresses Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF. 'But children do not have to contract HIV to be profoundly harmed by it. The number of orphans are growing dramatically, children are traumatised by watching parents, die, forced out of school to take the place of adults at home, and often suffer from discrimination. HIV has become a real threat to children's rights.'

The report, entitled 'Children Living in a World with AIDS', is released to mark the launch in Brussels of the 1997 World AIDS Campaign which aims to increase public understanding of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on children

and to promote further action to prevent HIV infection and improve care. The Campaign is being led by UNAIDS and its cosponsoring organisations — UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank — in partnership with the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Centre for Health and Human Rights of the Harvard School of Public Health, the Children and AIDS International NGO Network, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the development information agency, PANOS.

Children Living with HIV
According to the report, more children than ever before are contracting HIV and there is no sign that the infection rate is slowing. In 1996 alone 400,000 children under the age of 15 years became infected worldwide. Around 90 per cent of these children acquire the virus from their HIV-positive mothers, whether before or during birth or through breastfeeding. And women of childbearing age are now making up an ever-increasing proportion of people with HIV worldwide: today, AIDS kills more women than men in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the longer term, therefore, reducing the vulnerability of infants to HIV infection means increasing women's control over their situations, improving their ability to take decisions about their own reproductive and sexual health, and increasing the knowledge and sense of responsibility of both men and women about HIV prevention. It also means increasing women's access to antiviral drug regimens which can cut the risk of mother-to-child transmission.

For children who are already infected and sick, the report shows that the situation remains very grave. This is particularly so in many poorer countries, which have been unable to benefit from the recent advances made in antiviral therapy, and where even inexpensive medicines to treat HIV-related illnesses and reduce suffering are often unavailable. In Europe, more than 20 per cent of HIV-positive children are still alive at the age of 10. In Zambia, in contrast, a recent study showed that nearly 50 per cent of HIV-positive children

had died by the age of two.

Children Orphaned by AIDS: An Exploding Problem
Children are not only infected by HIV, they are also affected. More than 90 per cent of the 9 million children who are currently estimated to have lost their mothers to AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa. Experts in Zimbabwe, for example, estimate that by 1996 approximately 8 per cent of children in the country were in this situation. In Uganda, 1,000 children every week lose one of their parents to AIDS.

Children living in communities struck by AIDS feel its impact as their parents and teachers become infected, as health and social services are stretched beyond their limits, and as their families also take in other children who have been orphaned by the epidemic. Says Elizabeth Matlaka, Executive Director of Matlaka, Executive Trust in Zambia, 'In some of the worst-hit African communities, there are only children and old people—the age groups in between have been almost wiped out. No one yet knows what effect this will have on the children and their future.'

In all countries, families, and the traditional safety net of the extended family, are coming under increasing pressure—a recent survey of social care in seven countries participating in the European Collaborative Study showed that, by age 8, 60 per cent of children born to HIV-positive mothers lived in alternative care.

When an HIV diagnosis occurs in the family, the household often also suffers disproportionately from stigma, isolation and impoverishment, the report notes. A recent study in Thailand found that many parents had lost jobs as a result of AIDS and that stigmatisation due largely to incorrect beliefs about HIV transmission, was widespread. 'Despite the almost universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in many countries children are still suffering from gross discrimination and exploitation as a result of their HIV status or that of members of their families', said Peter Piot. 'Children have

a right to be better informed and better protected.'

