WHAT'S ON

Group Art Exhibition
Title: Standard Chartered Sreejoni 2010
Venue: Dhaka Art Centre, H-60, R-7/A, Dhanmondi
Date: April 1-10

Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Symphony of Colours
Artist: Syed Abdullah Khalid
Venue: Galleri Kaya, H-20, R-16, S-4, Uttara
Date: April 12-29

Grand Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Saju Art Gallery, DCC Market, Gulshan-2
Date: April 1-30
Time: 10am-8pm

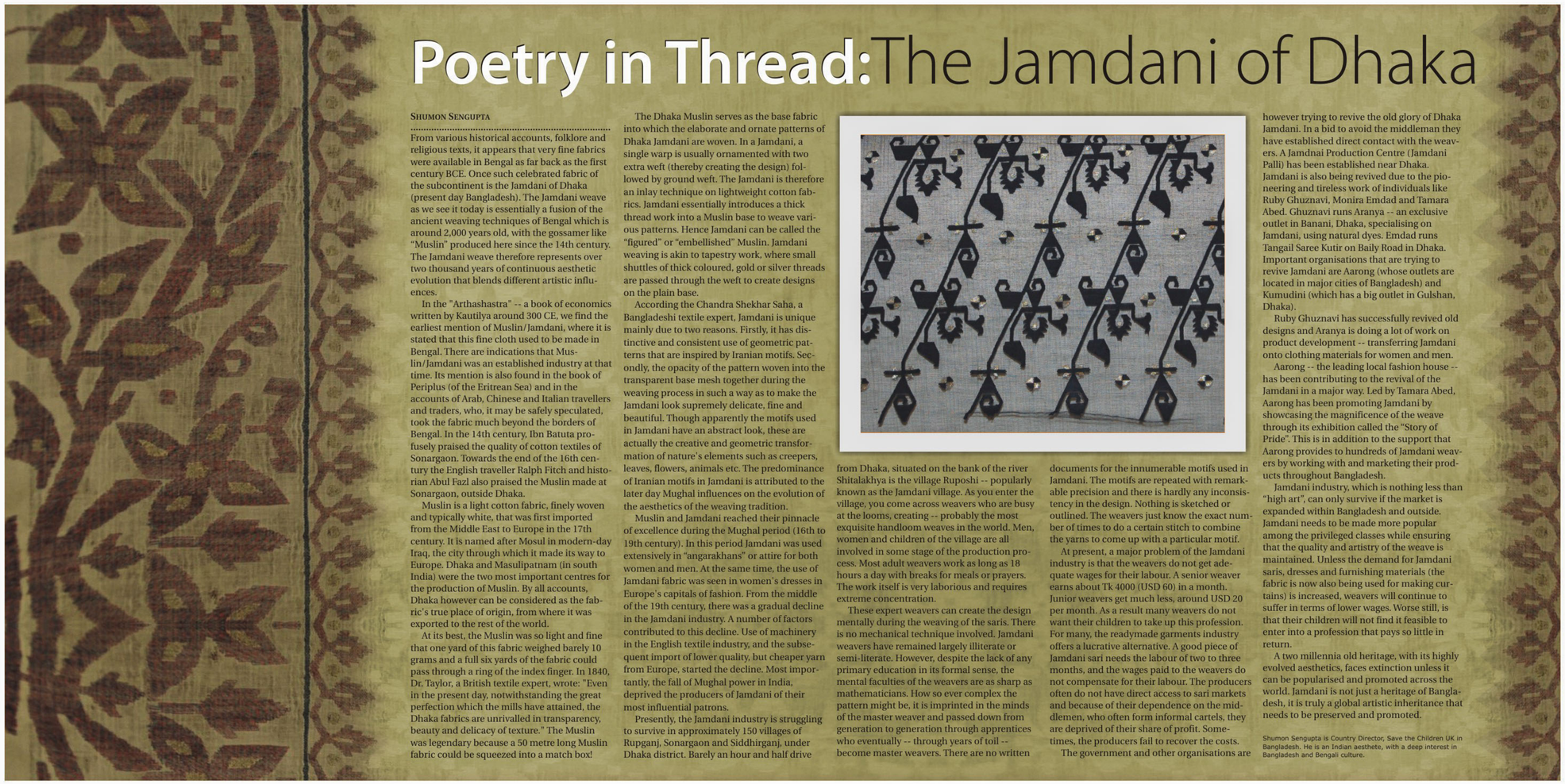
Book Fair
Organiser: Adorn Publication
Venue: Public Library, Seminar Hall, Shahbagh
Date: April 2-13
Time: 10am-8pm

