

MAKING HAY IN DHAKA



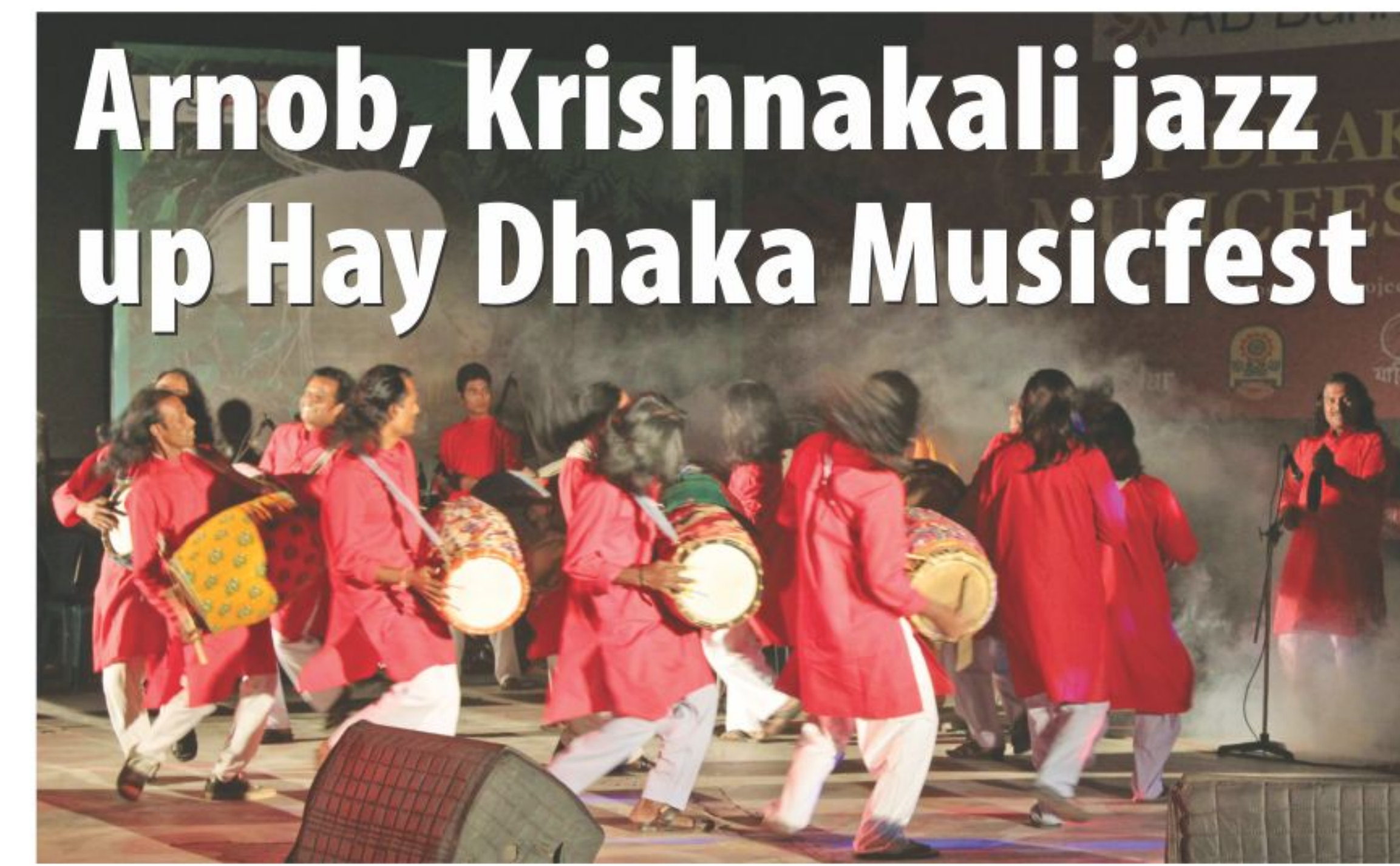
PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The concluding day of the Hay Festival Dhaka 2012, at Bangla Academy, boasted everything under the sun -- from invigorating feminist performances to amusing quips about cricket; from a talk on publishing trends in South Asia to an interpretation of Syed Waliullah's classic, "Lal Shalu"; from launching of books by budding writers to readings by veterans.