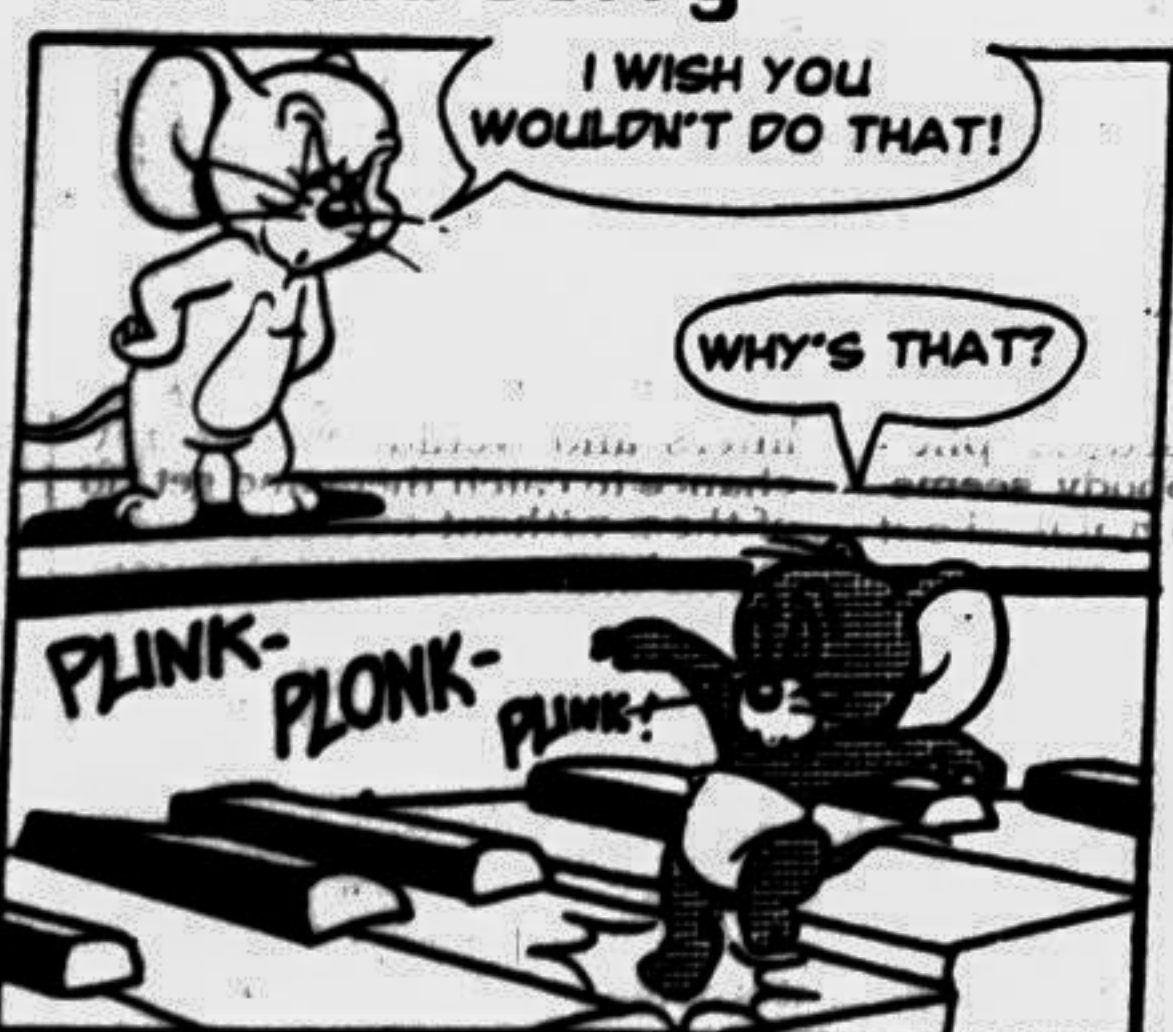
Living in the Shadow of HIV Risk
No one knows how many child sex workers there are in the world but recent figures indicate that more than 1 million children enter the sex trade every year. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has made child sexual abuse and child prostitution more dangerous than ever and the belief that children are less likely to be infected has raised the demand for younger sex workers.

Awareness is also growing of the scale of child abuse that takes place in or near the home. A study of children under 12 being treated for a sexually transmitted disease at a clinic in Zimbabwe showed that the majority had been abused and infected by neighbours or close relatives, the report states.

A Window of Hope
But if children are an increasing part of the AIDS problem, they are also a critical part of the solution. Information and the promotion of children's rights are important keys to reducing risk behaviour. Said Bill Røed, President of MTV Networks International, 'There is an essential need to communicate with young people in a manner which they will understand, appreciate and relate to. HIV and AIDS demand that we talk about some pretty tricky subjects—but I can see no reason for preventing potentially life-saving information from reaching those with most to lose.'

The report recommends a number of areas in which sustained efforts can improve the situation for children, including providing sexual health education; expanding both educational and employment opportunities; and strengthening health and social services to families and communities. 'AIDS has changed the world for children,' said Dr Piot. 'It is the responsibility of everyone—governments, communities and individuals—to rise to this new challenge and to bring urgent support to children and their families as they face the uniquely painful realities of life in a world with AIDS.'