Documentary Screening
Title: Bangladesh-e Rabindranath
Organiser: Surlok
Venue: Bangladesh National Museum Auditorium

Syed Badaruddin Hossain Smrity Natyo Utshab
Venue: National Theatre, BSA
Date: April 6-12

Recitation Fest for Children
In Memory of Waheedul Haque
Venue: Plaza, National Art Gallery, Shilpakala Academy

Contemporary Australian Art Exhibition
Title: BALGO
Venue: Gallery Cosmos, 69/1, New Circular Road, Malibagh
Date: April 1-13



Poetry in Thread: The Jamdani of Dhaka

SHUMON SENGUPTA

From various historical accounts, folklore and religious texts, it appears that very fine fabrics were available in Bengal as far back as the first century BCE. Once such celebrated fabric of the subcontinent is the Jamdani of Dhaka (present day Bangladesh). The Jamdani weave as we see it today is essentially a fusion of the ancient weaving techniques of Bengal which is around 2,000 years old, with the gossamer like "Muslin" produced here since the 14th century. The Jamdani weave therefore represents over two thousand years of continuous aesthetic evolution that blends different artistic influences.

In the "Arthashastra" -- a book of economics written by Kautilya around 300 CE, we find the earliest mention of Muslin/Jamdani, where it is stated that this fine cloth used to be made in Bengal. There are indications that Muslin/Jamdani was an established industry at that time. Its mention is also found in the book of Periplus (of the Eritrean Sea) and in the accounts of Arab, Chinese and Italian travellers and traders, who, it may be safely speculated, took the fabric much beyond the borders of Bengal. In the 14th century, Ibn Batuta profusely praised the quality of cotton textiles of Sonargaon. Towards the end of the 16th century the English traveller Ralph Fitch and historian Abul Fazl also praised the Muslin made at Sonargaon, outside Dhaka.

Muslin is a light cotton fabric, finely woven and typically white, that was first imported from the Middle East to Europe in the 17th century. It is named after Mosul in modern-day Iraq, the city through which it made its way to Europe. Dhaka and Masulpatnam (in south India) were the two most important centres for the production of Muslin. By all accounts, Dhaka however can be considered as the fabric's true place of origin, from where it was exported to the rest of the world.

At its best, the Muslin was so light and fine that one yard of this fabric weighed barely 10 grams and a full six yards of the fabric could pass through a ring of the index finger. In 1840, Dr. Taylor, a British textile expert, wrote: "Even in the present day, notwithstanding the great perfection which the mills have attained, the Dhaka fabrics are unrivalled in transparency, beauty and delicacy of texture." The Muslin was legendary because a 50 metre long Muslin fabric could be squeezed into a match box!

The Dhaka Muslin serves as the base fabric into which the elaborate and ornate patterns of Dhaka Jamdani are woven. In a Jamdani, a single warp is usually ornamented with two extra weft (thereby creating the design) followed by ground weft. The Jamdani is therefore an inlay technique on lightweight cotton fabrics. Jamdani essentially introduces a thick thread work into a Muslin base to weave various patterns. Hence Jamdani can be called the "figured" or "embellished" Muslin. Jamdani weaving is akin to tapestry work, where small shuttles of thick coloured, gold or silver threads are passed through the weft to create designs on the plain base.

According the Chandra Shekhar Saha, a Bangladeshi textile expert, Jamdani is unique mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, it has distinctive and consistent use of geometric patterns that are inspired by Iranian motifs. Secondly, the opacity of the pattern woven into the transparent base mesh together during the weaving process in such a way as to make the Jamdani look supremely delicate, fine and beautiful. Though apparently the motifs used in Jamdani have an abstract look, these are actually the creative and geometric transformation of nature's elements such as creepers, leaves, flowers, animals etc. The predominance of Iranian motifs in Jamdani is attributed to the later day Mughal influences on the evolution of the aesthetics of the weaving tradition.

Muslin and Jamdani reached their pinnacle of excellence during the Mughal period (16th to 19th century). In this period Jamdani was used extensively in "angarakhans" or attire for both women and men. At the same time, the use of Jamdani fabric was seen in women's dresses in Europe's capitals of fashion. From the middle of the 19th century, there was a gradual decline in the Jamdani industry. A number of factors contributed to this decline. Use of machinery in the English textile industry, and the subsequent import of lower quality, but cheaper yarn from Europe, started the decline. Most importantly, the fall of Mughal power in India, deprived the producers of Jamdani of their most influential patrons.