Syed Samsul Haq and Vikram Seth recited their poems on the lawn.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal charmed audiences with his views on science fiction as a literary genre.

The three-day extravaganza came to an end with Tagore's dance-drama "Shapmochon" and the soulful ballads of Lalon.



FAHMIM FERDOUS

There were few better places to be on a mildly wintry November week-end evening, than at Dhamondi's Robindro Shorobor -- ready to groove with the Hay Dhaka Musicfest, part of the Hay Festival Dhaka. The concert was sponsored by AB Bank, USAID and Nishorgo Network. As the evening sunk in, music enthusiasts gathered at the arena, curiously watching the beautiful candles and paper lamps, anticipating some good music.

The first to take the stage was an ensemble of *dhuli* -- in bright red attire and waving their long hair, just to warm up the atmosphere. As the beats echoed through the amphitheater, more people joined in. Next on stage was Nobonita Chowdhury, who performed a Hason Raja song and a Rabindra Sangeet, before Labik Kamal Gourab (from the band AJob) joined her. Labik moved the crowd with his folksy vocals, singing the popular Lalon Geeti, "Khancha'r Bhoir Auchin Pakhi", and Sachin Dev Burman's "Shono Go Dokhin Hawa", among others. The next act was Leemona, the band led by singer Leemona, who sang original numbers, and got good response from a growing crowd. In particular, the band's rendition of "Jalikhana'r Chithi" was memorable.

Cultural personality Aly Zaker then came on stage, and on behalf of Nishorgo Network, urged everyone to be "responsible tourists". He made a call to everyone to "not leave a mark" after they leave a place they've just visited -- whether it be littering, damaging natural resources, or offending the locals or the local lifestyle.

The most-anticipated artiste of the night, Arnob, was next on stage, and was greeted by a massive cheer from the crowd. He started off with the catchy number "Rasta-e", and then did a beautiful classical-tinged cover of "Tor Jonno", alongside Dhaka University teacher of music, Shoyeb, crooning Tagore's "Saavan Gaganey Ghor Ghanaghat" in Raga Megh Malhar. Arnob followed it up with a new rendition of the popular song "Mon Torey" with Pantho Kanai, who was on drums, and Buno on bass guitar. Arnob then put his folk vocal skills on display with "Lal Pahari", following it up with the more contemporary "Tomar Jonno". Shoyeb made another guest appearance in a rendition of "Tui Ki Janish



PHOTO: ATIL KAMISH

Shoyeb's collaboration gave Arnob's rendition a new dimension (middle); Krishnakali sings at the concert.

Na". Arnob closed his performance with the crowd favorite "Shey Be Boshay Achhe". Krishnakali was the last on stage, in her usual vivacious demeanour, beginning with "Bondhu Tomar", then moving on to her other popular numbers, "Boshek", "Nacho Toh Kall", and ending on a happy note with "Jao Harao". Hay Festival guests and people from all walks of life at the show left after a fulfilling musical evening amid very thin film of mist under a starry night.

Living Alone

Arundhati Subramaniam

Living Alone

is about learning to believe things are as they appear,

that everyday has no ulterior motive,

that every flicker of air against neck does not spell a spectral presence,

about learning not to ask for more than those long afternoons

gliding through rooms and rooms

of vacant mind recovered after years of subletting.

The Space between Adventure and Anchorage

A conversation with Arundhati Subramaniam

IFFAT NAWAZ

Arundhati Subramaniam is a voice that stands strong in the realm of modern poetry -- her poems explore various ambivalences with bottlenecks and surprises in a 'third world megalopolis' myth, the politics of culture and gender, and the persistent trope of the existential journey. Her works are characterised by contradictory impulses -- the desire for adventure and anchorage, expansion and containment, vulnerability and strength, freedom and belonging, withdrawal and engagement. Her recent book "Where I live" combines Arundhati's first two Indian collections of poetry. Arundhati was at Hay Festival Dhaka yesterday and spoke to The Daily Star.

Many of your pieces explore the relationship between space and emotions. Tell us about that.

Arundhati: I feel that it is important to be anchored, and yet have a sense of adventure to write about what is inside of you. You



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

cannot talk about anything universal without feeling the ground under your feet and the space that you are in. Be true to yourself, be concrete. Sometimes we are in a hurry to arrive to abstraction, but being anchored is

essential to reach the stars. An Irish poet once told me, "I like writing about the 'thingness' of ideas, the crunchiness of ideas, smokiness of things, not just the spirit but the matter as well."

