

exhibition

## The Pangs and Woes of Migrant Workers

Chobi Mela's migrant labour episode by Shahidul Alam ends at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

By Tawfique Ali

"He sat beside me in the plane. A numbered uniform, that he was in, made me inquisitive. I talked to him and this made the revelation of Bangladeshi migrant workers' tale who are beckoned by the promise of distant lands of the globe. This was how I began a photographic composition of their predicament," Shahidul Alam, a prolific photographer and father of modern photography movement in Bangladesh, said while talking about his show at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy gallery.

The photographic exhibition titled 'Migrant Labour' was held as part of the first ever photographic extravaganza, Chobi Mela, in Asia jointly organised by Drik Picture Library Ltd, Pathshala - South Asian Institute of Photography, the Netherlands embassy, the British Council, the Alliance Francaise, the ICCR through the high commission of India, and Goethe Institut.

The plight of the Bangladeshi migrant workers across the world has never been under focus for long now. Mainly the illiterate young folks of this poor country have been driven to launch their



The photographs on the show present a vivid description of deception, mal-treatment, humiliation and dehumanisation that the Bangladeshi labourers suffer at different stages. The picture titled 'Relatives Praying Outside Airport' taken in 1995 tells about the anxiety of a migrant's relatives. In this photograph relatives of one Abdul Malek, bound for Tripoly, are seen to camp at the airport one day ahead of his departure and pray for his safe travel and well-being.

In 'Friends of Migrant Workers at Wire Fence' taken in 1996, depicts a painful separation of a worker from his friends. The wire they holds at, mark the departure more poignantly.

A woman bids farewell to her husband, leaving for work in the Mid-East, from across the glass panels at the Zia International Airport. The husband is seen



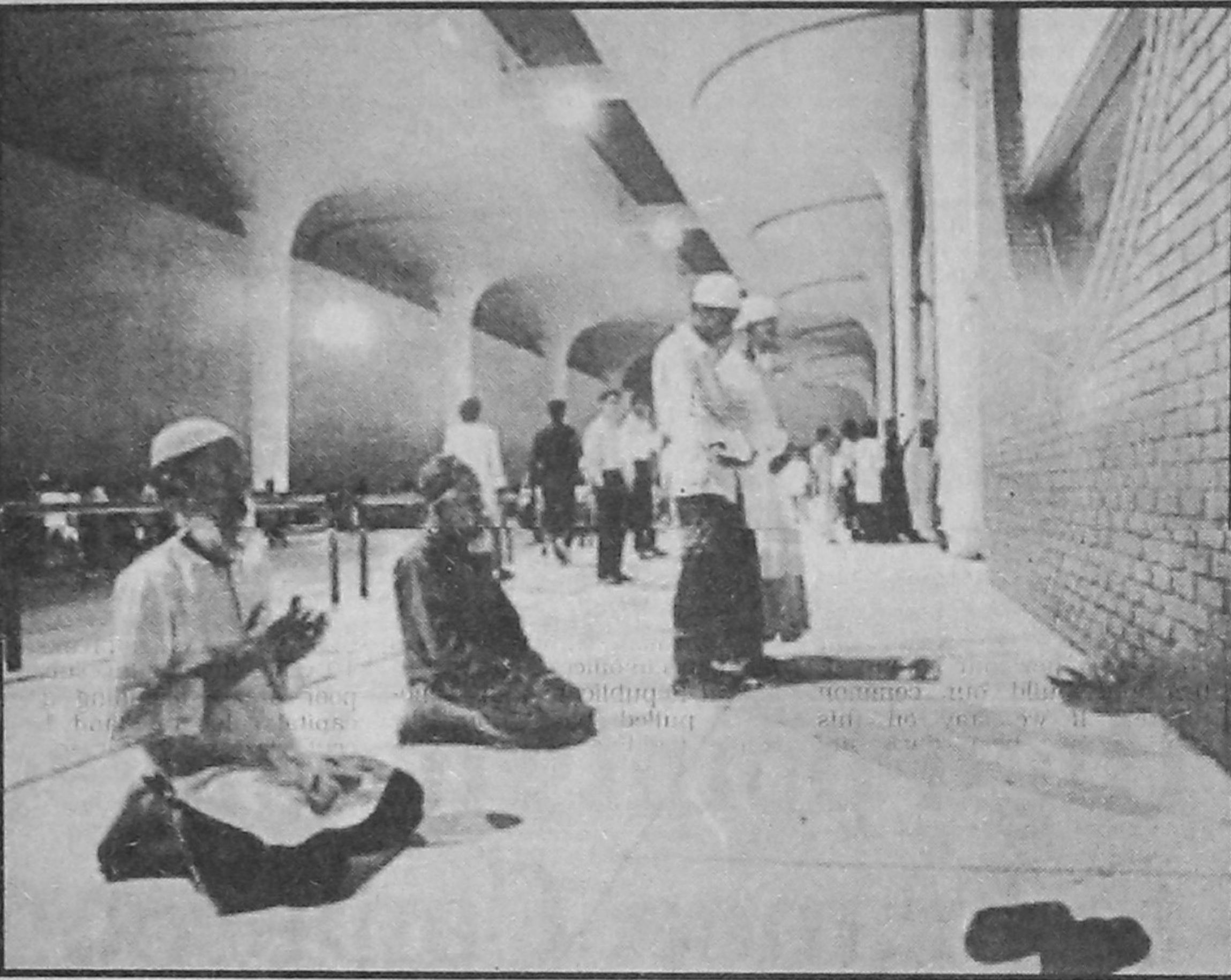
parting his wife apparently with smiling face but evidently with a heavy heart full of pangs.