Presently, the Jamdani industry is struggling to survive in approximately 150 villages of Rupganj, Sonargaon and Siddhirganj, under Dhaka district. Barely an hour and half drive from Dhaka, situated on the bank of the river Shitalakhya is the village Ruposhi -- popularly known as the Jamdani village. As you enter the village, you come across weavers who are busy at the looms, creating -- probably the most exquisite handloom weaves in the world. Men, women and children of the village are all involved in some stage of the production process. Most adult weavers work as long as 18 hours a day with breaks for meals or prayers. The work itself is very laborious and requires extreme concentration.

These expert weavers can create the design mentally during the weaving of the saris. There is no mechanical technique involved. Jamdani weavers have remained largely illiterate or semi-literate. However, despite the lack of any primary education in its formal sense, the mental faculties of the weavers are as sharp as mathematicians. How so ever complex the pattern might be, it is imprinted in the minds of the master weaver and passed down from generation to generation through apprentices who eventually -- through years of toil -- become master weavers. There are no written documents for the innumerable motifs used in Jamdani. The motifs are repeated with remarkable precision and there is hardly any inconsistency in the design. Nothing is sketched or outlined. The weavers just know the exact number of times to do a certain stitch to combine the yarns to come up with a particular motif.

At present, a major problem of the Jamdani industry is that the weavers do not get adequate wages for their labour. A senior weaver earns about Tk 4000 (USD 60) in a month. Junior weavers get much less, around USD 20 per month. As a result many weavers do not want their children to take up this profession. For many, the readymade garments industry offers a lucrative alternative. A good piece of Jamdani sari needs the labour of two to three months, and the wages paid to the weavers do not compensate for their labour. The producers often do not have direct access to sari markets and because of their dependence on the middlemen, who often form informal cartels, they are deprived of their share of profit. Sometimes, the producers fail to recover the costs.

The government and other organisations are however trying to revive the old glory of Dhaka Jamdani. In a bid to avoid the middleman they have established direct contact with the weavers. A Jamdnai Production Centre (Jamdani Palli) has been established near Dhaka. Jamdani is also being revived due to the pioneering and tireless work of individuals like Ruby Ghuznavi, Monira Emdad and Tamara Abed. Ghuznavi runs Aranya -- an exclusive outlet in Banani, Dhaka, specialising on Jamdani, using natural dyes. Emdad runs Tangail Saree Kutir on Baily Road in Dhaka. Important organisations that are trying to revive Jamdani are Aarong (whose outlets are located in major cities of Bangladesh) and Kumudini (which has a big outlet in Gulshan, Dhaka).

Ruby Ghuznavi has successfully revived old designs and Aranya is doing a lot of work on product development -- transferring Jamdani onto clothing materials for women and men.

Aarong -- the leading local fashion house -- has been contributing to the revival of the Jamdani in a major way. Led by Tamara Abed, Aarong has been promoting Jamdani by showcasing the magnificence of the weave through its exhibition called the "Story of Pride". This is in addition to the support that Aarong provides to hundreds of Jamdani weavers by working with and marketing their products throughout Bangladesh.

Jamdani industry, which is nothing less than "high art", can only survive if the market is expanded within Bangladesh and outside. Jamdani needs to be made more popular among the privileged classes while ensuring that the quality and artistry of the weave is maintained. Unless the demand for Jamdani saris, dresses and furnishing materials (the fabric is now also being used for making curtains) is increased, weavers will continue to suffer in terms of lower wages. Worse still, is that their children will not find it feasible to enter into a profession that pays so little in return.

A two millennia old heritage, with its highly evolved aesthetics, faces extinction unless it can be popularised and promoted across the world. Jamdani is not just a heritage of Bangladesh, it is truly a global artistic inheritance that needs to be preserved and promoted.

Shumon Sengupta is Country Director, Save the Children UK in Bangladesh. He is an Indian aesthete, with a deep interest in Bangladesh and Bengali culture.

AR Rahman's Biography Launched

The story of music maestro AR Rahman's life was out this week.