Tom and Jerry



James Bond



The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 7th July
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programme)

BBC

6:00am BBC World News
6:30 World Living: Top Gear
7:00 BBC World News Inc.
World Business Report/Asia Today
7:24 News 10:00 BBC World News
10:30 World Focus: Correspondent
11:30 BBC Newsdesk
12:30 BBC Newsdesk
12:30 Hard Talk: 1:00 BBC World News
1:30 World Focus: Correspondent
2:30 BBC World News
2:25 50 Years Of Independence
2:30 World Living: Building Sights
3:00 BBC World News
3:30 Hard Talk: 4:00 BBC World News
4:30 World Living: Top Gear
5:00 BBC Newsdesk
6:00 BBC World News
6:30 World Focus: Correspondent
7:00 BBC World News
7:15 World Business Report
7:30 BBC Newshour Asia & Pacific
8:25 50 Years Of Independence
8:30 World Living: Film 97
9:00 BBC World News
9:30 Hard Talk
9:55 50 Years Of Independence
10:00 BBC World News
10:30 World Living: Tomorrow's World
11:00 The World Today
12:00 The World Today
12:30 Hard Talk
1:00 BBC World News
1:30 World Focus: Window On Europe
2:00 BBC World News
2:25 50 Years Of Independence
2:30 World Living: Holiday
3:00 BBC Newsdesk Inc.
World Business Report & 24 Hours
5:00 BBC Newsdesk Inc.
Asia Today & World Business Report
5:00 BBC World News
5:10 Newsnight

STAR PLUS

6:00am Travel Asia
6:30 Ninasud
7:30 Good Morning
8:00 Business Agenda
9:30 Nine To Five
10:00 Pierre Franey's Cooking In France
10:30 Video Fashion
11:00 The Wonder Years
11:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show
12:30 Dynasty
1:30 Santa Barbara
2:30 The Bold & The Beautiful
3:00 Jeena Bhi Do Yaaro
4:30 Lost In Space
5:30 Doogie Howser MD
6:00 The Wonder Years
6:30 Pierre Franey's Cooking In France
7:00 Living On The Edge
7:30 Star News (Hindi)
8:00 Small Wonder
8:30 Tu Tu Main Man
9:00 Imithan
9:30 Star News
10:00 Yes Prime Minister
10:30 Chicago Hope
11:30 The Bold & The Beautiful
12:00mn Santa Barbara
1:00 Star News
01:30 The X Files
2:30 Star Trek
3:30 Vega
4:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show
5:30 Barnaby Jones

STAR SPORTS

7:00am Inside PGA Tour
7:30 Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships Men's Singles Final
8:30 World Wrestling Federation Raw
11:00 ITTF Brazilian Open Coverage
12:00 Inside PGA Coverage
12:30 Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Champi-

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Family: The Picture Show Man
12:30 Comedy: The Woman in Red
11:30 Classic: Bachelor of Hearts
12:10 Miniseries: Pride and Prejudice Part 1
2:30 Documentary: My Heroes Were Always Cowboys
3:30 Classic: Bird of Paradise
12:40 Film Club: Unspeakable Acts
15:30 Classic: My Favourite Brunette
12:9:30 This Week That Year
10:30 Comedy: A Perfect Little Murder
12:00 Summer Samura
Yo Jimbo 15 (English Subtitles)
2:00 World Cinema: Walls (English Subtitles)
4:00 Action: The New Gladiators
18:5:30 Comedy: Last Resort 15

ZEE TV

6:00 Jagran
6:30 ZED
7:30 Helpline
8:00 News
8:30 Ghoomta Aaina
9:00 Disney Hour
10:00 Gaana Anjaane
10:30 Nirma
Hum Paanch
11:00 Deak Ghazal
11:30 Umed
12:00 Suhana Sagar
12:30 Dhara Zaike
Ka Sagar
1:00 Love Stories
1:30 Silsila
2:00 Hum Paanch
2:30 Kurukshestra
3:00 Dard
3:30 Lakme Khushbuart
4:00 Vakaalat
4:30 DHM
Khanza
5:00 Arman/Hum

PTV

8:00 TILAWAT AUR TARJUMA
8:30 KHABRAIN
8:45 Ab Pata Chala
9:05 KHAT FARMASHI
9:20 Sargam
9:45 ILAAJ-BIL-GHILZA
PAKISTAN 10:05 Shabb Daigh
10:35 ENGLISH Film: Gooft
Troop
10:55 MILLI NAGMA
11:00 KHABRAIN
11:10 The Saint (Eng. Film Roger Moor)
12:00 Shama (Drama Series)
12:55 DURRAN-E-HAKEEM
1:00 BISMILLAH
1:15 Angaar (Drama Series)
2:00 Shahrad (Drama Series)
2:50 THE FACE OF CULTURAL
3:15 Roushni
3:30 Paimanyar
4:00 Ghadar
4:35 Biology for 10th/Geography/Chemistry
5:55 INTER COLLEGE QUIZ
6:25 AIQU COURSES
7:00 Taranam (Drama Series)
7:45 ENGLISH NEWS
8:00 POTTUCK
8:20 Ali Baba (Drama Series)
8:45 Tum Se Kahani
9:30-9:50 (Series)
9:00 Break for Headline News
10:00 Khabarnaam & Commercial News & Pak Business Update
11:15 Classics Drama Series
11:30 Special: TBA
12:00 KHAS KHABRAIN/CLOSE DOWN.