At 'Airport queue' the labourers are exposed to mal-treatment in the hands of the airport officials. Though migrant workers make up most of the passengers in certain routes, airport officials generally treat them with disdain. Unaware of their rights, workers are often harassed and abused but await patiently to get their destination. Compared to what they have already faced, long queues and rough behavior are no difficulties to them.

The image titled 'Bangladeshi Construction Workers in front of Petronas Tower' taken in 1998, hints at the irony of life that these workers who sweat their guts out in construction of the world's highest structure will never enter the exclusive boutiques in the complex.

'Little India', title of a picture on the show, is where workers from the sub-continent gather every Sunday afternoon in Singapore. Here they enjoy their pastime. Here even Chinese shopkeepers speak a little a Bangla. Those who can't read have others read their letters from home. For some, it's nearly one place where they are with kin, and are not seen as foreigners by those around them.

The exhibition also showcases one photograph of a recruiting agent who has become 'Prince' Musa. He bathes in rosewater and wears diamond encrusted shoes and as such it has been titled Diamond in his Shoes.



precarious journeys all across the world in quest of economic emancipation. The illusive glow of materially prosperous lands of the world have always tempted them to head for there at any cost.

Being lashed up by acute poverty, these unemployed folks desperately seek for a social mobility and a little comfort of life. They immediately get entrapped by the allure of the deceitful manpower agents. Fake promises made to them enkindle their innocent hope for prosperity all the more. Sometimes mortgaging their last resort, virtually mortgaging themselves, they enterprise to construct their only hope, to uplift their destiny. The tale of their disillusionment and inexplicable sufferings throughout the entire process begins there.

Shahidul Alam, also the festival director of the Chobi Mela, has made up an honest and sincere depiction of dreadful sufferings that these helpless people undergo at different phases to get to their dream lands.

Of three phased work on the Bangladeshi migrant labourers, Shahidul's first phase projects the plight of the migrant workers in the region from the Middle-East to Malaysia.

