

Maestros of melody take the stage

Bengal Foundation's commitment to traditional music should be lauded

PANDIT AJAY CHAKRABARTY

I take great pride to think I was born in Bengal, in this part of the subcontinent where creativity seems to flourish. There was even a saying: "What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow."

Bengal was divided for political reasons but the people of Bengal can never really be divided. There is a sense of oneness in the people of Bengal that surges through our souls in terms of eating habits, literature, music, language as well as other things.

A sense of nostalgia overwhelms me when I think of Bangladesh. Both my parents are from Mymensingh, and strangely enough there are many people of fame who happen to be from Mymensingh. The all-time greats Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury, Sukumar Ray, and Satyajit Ray were originally from Mymensingh, even the world famous magician P.C. Sorcar was from there.

While writing the name of Satyajit Ray, my first encounter with him comes to mind. He had asked me about my ancestral home, and the second I mentioned Mymensingh, he exclaimed, "But of course, how else could you be such a vocal genius!" I know that I am but a mere droplet in the vast ocean of music but I was still very pleased to hear this generous remark from him. Currently I live in Kolkata and practice my music

Sangeet gurus of SRA can come to Bangladesh along with their highly trained musicians and scholars for extensive training programmes. And this training will be imparted to all promising and eager students of music across all cities of Bangladesh.

there but I have travelled to other cities of India as well as the world. I have also come to Bangladesh on several occasions. Not all these trips have been for my performances. With time I have grown to form a great bond with and a love for this country.

On one such trip, not more than a year ago I happened to meet Abul Khair. When I first saw him, I was moved by his simplicity and humility. I was overwhelmed to see his achievements and contributions in terms of promoting the arts and culture of Bangladesh.

The man is a visionary. He understood and appreciated the fact that Bangladesh is a land opulent in terms of its music, literature and other forms of art. Many great names hail from this land like those I have already mentioned. Michael Madhusudan Dutt is also from Jessore.

One's wonder will know no bounds discovering the galaxy of musical geniuses who have come from Bangladesh. The very first name that leads the line without a doubt is that of Ustad Allauid Khan, often reverently referred to as 'Baba' Allauid Khan. He had an uncanny flair for playing any string instrument or leather instrument that was there in his time.

It is said that Baba Allauid Khan's elder brother Aftabuddin Khan had a stunning power of amazing listeners by playing any tune from any length of a string. On the other hand his younger brother Ayet Ali



Khan had the skill of making a sarod himself and was of course a stalwart sarodiya. He had made two sarods by cutting a Tun tree from his house and had gifted them to Ali Akbar Khan and his own son Bahadur Khan. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, the leading sarod player of the present generation, is one of the most distinguished disciples of the legendary sarod maestro Bahadur Khan.

A few other names of artistes for whom Bangladesh shines brightly also deserve a mention. One of them is Debabrata Biswas, popularly known as 'George' Biswas, who had popularised Rabindra Sangeet by presenting them in his original style. Born in Barisal, he later moved to Kishoreganj. Then there is the 'Emperor of Sitar', Ustad Vilayat Khan who was born in Gouripur. His father, the legendary Enayet Khan, was the court musician in Gouripur. An instrument has no language as such but when Vilayat Khan played the sitar it would seem that the instrument was singing. At the end of his every concert, he would play tunes of Bengali folk songs -- be it anywhere in India or anywhere else.

The list of course goes on but maybe the article will get too long if I mention them all. Bangladesh is not only rich in its traditions of classical music, but also enormously opulent in its folk traditions. Legendary singers Abbasuddin Ahmed and many more have brought the folk music of Bangladesh onto the world stage. I think the many talented singers who render beautifully the songs of Tagore and Nazrul need a special mention here. They sing with such command of the music and with such grace that I really feel they have brightened the name of Bangladesh through their performances within the country as well as abroad.

Let me come back to Abul Khair. In April 2012, Ravi Mathur, executive director of ITC-SRA (Sangeet Research Academy) of Kolkata, and I had come to Bangladesh. ITC-SRA is my musical Mecca in life. A

memorandum of understanding was reached between Khair of Bengal Foundation and Ravi Mathur of ITC-SRA. This MoU had the objective of promoting and propagating the practice of classical music. Under the joint venture many initiatives were planned. On April 29, Bengal Foundation organised a concert under this initiative. Unfortunately owing to a strike called on that day we were quite apprehensive about the audience response and attendance but to our amazement not only was the auditorium (National Museum Auditorium) full, some people even had to stand outside just to listen to the recital. This reassured us of the fact that there really is a genuine love for classical music in Bangladesh.