Poetry now seems to be shifting to sociology rather than sensuality or emotions. What do you think of that?

Arundhati: A great pressure in put on artists today to be relevant. Sometimes you are pushed into a position to take a stand. I believe that is what newspapers are supposed to do, but not necessarily poets. If you are all about content and without form, then your poem is not complete, and a form without content is not poetry. A poem needs an emotional access, otherwise it is not full.

What would you say to the new generation of poets, especially women?

Arundhati: I would tell them, please do not be afraid to grow into yourself. Our parents and teachers don't tell us this enough but the only thing worth doing is "growing into yourself," and that means including

people, including space and being comfortable in your own skin. True poetry comes from your heart, your marrow. But it is okay to be an apprentice, write like others, use their voices, and through that you might find your own voice, and your readers will recognise it.

Whom do you write for?

Arundhati: I have this shadowy phantom ideal reader whom I write for, who resembles me to an extent. I write for that phantom who holds the art of listening, and whom I listen to as well. You are not a writer if you are not a listener.

Thoughts on Hay Festival Dhaka?

Arundhati: I like the intimacy of Hay festivals. One of the achievements of Hay, and I have been to three, is that these festivals are able to combine a certain intimacy with the broadness of festivity. Often intimacy and festivals do not go together but Hay Festival Dhaka has kept that balance and it is wonderful. I also appreciated the thought that went into planning each session, which had

at least one Bangladeshi personality along with the international ones. That thoughtfulness really came through.

What are you taking back with you?

Arundhati: Recognition, familiarity, and kinship.

What do you think about the space South Asian writers occupy now?

Arundhati: I think, where one lives is not necessarily where they belong. I don't know where I belong but I know where I do not belong. I know the gap created by nostalgia and I like exploring that gap and somewhere that gap gets mended in moments, through experiences. I think Indian/Bangladeshi/Pakistani writers have an advantage, and we are now in an exciting time, where the complexity of our beings, of our surroundings, is our treasure. The fact that we do not belong to a monoculture helps our writing to be diverse. We should see this complexity as a benefit and not a conflict. We live in a place of richness and that is something to celebrate and write about.

For the Love of Cricket

ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

It seemed somehow appropriate that any discussion on cricket should start at the figurative crack of dawn. And although 'play was delayed' by some malfunctioning floodlights at the Bangla Academy, the collective intellect of the lovely Kamila Shamsie, the uber cool Shehan Karunatikala and the affable Khademul Islam made for a thoroughly enjoyable discussion on cricket and how it dominates the South Asian psyche.

Moderated by Sandip Roy, the session covered topics as diverse as cricket history, sexism and cricketer politicians. In between, the three discussants served up interesting discourse on the wanton demand of T20 cricket, the place of test cricket in today's breakneck world and the resurrection of the Author's Cricket Club.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

(From right) Shehan Karunatikala, Kamila Shamsie and Khademul Islam profess their love for the sport.

member of a men's team up against an all-women team in cricket. "The players had a hard time figuring out whether it would be sexist to sledge or sexist to not sledge," she said. Karunatikala spoke of how the Sri Lankans at the end of their thirty-year war had gotten their priorities straight by reallocation most of the excess budget, not to education or health, but in the building of two

brand new cricket stadiums. He also spoke of how in his book, the protagonist weaves an elaborate (and mostly hogwash) theory of how cricket nations pay for their sins out on the field. The colonial English fail at every game they invent, the South Africans choke because of their apartheid past and the West Indians were blessed with talent to compensate for the years of slavery they

suffered. Khademul Islam spoke of how he has embarked on a quest similar to the Chinaman's protagonist to locate the first Bangladeshi Muslim player. His luck, unfortunately, has been slightly less forthcoming. All in all, it was an hour well spent in the company of literary giants talking about a sport most Bangladeshis innately relate to.

When Poetry leaves the Page

SUSHMITA S PREETHA

Six aspiring poets, three random phrases chosen by the audience, 12 minutes to compose an original work and a totally impressive outcome -- that's what characterised the bilingual poetry slam arranged by British Council on the concluding day (yesterday) of the Hay Festival Dhaka.