### Recommendations



#### Circus Women

Indian photographer Saibal Das peeps beyond the glamour of shows and picks up the glimpses of the circus women their joy and misery, their agony and amusement entwined in their everyday life. The show is part of the ongoing Chobi Mela, 1st Festival of Photography in Asia. The show is being held at Russian Cultural Centre and will run until December 23 from 9 am to 4 pm.

#### Exhibition on Liberation

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Liberation War, the Liberation War Museum has put up a month-long exhibition titled *Gourabmoy Atmadan Chiro-Jagoruk*.

The remains found in the killing fields of Jallakhana and Nuri Masjid and some photographs are being exhibited, at the museum gallery at Segun Bagicha.

#### Exhibition

A comic exhibition titled *Ora Prithibir Swapna Dekhe*, 2000 Saier Chhobi planned by Association Francaise d'Action Artistique is being held at the gallery of the L'Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Open to all, the exhibition will run until January 9, 2001 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon every day.



#### Interactive

##### Painting Show

A creatively interactive painting exhibition, titled *Mye, Yours, His/Her's and Everybody Else's Paintings* by Omar Zafar is now being held at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts at Dhanmandi. The show will remain open on December 21-22 and from December 31-January 9, 2001. The gallery will remain closed from December 24-30 for Eid holidays.

## TV GUIDE

### PICK OF THE DAY



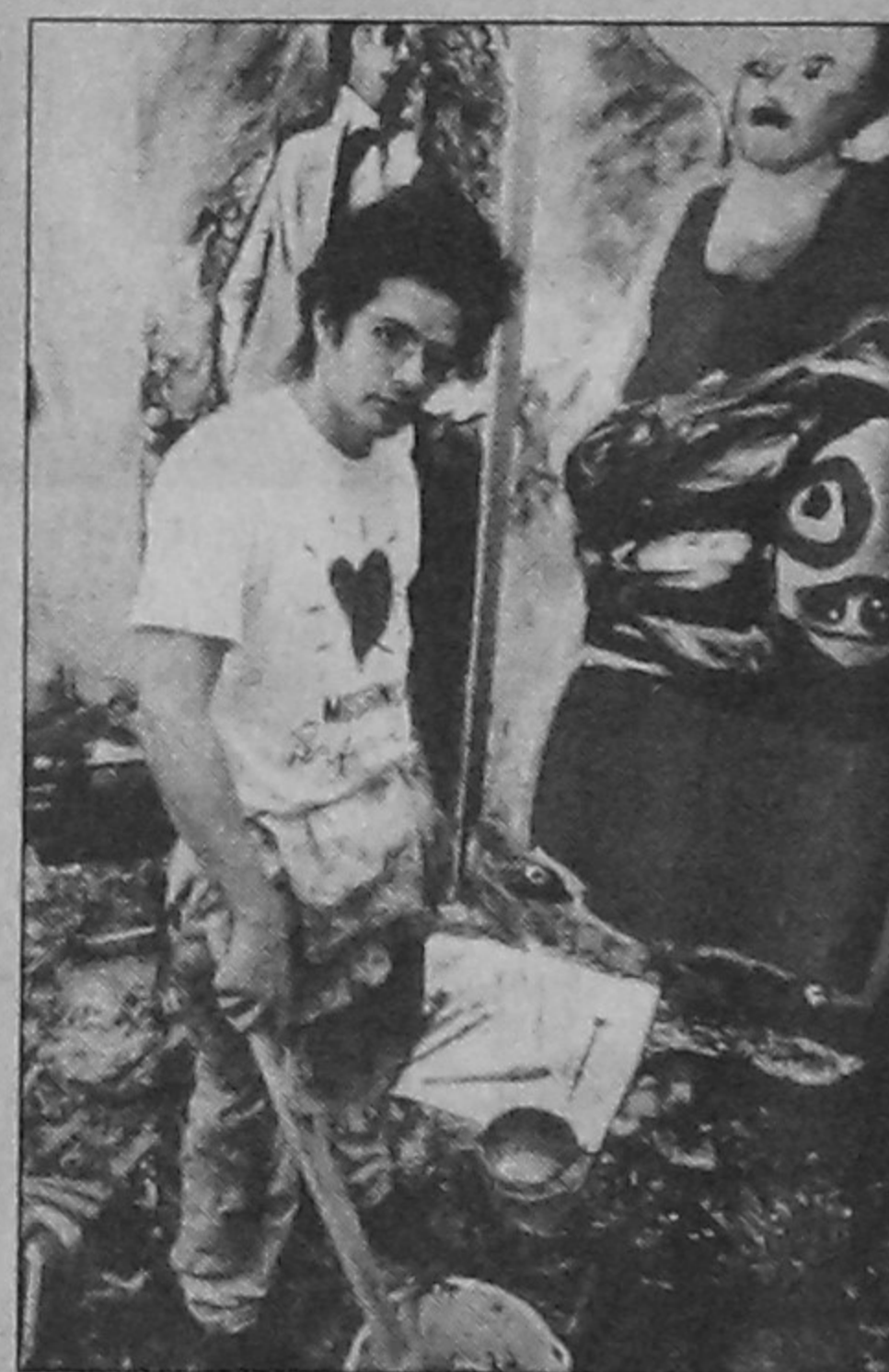
#### My Best Friend's Wedding on HBO on at 10 pm.