Abul Khair believes to sustain the musical resources of Bangladesh, both classical and folk music should be nurtured under the guidance of able hands and for which he is willing to do the necessary -- not only in monetary terms but also by providing whatever support is required. He feels that with the joint power and force of Bengal Foundation and ITC-SRA a new era in the field of classical music in Bangladesh will be heralded.

Another aspect of the relationship between Bengal Foundation and ITC-SRA is that the wealth of sangeet gurus of SRA can come to Bangladesh along with their highly trained musicians and scholars for extensive training programmes. And this training will be imparted to all promising and eager students of music across all cities of Bangladesh.

Currently some of the plans are that some particular regions will be chosen and in those regions a number of small soirees will be held where junior artistes will perform alongside senior ones. There will also be some workshops. The objective is that more and more people may get involved and develop a taste for music.

Then there is the plan to have artistes from different regions -- both senior and junior -- perform together before a bigger crowd so that even the emerging performers get an opportunity to develop their skills.

Then of course come the biannual or annual concerts that will tend to be on a large scale and possibly at some big auditoriums. Here efforts will be made to mobilise artistes of both national and international fame and a few thousand people will get the opportunity to enjoy the show.

The Bengal ITC-SRA Classical Music Festival is the first of the large-scale concerts and will be the first of its kind in terms of the magnitude, the number of great performers and the audience capacity. It is a four-day mega event that starts today at the Army Stadium in Dhaka. Here, only with the exception of 'Tabla Nawaz' Ustad Zakir Hussain, all the top classical artistes of national and international fame will be performing. Its sole objective is to preach an all-embracing message of love, unity, harmony and fraternity in all students of music as well as lovers of music and inspire them to create a bond beyond national boundaries.

I, as a responsible Guru of ITC-SRA, am a strong believer in this vision and find this truly inspiring and I pray to the Almighty that time will help realise this great dream.

The writer is an internationally renowned classical music teacher and artiste.

WAHEEDUL HAQUE Infusing the soul with melody

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

There was a knowledgeable being that inhabited Waheedul Haque. He was into song, into all those feelings that contribute to the making of aesthetics. Tagore for him was a lifeline, to culture, indeed to politics. He was always humming a tune, on the rickshaw rides we took together on steamy afternoons, at his desk as a breather from the drudgery of writing editorials at a time when there was not much to write about. Tagore for him was a metaphor, for all the celebratory in life. And as a way of explaining away the darkness that enveloped Bengali society, it was Tagore he went back to. Which is when he broke into a soft rendition of ekhono gelo na andhar / ekhono roilo je badha.

Waheedul Haque was a stickler for purity --- in music, in writing, in the way men shaped thoughts in their chaotic minds. There was the



Waheedul Haque

Shabbagh. And then there was nature Waheedul Haque placed his faith in, or lived by. He once made a gift of an old book of trees, plants, roots and herbs to me. It was his way of informing me that all that needed to be turned into objects of medicinal value was to be found in the pages of those books, in the nature that it celebrated. With him I have walked through Ramna Park and Suhrawardy Udyan, in dripping rain, to learn from him stories of the life and birth of trees. He did not rest there. He went for an enumeration of their history. It was a stunning discovery, for in Waheedul Haque lay embedded a veritable encyclopaedia of knowledge --- of the stars in the heavens, of the reeds on the moist soil of the earth. He made friends with the young, with those young he thought were willing to be educated on the mystery of life and the devastating inexplicability of death. He was not willing to please anyone. He once told one of my colleagues, in public, that his pronunciation of English was embarrassing. And when a rising Tagore singer asked him if he watched her programmes on television, he was curt in his response. An artiste aiming for television was anything but an artiste, he said in quiet indignation. The singer was left red-faced.