The event featured the "Cascading Poets" in a series of battles and responses between each other live onstage. Rifat Islam Esha, Ripon Parbez, Humaira Noor, Quamrul Hassan, David Shool and Zarin Rafiuddin -- the fearless participants of the show -- were asked to compose a poem from scratch incorporating phrases suggested by an eager audience: 'revealing what goes on behind closed doors', 'ghor ke jete chai -- I want to go home' and 'purple'.

The "Cascading Poets" consists of 10 upcoming poets who seek to explore new approaches to understanding and writing poetry. With the assistance of British Council and British poet-comedian, Ross Sutherland, the group has been working to develop interactive forms of poetry that challenges the poet-audience duality.

The event was organised to pay homage to 'Kobir Lorai', a traditional art form of Bengal where rival village poets challenge each other in a duel to claim poetic supremacy. As the participants locked themselves into solitary confinement to compose their pieces, Eeshita

Azad, the facilitator of the event, delighted the audience with recitals of her own poems.

The participants divided themselves into two groups, and went head to head against each other, vying for the audience's claps. It was, after all, the loudness of the claps that would determine the winner. There was no lack of enthusiasm on the audience's part as it not only clapped but also whistled and heckled as the poets bared their wits on stage.

The quality of the poetry, written within the short span of time, was surprisingly fresh and inspiring. It's not an easy task to produce something spectacular on the spot, but it seemed as if the challenge actually served as a motivation rather than a hindrance to the poets.

The group also introduced its website to the audience -- kobita-cascade.tumblr.com. The tagline of the project is 'Please Steal from Us', and encourages open sharing of information, art and expressions.

"Everything good in this world is a copy of something," explained Eeshita. "We all influence each other."

The group started with a root poem "Ami Ekti Kobor Khurchi" by Rafiq Azad. The poets took words, phrases or lines from the poem and wrote their own poems inspired by them. Each of the poems on the website, in turn, can be taken as inspiration by others for creating more art. In the end, the teams tied with each other.

A theatrical reading of Sultana's Dream

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As part of the Hay Festival Dhaka, a group of young and amateur performers staged a theatrical adaptation of Begum Roquia Sakhawat Hussain's literary work "Sultana's Dream". The short play was staged at the corridor of Burdwan House, Bangla Academy on November 16.

Directed and designed by Naila Azad Nupur, the play featured more of reading out than dramatic performance. Part of the corridor was covered by transparent veils, to depict the *pardah* tradition of that period. The aim was to symbolically portray women engaged in social customs.

This classic, written in 1905, was considered groundbreaking in its time and is one of the first examples of feminist science fiction in Bangla.

It depicts a feminist utopia where women run everything and men are secluded. The women challenge the men to invent new technologies. They are aided by technology that enables labourless farming and fuels flying cars. The female scientists have discovered how to use solar power and can



PHOTO: JAMIL MAHMUD

The play was directed and designed by Naila Azad Nupur. Violence is eliminated, since men were responsible for all of it. The workday is only two hours long, since men used to waste six hours each day. Men are placed in women's position so that they experience the repression. The cast included Ulfat Qudus, Rumana Habib, Imtiaz Kibria and Amrur Habib.

BTV	10:30 Mat O Manush	12:35 Shukhi Paribar	09:00 Drama Serial: Rajkonna Lilaboti	10:25 Digital Bangladesh	06:15 Shushta Thakun	08:40 Drama Serial: Shongshar Shubher Hoy bedonar Guney	11:30 Drama Serial: Boiri Batash	02:45 Gurey Churey Gaaner	06:20 Rupantar	09:35 Drama Serial: Chhutr Din Ebong Eki Nil	12:35 Bangla Feature Film	07:35 Drama Serial: Bhim Roti	09:50 Dhrupodi Kahini	12:05 Shimana Perley		
ATN BANGLA	11:20 Business and Finance	06:15 Shushta Thakun	08:40 Drama Serial: Shongshar Shubher Hoy bedonar Guney	11:30 Drama Serial: Boiri Batash	02:45 Gurey Churey Gaaner	06:20 Rupantar	09:35 Drama Serial: Chhutr Din Ebong Eki Nil	03:02 Gaan R Gaan	06:30 Sanskritir Sharadesh	12:30 Total Sports	Diganta TV	03:05 Shashta Diganta	06:00 Priyo Shilpi Priyo Gaan	09:35 Drama Serial: Hijibji	12:05 News of the Day	
CHANNEL i	02:45 Gurey Churey Gaaner	06:20 Rupantar	09:35 Drama Serial: Chhutr Din Ebong Eki Nil	03:02 Gaan R Gaan	06:30 Sanskritir Sharadesh	12:30 Total Sports	Diganta TV	03:05 Shashta Diganta	06:00 Priyo Shilpi Priyo Gaan	09:35 Drama Serial: Hijibji	12:05 News of the Day	Maasranga Television	10:02 Bangla Feature Film	10:02 Binodon Sharadin	08:30 Drama Serial: Khonkaloy	09:00 Tele-quiz