'Pretty Women' Julia Roberts stars as Julianne Potter in the best romantic comedy of the year, who falls in love with her best friend the day he decides to marry someone else. The movie tells the funny, romantic story of how far we have come and how long we will go in the game of love. Starring Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett

**BBC WORLD**  
6:00 BBC News 6:30 World Business Report 7:00 BBC News 7:30 Asia Today/World Business Report 8:00 BBC News 8:30 Asia Today/World Business Report 9:00 BBC News 9:30 Asia Today/World Business Report 10:00 BBC News 10:30 Hardtalk 11:00 BBC News 11:30 Talking Movies 12:00 BBC News 12:30 Question Time India 1:30 Click Online 2:00 BBC News 2:30 Louis Theroux's Weekends (45-49) Moral Combat (50-52) Global Sunrise (53) 3:00 BBC News 3:30 Talking Movies (45-47) Pull Of The City (48-50) Nobel Minds (51) TBA (52) Royal Collart (53) 8:00 BBC News 8:30 Click Online 9:00 BBC

News 9:45 Generous Rich (45) Bubble Trouble (46-48) Tate Mod (49-50) Shock (51) Royal (52) Global Sunrise (53) 10:00 BBC News 10:30 Mastermind India 11:00 BBC News 11:30 Talking Movies 12:00 BBC News 12:30 This Week 1:00 BBC News 1:30 Earth Report ex World Review 2:00 BBC News / Louis Theroux's Weekends (45) Inside Dot Coms (46-49) Moral Combat (50-52) Global Sunrise (53) 3:00 BBC News 3:30 Talking Movies (45-47) Pull Of The City (48-50) Nobel Minds (51) TBA (52) Royal Coll Art (53) 5:00 BBC News 5:30 Eur Dir (48, 52) USA Dir (45, 49, 53) Sci Wild (46, 50) Aus Dir (47, 51)

**CNN**  
4:00 World Business Today 4:30 Inside Asia 5:00 CNN World View 5:30 Moneyline News Hour 6:30 World Beat World News Americas 7:00 The Artclub 8:00 Larry King Live 9:00 World News 9:30 World Sport 10:00 World News 10:30 Showbiz Today 11:00 World News 11:30 Science and Technology Week 12:00 World News 12:30 CNN Hotspots 1:00 World Sport 1:30 World Sport 2:00 World News 2:30 Style with Elsa Klensch 3:00 Larry