You could go on and on about Waheedul Haque. In matters that had to do with religion, he brimmed over with questions. Araj Ali Matubbor was for him, as he was and remains for many of us, the quintessential philosopher. Ask questions, said he. You will not come by all the answers, but some responses could rise and flow, lava-like, into your little world. He had a healthy dislike for pretension, for intellectual parochialism. Freedom kept whispering around him, to tell him that beyond the constricting confines of modernity lay the expansive spaces of thoughts and dreams. He found those expanses in his journeys through the hamlets and villages of Bangladesh, building on the theme of culture he had inaugurated through the centenary celebrations of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore in 1961. His politics was leftwing, but he never for a moment fell for the illusion that this country was ready for socialism, for communism. That would take time, he said, as we popped peanuts into our mouths on a rainy twilight before the Teacher-Student Centre at Dhaka University.

It takes a brave man to refuse to have his body, post-life, concealed for all time in a quiet, soon to be forgotten grave. And so Waheedul Haque, in the manner of Araj Ali Matubbor, chose to have his mortal remains claimed by students of medical science. But his soul? The soft childlike laughter that he broke into over a little joke? The song he murmured as he reclined on his chair in his cubicle? The impeccable English he employed in his editorials, the urbane Bangla that punctuated his political commentaries? These are memories that remain. These sum up the tumultuous poetry that Waheedul Haque stood for and, to a very large extent, came to personify as he trudged toward the point where mortality becomes the ultimate truth.

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(Waheedul Haque --- music maker, journalist, scholar, aesthete, cultural guru --- died on January 27, 2007)



Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain Khan



Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan

Artistes to perform today at Bengal ITC-SRA Classical Musical Festival 2012

6 pm till 4:30 am next day

Dedicated to Sangeetsadhak Waheedul Haque

- Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain - Shehnai
- Omkar Dadarkar - Vocal
- Ustad Shahadat Hossain - Sarod
- Vidushi Sujata Mohapatra - Odissi
- Waseem Ahmed Khan - Vocal
- Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan - Sitar
- Pandit Uday Bhawalkar - Vocal
- Pandit Tejendra N Majumdar - Sarod
- Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty - Vocal