It was Mani Ratnam, director and long-time friend of Rahman, who officially launched the book, "AR Rahman: The Spirit of Music", at a hotel in Juhu, Mumbai. The book was the result of a series of conversations with documentary filmmaker and writer Nasreen Munni Kabir.

Before getting around to actually launching the book, Ratnam recalled how they first met at Rahman's tiny studio. It was about one-fourth the size Ratnam was used to but the melodies he heard were simply beautiful.

But Ratnam says there is more to Rahman than mere music.

"As much a fan I am of his music I am a bigger admirer of him as a human being," Ratnam said of his friend.

The book took four years to complete, during which Kabir spoke to Rahman some times in person, at others via a video conferencing facility.

Kabir reflected on the many nuances of Rahman's personality.

"Rahman is not shy but he is a reserved person; you have to engage him properly to talk to him," she said. Kabir is used to nuance, given the disparate characters she highlighted in her documentaries on Hindi cinema, including Guru Dutt, Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan.

Speaking about the book, Rahman said his favourite chapter describes the time his mother, seeing how depressed he was because he had no money to buy equipment for his studio, sold the jewellery that she had kept aside for his sister's wedding. He used the Rs 4 lakh she got from the sale to buy the equipment.

Rahman went on to describe the people who contributed in his eventful journey in music. Naturally, he mentioned Ratnam, his friend and early mentor, before going on to name Ashutosh Gowariker, Ram Gopal Varma and Subhash Ghai, all of whom were present. Also present were director Imtiaz Ali and percussionist Shivmani.

Discussing his book later, he said, "There are lots of facts about me. What Nasreen [Kabir] wanted is a completeness." He described the book as universal while still maintaining a simple tone.

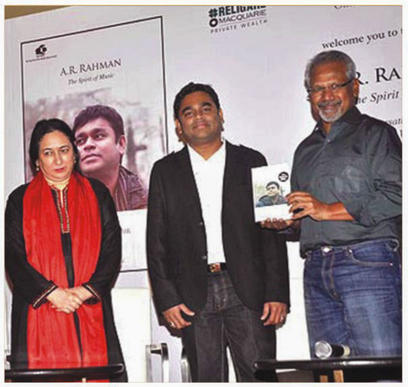
Asked if he had yet endured failure after the high of the Oscars, he responded philosophically, saying that if fame came along in plenty, the opposite was also a likelihood.

"I am just waiting for it. In fact it came, in a way, but I could handle it, it was not as disastrous as I had thought. Plus, it was helpful [that I was] spiritual. I have been in the media from the age of 13. I was playing [music] on Doordarshan. But after a while you get immune to all [these positive strokes] in a good way." And that detachment has helped him manage even the few crises he has had to deal with, Rahman says.

Asked if indeed planned to start a film production company, he responded guardedly in the affirmative.

However cautious he is about a film company, Rahman has nothing to worry about on account of his music school, the KM Music Conservatory. The school, on which the musical mastermind lavishes attention, is headed for bigger things, Rahman says.

Compiled by Correspondent



(From left) Nasreen Munni Kabir, AR Rahman and Mani Ratnam at the book launch.

Focus on Sylheti Icons

Documentary Festival at SUST

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, *Sylhet*

A two-day documentary film festival organised by Chokh Film Society of the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) concluded on April 6 at the mini auditorium on campus.

Among the documentaries screened were "Nibhritacharini" (on the life and works of veteran social activist Suhashini Debi, who fought against colonial rule and espoused the cause of education for underprivileged girls in Sylhet); "Surer Manik" (on the life of veteran music collector and vocalist Ramkanai Das) and "Kemoney Chinibo Tomarey" (on "Baul Samrat" Shah Abdul Karim).

SUST Vice Chancellor Professor Md. Saleh Uddin was present as chief guest at the opening programme. Noted writer Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, also advisor of Chokh Film Society, formally inaugurated the event.

Proshanto Mridha, Shekhor Himadri, Md. Shafiqul Islam, Farzana Siddiqua and Zayeda Sharmin Swati also addressed the inaugural function.

The chief guest and speakers thanked the director Nironjan Dey Jadu for his excellent portrayal of the legendary figures and their contributions to the nation in the three documentaries. These would help present the iconic figures accurately to the young, they asserted.

Penelope Cruz to collaborate with Woody Allen again

Penelope Cruz and Woody Allen are set to come together again for a new movie.

Cruz won an Oscar for her role in Allen's "Vicky Cristina Barcelona" and now the Spanish beauty has revealed that she's planning her next film with the director.