Royal College of Art on BBC World at 2.30 pm

King Live (replay) 4:00 World News 4:30 CNNdotCOM 5:00 World News 5:30 World Sport 6:00 World News 6:30 Biz Asia 7:00 World News 7:30 World Beat 8:00 World News 8:30 The Artclub 9:00 World News 9:30 Style South Asia 10:00 World News 10:30 CNNdotCOM 11:00 Business Unusual 11:30 CNN Indiadotcom 12:00 World News 12:30 Ebizasia 1:00 World News 1:30 CNN Hotspots 2:00 World

**AXN**  
6:00 Anime/Twin Signal 7:00 Gogs 8:00 Grander Musashi RV 9:00 Silk Stalkings V I / C a l l M e @ M u r d e r . c o m 10:00 World Most Amazing/Video II 11:00 Anime/Twin Signal 12:00 Gogs 1:00 Movie: Stand Off 3:00 Who Dares Wins/Grander Musashi RV 4:00 Grander Musashi

RV/Walker's World 5:00 Silk Stalkings VI/Exit the Dragon 6:00 World Most Amazing Video II 7:00 Profiler III Las Brisas pt2 8:00 Movie: Blue Submarine 10:00 World Most Amazing Video II 11:00 Movie: Blue Submarine 2:00 Big Sky II/Just Between Us 3:00 Silk Stalking IV/Pax de Duex

**ZEE CINEMA**  
6:30 Sati Nari (Manhar, Anita Guha) 10:30 Jigri Dust (Jeetendra, Mumtaz) 2:00 Bamba Ka Babu (Dev Anand, Suchitra Sen) 6:30 Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahin (Aamir Khan, Pojo Bhatt) 11:30 Kamasutra (Rekha) 2:30 Men Izzat Bacho (Chandrar, Anu Dhawan)

**ZEE MGM**  
4:00 The Coming 6:30 Doctor in Distress 9:00 Summer Dreams 11:30 Colours 2:00 Perfect Match 4:30 Break Dance 7:00 Escapes 9:30 Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey 11:30 Diary of a Hit Man 1:30 Moon Struck

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**  
7:00 Family Hour: Dance of the deep 8:00 Saturday Unlimited: World of Clones



101 Dalmatians on Star Movies at 9 am

**BTB**  
Morning session 9:00 Opening announcement 9:15 Programme on self defence 9:35 Dripta Uchharan: Programme on recreation 10:00 Programme on mother and child health 10:20 Movie of the holy Sabe-Kader 10:00 News at Ten 10:20 Milad Mahfil in observance of the holy Sabe-Kader 11:15 Khabar/ The News 11:30 Closing



Mukta Khabar on Ekushey TV at 7.20 pm

the week: Iranian feature film 12:00 Closing  
**Evening session**  
3:00 Opening announcement 3:20 Children programme marking the holy Sabe-Kader 4:00 Khabar 4:05 Hamdt-o-Nath in observance of the holy Sabe-Kader 4:50 Mahe Ramadan 5:30 Special discussion programme on holy Sabe-Kader 6:00 Khabar 6:10 Hamdt-o-Nath 6:30 Programme of the Chittagong centre 7:00 Hamdt-o-Nath 8:00 News in Bangla 8:20 Special programme marking

**ALPHA TV BANGLA**  
6:00 Alaap 7:00 Grihosajja 7:30 News/Arghya 8:00 Andolon 8:30 Cine News 9:00 News/Bharat Bhromon 9:30 Bahari Aabar 10:00 Grihosajja 10:30 Jhara Samayer Upakatha 11:00 Bhawani Purer Chattujera 11:30 Googly 12:00 Bahari Aabar 12:30 Manabi 1:00 Daibadha 1:30

Chena Mukh Achena Manush 2:00 Sat Kahan 3:30 Feature Film 5:00 Zee Jalsa 5:30 Googly 6:00 Arghya 6:30 Apna Der Janya 7:00 Surer Ni Jhama Dhara 7:30 News 8:00 Hiyar Majhe 8:30 Chokher Bali 9:00 Major Khela Kobitae 9:30 Jeman Bolben Sir 10:00 News/Triyo Purush 10:30 Sa Re Ca Ma 11:30 Monniye 12:00 Arghya 12:30 Bharat Bhromon 1:00 Shudhu Tomake Chai 1:30 Feature Film 4:00 Manabi 4:30 Ghuhasajja 5:00 Jemon Bolben Sir 5:30 Mojare Khela Kobitae