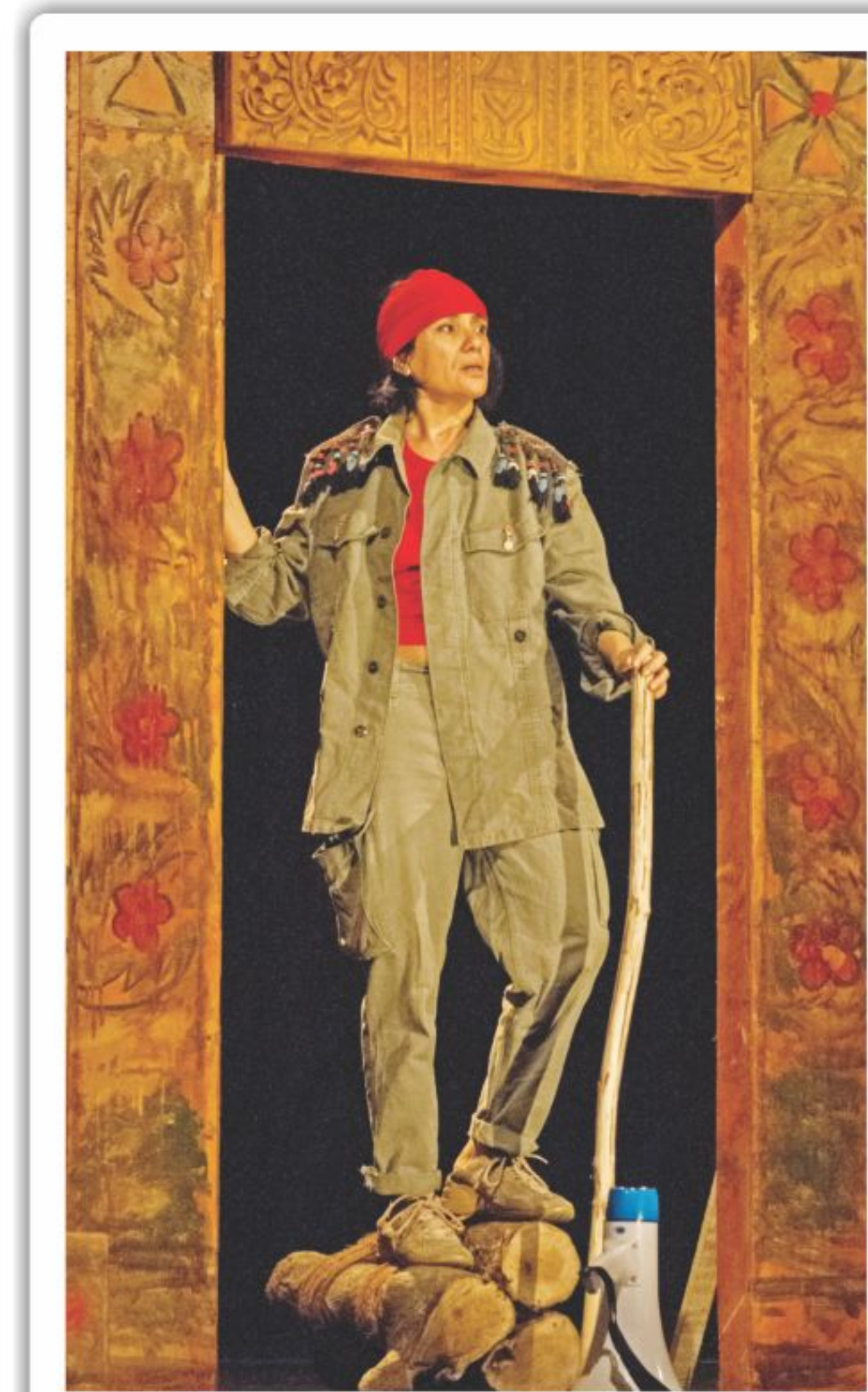
Vidushi Sujata Mohapatra



Pandit Tejendra N Majumdar



Pandit Uday Bhawalkar



Italian theatre company Accademia Mutamenti staged a monodrama "La Regina dei Banditi" (The Bandit's Queen) as part of the ongoing Dhaka University Annual Theatre Festival. The play was staged at the TSC auditorium, on November 27. Based on the life of Phoolan Devi, the play has been jointly written by Federico Bertozzi and Sara Donzell. Directed by Giorgio Zorcù, the play saw Sara Donzell as the protagonist.

PHOTO: JAMIL MAHMUD

Ayub Bachchu hospitalised



A CORRESPONDENT

Popular singer Ayub Bachchu was admitted to a private hospital in the capital on November 27. He is now in the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) under supervision of a cardiologist of the hospital. Bachchu, the front man of the band LRB, is suffering from lung ailment.

Due to accretion of water in his lungs, Bachchu was experiencing respiratory problems. The singer's condition is now stable after receiving treatment. But his doctor suggested that the busy artiste rests for a month.

His scheduled concerts for the next month have been cancelled. Ayub Bachchu has also expressed regrets to all for the cancellation of the scheduled concerts.

Pizzasin, animated fiction film, at Dhaka Short Film Fest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Pizzasin" -- an animated fiction film scripted and directed by young filmmaker Gaushey Shaharior -- will be part of the upcoming 12th International Short and Independent Film Festival, Dhaka. The film is one of the official selections for the festival, informed the filmmaker.

The festival, organised by Bangladesh Short Film Forum, will be held in mid-December, where short and independent films from different countries will be screened.

"Pizzasin" is set to be screened at the Public Library auditorium. The film had a couple of screenings at the Goethe-Institut Bangladesh and at North South University. The filmmaker also said that he is expecting to screen



the film at overseas festivals.

The film is a production of Studio Parrot in Motion. Poormanswheel and animation house Prohelia are co-producers of the film. It uses comic book style in visual storytelling. Tanvir Hafiz is the director of animations.

The story evolves in a film-

noir genre, flaunting a powerful fight sequence in 24 frames per second. The story follows a lone-some spy whose predicament is summed up in the movie as, "in the end a spy has no sides". Melodramatic original soundtrack by Rasheeq Rayhan helps build the characterisation of the protagonist.