"I know (what I'm doing next), but the thing is that I have to ask the director what I can say and what I cannot say, because he's very secretive. It's a movie with Woody Allen. But I really cannot say anything about the story or the characters," she said.

Allen recently announced that he planned on shooting his as-yet-unnamed next film in Rome.

Ironically, the director's new movie "Midnight in Paris" will open on May 20, the same day as Cruz's "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides".

Source: Internet

WHAT TO WATCH

Thakurma'r Jhuli on Channel i

A CORRESPONDENT

An impressive array of indigenous fairy tales consisting of exotic characters ranging from frogs and talking birds to kings, queens and demons, is collectively known as "Thakurma'r Jhuli". These stories, popular in Bengal, from time immemorial were collected by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar. From the seemingly uncountable stories, Titto Ridwan had picked up "Shonar Chul" [Golden Hair] and "Jadur Hari" [Magic Pot] to base his drama serial on. "Sonar Chul" narrates how a farmer's son goes from rags to riches. In a slightly different vein, "Jadur Hari" is the story of a farmer overcoming his greed through a lot of struggles. The serial is aired every Saturday at 5:30pm on Channel i.

Natya Chakra staged its popular production "Bhaddornok" on April 7 at the National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The play was staged as part of the ongoing theatre festival by Padatik Natya Sangsad (TSC). The adaptation of a Molière work was directed by Golam Sarwar.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

THE WEEKLY STRUM

Song: Roder Phota
Album: Shoborbondi (2009)
Band: Meghdol
Lyric and tune by Shibu Kumer Shill

(Meghdol plays their songs on D#)

C.....G.....
Shunnotay Dheke Geche
C.....G.....
Sohorer Shob Poth Ghat
C.....G...
Phirbe Na Gotokal Jani
C.....G...
Phirbe Na Agamikal

C.....G.....
Tobu Chaichi Tomakei...
C.....G..
Tule Nite Anjolite..
C.....G....
Roder Phota...

C.....G.....
Shono Kobi Shono Kobita...
C.....G.....
Bhango Dirgho Murchona...

E.....G.....
Rakho Ei Khane Haat Tuku
A.....Dm....G
Tobu Chole Jete Bolo Na

C.....G.....
Shunnotay Dube Geche
C.....G....
Shohor er Baki Itihash
C.....G...
Phirbo Na Tumi Aar Ami
C.....G.....
Phirbo Na Hoyto Abar

C.....
Shunnotar Shokshobha..
.....E.....
Shunnotar Joto Gaan..
C.....G.....
Dilam Tomar Mukut..e...
E.....G....
Amar Joto Obhiman....

Chords by Meghdol

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

ATN BANGLA
11:10 Hajar Bachhor-er Bangla Gaan
02:50 Bangla Feature Film
06:15 Shastha Thakun
10:45 Bihango Kotha
01:00 Campus Parliament

CHANNEL i
12:05 Ebong Cnemar Gaan
01:05 Bangla Feature Film
05:15 Krishi Shangbad
09:35 Hridoye Mati O Manush
11:30 Fun Club Tournament
12:00 Ajker Shangbadpotro

ntv
10:05 Bangla Feature Film
12:50 Shastha Protidin
04:10 Gallery
06:45 Shangskriti Ei Shaptaho
09:00 Viewers Hour
11:30 Ha-Show
05:15 Boishakhi-CNN Shara Bishwa
08:45 Onno Alor Gaan
11:30 Boishakhi Binodon O Shangskritti Sangbad
12:30 Shudhu Cinemar Gaan

Diganta TV
12:30 Score Cards
01:30 School Angina
05:30 Aparajita
08:05 Career Line
10:00 Prime Time
11:05 Down the Wicket

Z Studio
10:55 Wild Hogs
01:30 The Hurricane
05:10 Scary Movie 4
07:10 Shortcut to Happiness
09:30 Duplex
11:30 Snake Eyes

HBO
11:15 Clueless

RADIO

abc radio FM 89.2
06:00 Bhorer Janalay
09:00 Mukhorito Jiboney
12:25 Standard Chartered-The Daily Star Jiboner Joygaan
03:00 Duranto Bikeley
05:00 Shonchatara
07:00 Shajer Maya
09:00 Raat-er Akashey
11:00 Golper Shesh Nei

RADIO FOORTI
08:00 Addabazi
02:00 Foorti Unlimited
06:00 Bumper to Bumper
10:00 Back to Back music