#### DISCOVERY CHANNEL

6:30 Go For It 7:30 Ushuaia 8:30 Lonely Planet 9:30 Future Tense 10:00 Eyewitness II 10:30 Untamed Australia 11:30 Untamed Amazonia 12:30 Wild Asia 1:30 Ultimate Guide 2:30 Amazing Worlds 3:30 Extreme Machines IV 4:30 Extreme Machines IV 5:00 Inside the Space 5:30 Assignment Discovery 6:30 ARK Tales of the Animal Rescue Kids 7:00 Splat IV 7:30 21st Century Medicine 8:30 Health Showcase 9:30 New Detectives III 10:30 Travelers 11:30 African Adventures 12:00 Adventure Crazy 12:30 21st Century Medicine 1:30 Health Showcase 2:30 New Detectives III 3:30



Xena: Warrior Princess on Star World at 5 pm

Travelers 4:30 African Adventures 5:00 Adventure Crazy 5:30 Discover Magazine

#### STAR GOLD

8:30 Bollywood News 9:00 Beti Bete (Sunil Dutt, B Saroj Devi, Jamuna) 12:00 Geet Bahar 12:30 Geetanjali (Jeetendra, Rekha) 3:30 Bollywood News 4:00 Dahej (Jayshree, Prithviraj Kapoor) 7:00 Geet Bahar 7:30 Saturday Special: Satyakam (Dharmendra, Hema Malini) 10:30 Hello Cinema 11:00 Sanjog (Amitabh Bachchan, Mala Sinha) 12:30 Sanjog (Cont) 2:00 Geet Bahar 2:30 Dahej (Jayshree, Prithviraj Kapoor) 5:30 Sanjog (Amitabh Bachchan, Mala Sinha)

#### STAR PLUS (INDIA)

6:00 Hello Cinema 6:30 Star Geetmala 7:30 Good Morning India 8:30 Fox Kids 10:30 National Geographic Special 11:30 Love My India 12:00 Chupa Rustom 12:30 Mirch Masala 1:30 TSN 1:30 Charwali Uparwali 2:00 Kabhi Kabhie Mere Ghar Mein Bhuchaal Aata Hai 2:30 National Geographic Special 3:30 Tea Time Cinema: 6:30 Musaffir Hoon Yaron 7:00 Family Fortunes 7:30 Chalti Ka Naam Antakshiri 8:30 STAR Mast Movies: Radha Ka Sangam 11:30 Aaj Ki Baat 12:00 Zor (cont.) 12:30 Siski 1:00 Kalash 1:30 I Love My India 2:00 Kabhi Kabhie Mere Ghar Mein Bhuchaal Aata Hai 2:30 Hasna Matt 3:00 Hello Cinema 3:30 National Geographic Special 4:30 Musaffir Hoon Yaron 5:00 Gharwali Uparwali 5:30 Shrimati Sharma Na Kehti Thi

#### STAR MOVIES

7:00 Drama: Ever After: A Cinderella Story G 9:00 Family: 101 Dalmatians 11:00 Thriller: The Secret Pack 12 1:00 Comedy: The Ref 12 3:00 Drama: The Christmas List PG 5:00 Comedy: Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure 7:00 Drama: Ever After: A Cinderella Story G 9:30 US Top Ten 10:00 Thrillennium: Die Hard-2 15 1990 12:00 Saturday Late Night Movies: The Christmas Takeover G 2:00 Thriller: The Secret Pack 12 4:00 E! THIS: Death by Disco 5:00 Drama: The Christmas List PG