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ATN BANGLA	11:55 Drama
03:05 Business and Finance	Diganta TV
08:00 Bangla Feature Film	11:30 Dignata Omushandhan
11:00 Destination Unlimited	06:00 Inside Story
11:00 Drama	09:40 Drama Serial: Shimabodhho
CHANNEL i	Manusherha
11:05 Ami Maa Hote Cholechi	11:05 Music Hour (Live)
02:40 Hridoye Mati O Manusher Daak	05:30 Bangla Feature Film
03:30 Bangla Feature Film	05:30 Amazing Animals
07:50 Sherakontha	08:00 Tale-film: Paa
ntv	11:30 Tomy Gan Shonabo
10:05 Tele-film	CHANNEL 9
06:15 Shubho Shondhya	09:00 Bangla Feature Film
09:00 Amaro Gaite Ichchhe Holo	08:15 Drama
11:30 Music Euphony	10:30 Drama Serial: Nishigandha
ETV	CHANNEL 24
04:30 Shanskrit Shomachar	03:05 Drama Serial: Jolchhobi

abc radio FM 89.2	My Time
05:30 Kacha Lanka	12:00 No Tension
03:30 Gokul Dhadha	04:00 Dhaka Calling
06:30 Mitha Kara	07:00 Night Rider
07:20 GJ Lovech	RADIO TODAY FM 95.5
07:45 Megh Barata	06:00 Green FM
08:10 Adda	08:00 Good Morning Dhaka
11:10 Studio Live	12:00 Today's Adda
Radio Footit	04:00 U Turn
03:30 Hebe Dhaka	07:00 Today Talk Hok
19:00 Morning Express	10:00 Rock the Station

Brishti Prahar O Ora Tinjon
On CHANNEL 9 at 08:15pm
Single Episode TV Play
Cast: Hillol, Moushumi Nag

Tower Heist
On HBO at 07:30pm
Genre: Action/Comedy
Cast: Eddie Murphy, Ben Stiller & Casey Affleck

Paa
On Maansrang Television at 08:00pm
Tele-film
Cast: Rashed Mamun Opu, Farzana Chohi

07:50 Drama	08:10 Dine Out with Us
09:30 Ekushey-er Chokh	11:40 Sports 24
12:05 Ekushey-er Raat	11:30 Bangla Feature Film
Boishakhi TV	09:05 Drama
09:15 Bangla Feature Film	11:00 Ghor Mon Janala
12:15 The Business Show	Fox Movies
04:15 Shorashori Doctor	05:15 Limitless
11:00 Reporters Diary	07:00 Margin Call
BANGLAVISION	09:50 Men in Black
11:05 Shikal Belar	11:30 Men in Black II
Rudhir	HBO
06:05 Shyamol Bangla	05:45 Event Horizon
09:05 Shyamal Oritshi	07:30 Tower Heist
11:25 Gaane Gaane Deshe Deshe	09:30 Kung Fu Panda 2
Rtv	11:15 Paranormal Activity 3
12:35 Bangla Feature Film	Star World
07:40 Shera Ami Shonge Akas	02:30 Grey's Anatomy
08:15 Drama Serial: The Side Effect	04:30 Revenge
12:05 Music Fest	08:30 Melissa & Joey
Desh TV	09:30 Junior Master Chef Australia
03:00 Gaan Ri Gaan	Discovery Channel
06:00 123 Suisampur	03:30 Year in the Wild
09:45 Style & Fashion	07:30 Man Vs. Wild
	09:30 Survivor Man
	11:30 Ten Days
	Body Invaders

ATN BANGLA	09:20pm Ognipath
08:40pm Chupi Chupi	BANGLAVISION
09:20pm Chayabrita	08:15pm Generation Next Dot
CHANNEL i	Rtv
09:35pm Boring 757	09:05pm Oloshpur
11:30pm Rozhin	09:50pm Mon Bangla
ntv	Desh TV
08:15pm Mayanganam	07:45pm Saatkathon
09:45pm Shunno Shumikaran	08:15pm Radio Chocolate
Boishakhi TV	Gtv

BTv	10:10pm Toboo Badhon
10:25pm Unnayan Bangla-desh	Boishakhi TV
ATN BANGLA	12:00am Zero Hour
12:30am Lead News	BANGLAVISION
CHANNEL i	06:30pm Talk of the Week
12:30pm Tarika Kothon	Rtv
ntv	11:40am Tarokalop
12:10pm Ei Shomoy	Desh TV
	10:30pm Desh E Golpo
	CHANNEL 24

BTv	10:10pm Toboo Badhon
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