RADIO TODAY FM 89.6
06:00 Green FM
08:00 Good Morning Dhaka
11:00 World Music
04:00 U Turn
07:00 Tobe Tai Hok
10:00 Raat Vor Gaan

Neel
On ATN BANGLA at 08:40pm
Drama Serial
Cast: Nazneen Hasan Chumki, Joyraj

City of Ember
On Star Movies at 10:25pm
Genre: Adventure/ Family
Cast: Saoirse Ronan, Toby Jones

Nikamal-er Bioscope
On Desh TV at 09:45pm
Drama Serial
Cast: Chanchal Chowdhury, Shilpi

ETV
01:30 Bangla Feature Film
05:50 Sports Plus
06:30 Vobo Gure Dot Com
07:50 Ottopar Ami
10:10 Galpo Shalpo Gaan
12:05 Ekushey Raat

Rtv
10:10 Dhrupodi Kahini
03:10 Cinema R Gaan
05:00 Music R Music
05:30 Aroma Rupkotha
06:00 Look at Me
11:30 Jegey Achho Ki

BANGLAVISION
10:10 Moner Kotha
11:05 Ami Ekhon Ki Korbo
01:05 Bangla Feature Film
05:20 Islami Jibon
09:10 Garb-er Doshjon
01:30 Cinemar Gaan

Desh TV
03:00 Bangla Feature Film
04:00 Desh Janopad
07:45 Shangskriti Sharadesh
12:30 Total Sports

Boishakhi TV
10:30 Bangla Feature Film
01:15 Final Destination 3
03:15 Pretty in Pink
05:15 Save the Last Dance
07:30 Kickboxer
09:30 The Lazarus Project

Star Movies
11:55 Six Days, Seven Nights
01:40 Crossing Over
07:00 From Paris With Love
08:40 Haunting In Connecticut
10:25 City Of Ember
12:05 Maximum Risk

Star World
11:00 American Idol
02:30 Friends
04:30 Dexter
07:30 Coffee With Karen
10:30 Mr. Sunshine
11:30 Desperate Housewives

National Geographic Channel
10:30 The Known Universe
11:30 I Didn't Know That
03:30 Triumph of Life
09:30 The Living Edens
10:30 A Traveller's Guide to the Planets
11:30 Hunters Special

DRAMA SERIAL

ATN BANGLA
08:00pm Kak Daka Bhor
08:40pm Neel
10:55pm Aayna Ghor
CHANNEL i
07:50pm Choita Pagol
10:00pm Ural Ponkhi Mon
ntv
08:15pm Chader Nijer Kon Alo Nei
ETV
09:30pm Putul Nach-er Etikotha
Rtv
08:20pm Golla
09:05pm Ar Com
09:50pm Life Is Beautiful
BANGLAVISION
08:15pm Ladies First
Desh TV
08:15pm Shopno-bhuk
09:45pm Nikamal-er

NEWS BULLETIN

BTV
News (Bangla) at 8:00 am 2:00 pm.5:00 pm.8:00 pm. News (English) at 10:00am, 4:00 pm, 10:00 pm.
Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm. (To be telecast on all Bangla channels).
CHANNEL-i
News (Bangla): 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am
ATN BANGLA
NEWS (Bangla): 7:00 pm, 10:00 pm,11:00 pm, 1:00 am, 4:00 am
01:00pm, 3:00pm, 04:00pm
News (English): 9:00 am, 6:00 pm.

BANGLAVISION
News (Bangla) at 7:30am. 1:30pm. 5:00pm. 7:15pm. 10:30pm.
News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00am. 12:00am. 4:00pm.
News (English) at 6:00pm
Rtv
News (Bangla): 2:30 pm, 4:30 pm, 6:30 pm, 8:30 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:30 am
ntv
News (Bangla):7:30am, 12:02pm, 2:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm, 1:00am
ETV
News (Bangla): 9:00am, 11:00 am, 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 11:00pm

TALK SHOW

ATN BANGLA
09:20am Top Spin
10:30am Lead News
CHANNEL i
09:45am Tritiyo Matra
11:05am Amader Aayna
12:30pm Taroka Kathan
ntv
12:30am Ei Shomoy

BANGLAVISION
06:10pm Front Line
11:25pm Lal Golap
Rtv
10:45am Tarokalap
11:45pm Shoja Kotha
Boishakhi TV
12:00am Zero Hour