DD 7

10:30 Game
Game/Janmadin (Birth Day Greetings)
10:35 Educ. Prog.
11:00 Serial: Bakul
11:15 Classical/Folk Songs
11:30 Parliament Hour
12:30 Serial: Chuli
Chuli
1:30 Trishna (Serial)
2:00 Kuasha
Zakhin
2:30 Gaan Niyat
3:00 Drama / Bahari (Serial)
3:30 Feluda-30 (Serial)
5:05 Nepali Programme
5:30 News
5:35 Desh Bidisher
Kheila
6:00 Janmabhumi (Serial)
6:30 Tarunur Janney
6:55 Pali Katha
7:30 Bangla Sambad
7:55 Dinandin
8:00 Anya Bhuban (Serial)
8:30 Feluda-30 (Thriller Serial)
9:00 Janmabhumi (Serial)
9:00 Drama
10:00 Bengali Movie
Club Film Show
1:00 Closed

SONY ET

8:30 Yaadon Ki Baraat (Film Star Magazine Show)
9:00 Double O Slip
9:30 Dennis The Menace (Hindi Dub English Film)
10:55 I Dream Of Jeannie
11:30 Bewitched
11:00 Taak Jhanak
11:30 Gaane Jaane
12:00 Fasteel
12:30 Premier
1:00 Aahat
1:30 The Young And The Restless (Hindi Dub Eng. Serial)
2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film
3:30 Double O Slip
6:00 Dennis The Menace (Hindi Dub English Film)
6:30 Yaadon Ki Baraat (Film Star Magazine Show)
7:00 Dream Of Jeannie (Hindi Dub English Film)
7:30 Bewitched
8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show)
8:30 Humsar
8:45 Ganga Ganga
9:00 Dast
10:00 Shikhat
10:30 Kesh
11:00 Premier
11:30 The Young And The Restless (Hindi Dub Eng. Serial)
12:30 Star Ki Pasand
1:00 O'Maria/Wear Wolf (Serial)
1:30 Wheel Mukatai (Mag)
2:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show)
2:30 Closed



US actress Nicole Eggert, successor of Pamela Anderson in the 'Baywatch' TV serial, sits in an inflatable float as she presents herself to the German public during the live-broadcasting from a beach-party of a German private TV channel in Warnemuende, Germany on Saturday. Her appearance in a black dress and sun-glasses and not in her 'usual' Baywatch-outfit was reported to have caused some disappointment among the — mostly male — audience.

Stand By 7:40 Ched Ched
8:20 Hassen Pal
8:30 Fat Or Fit
9:00 Awaz Naye Andaz
9:30 Peoples Club
10:00 HFF: Mousum
1:00 Hay Ho Ha
1:30 Archie Top Of The Tops
2:00 Sapna Na Vavter
3:30 Shatrani
3:30 Aco Ru Ba Ru
4:00 Tanav
4:30 Zed
5:00 HFF: 7:50 Hassen Pal
8:00 LT Chalo Cinema
8:30 Sory Meri Lorry
9:00 Tehkhat-30
9:30 Parcel Superhit Hungama
10:30 Stand By
10:45 HFF
1:30 Namaste
2:00 Aahaa
2:30 LT Chalo Cinema
3:00 Aco Ru Ba Ru
3:30 Hey Ha
Ho 4:00 HFF

8:00 TILAWAT AUR TARJUMA
8:30 KHABRAIN
8:45 Ab Pata Chala
9:05 KHAT FARMASHI
9:20 Sargam
9:45 ILAAJ-BIL-GHILZA
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11:15 Classics Drama Series
11:30 Special: TBA
12:00 KHAS KHABRAIN/CLOSE DOWN.

8:00 Paying Guest
8:30 TVS
9:15 Jhalak
9:30 Parivartan
10:00 Chattan

10:30 News
11:00 Daraar
11:30 Close Up
Antakshari
12:30 Roshni
12:30 Andaz
1:00 Chahat
Aur Nafrat
1:30

Shojuin Show
2:00 Paying Guest
2:30 Hi Zindagi
Bay Zindagi
3:00 Hindi Feature Film

7:00 Yaadon Ki Baraat
7:30