abc Radio FM 89.2	09:30 Esh Osh	05:30 Kacha Lanka	06:30 Mitha Kara	07:20 G'lounch	07:45 Megh Barata	09:30 Love Hour	11:10 Hindi Hiss	02:30 Heba Dhaka	19:00 Morning Express	12:30 No Temion	04:00 Dhaka Calling	09:00 Full Volume	11:00 Back to Back music	RADIO TODAY FM 92.5	06:00 Green FM	08:00 Good Morning Dhaka	12:00 Today's Adda	04:00 U Tum	07:50 Today Jai Huk	10:00 Raat Bhor Gaan
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Long March
On Banglavisian at 09:05pm
Drama Serial
Cast: AKM Hassan, Tisha

Batman Begins
On HBO at 09:30pm
Genre: Action/Adventure
Cast: Christian Bale, Michael Gaine & Ken Watanabe

Khonkaloy
On Maasranga Television at 08:40pm
Drama Serial
Cast: Azad Abul Kalam, Munmun

CHANNEL 9
09:00 Bangla Feature Film
08:40 Drama Serial: Nagarik
09:00 Power Voice 2012
11:15 Bits Unlimited

CHANNEL 24
01:05 Musical Programme
08:10 Musical Lounge
10:15 Drama Serial: Jolchhobi

BANGLAVISIAN
01:05 Bangla Feature Film
06:05 Ebong Clats-er Bairey
08:15 Drama Serial: Ladies First
11:25 Business Vision

DRAMA SERIAL
ATN BANGLA
09:20pm DB
10:55pm Scandal
CHANNEL i
07:50pm Noorjahan
ETV
09:30pm Tattu Ghora
08:00pm Boro Barr Chhoto Boro
09:05pm Long March
rtv
08:15pm Oghoton Ghoton
Potyoshi
Rtv
09:05pm Okoshpur
Desh TV
07:50pm Saikhath
08:00pm Maasranga Television
08:00pm Sat Sawdagar
CHANNEL 24
09:30pm Jadur Shahar

NEWS BULLETIN
BTV
01:00am News (Bangla) at 12pm, 2pm, 5pm, 9pm.
News (English) at 10am, 4pm, 10pm.
ATN BANGLA
News (Bangla) at 11am, 12pm, 2pm, 7pm, 10pm.
News (English) at 9am, 6pm.
CHANNEL i
News (Bangla) at 2pm, 9pm, 10:30pm.
rtv
News (Bangla) at 2pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm.
Etv
News (Bangla) at 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm, 9pm, 11pm.
Boishakhi TV
News (Bangla) at 10am, 2pm, 5pm.
News (English) at 9am, 6pm.
BANGLAVISIAN
News (Bangla) at 10am, 2pm, 7:30pm, 10:30pm.
News (English) at 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm.
Rtv
News (Bangla) at 1:45pm, 6:45pm, 10:45pm.
Desh TV
News (Bangla) at 2pm, 7pm, 9pm, 11pm.
Maasranga Television
News (Bangla) at 7pm, 1am.

TALK SHOW
ATN BANGLA
01:00am Onno Droidi
12:30pm Taraka Kothon
rtv
12:30pm El Shomoy
10:10pm Media Gossip
Boishakhi TV
12:00am Zero Hour
Rtv
12:20pm Our Democracy
Desh TV
11:45pm Shuja Katha
Maasranga Television
12:00am Shampantok
CHANNEL 24
12:55am Molyaster
Muktakab
Gtv