

RISING STARS

Room to Play

by Judith De Costa

How often are you to find children heading in the direction of Ramna Park with a football under their arm or a cricket bat, wickets and other such equipment? Not very often I suppose. That's because Ramna Park does not exist for such activities. Neither are most of the other parks in Dhaka city — they are more grounds for strolling than any sport activity. You are more likely to see little boys, big ones too, running after a rolling football in the streets, giving hardly two hoots for their safety, provided they just have a good game. This is a major problem facing the citizens of Dhaka: there are just no facilities or even proper provision of grounds for children and youths where they can go and play a good game of either cricket or football. For the players, it is a question of their safety (a slight concern of theirs, I repeat) and for the non-players, there is the trouble of being landed with broken windows!

Sports, or just proper physical activity, we know, keeps the mind, not to mention body, healthy. In some countries — in fact most — sports is compulsory for school-age children. Whether you get it at home or not is a problem for you to deal with. In our country, however, if you get it at all seems to be your lookout.

In schools, where you go to study, most of the time you end up doing just that and nothing more. There are no proper grounds for play — grounds because the premises used for schools are not fit for holding hundreds of children, six hours a day, who need

plenty of running about. Most of the premises are homes too large to be lived in which have been let out. You are very likely to find the residents of these buildings looking out of the third or fourth floor window, checking if their flower-beds are still safe from the boisterous students' trampling feet.

Of course, many principals, realizing the dilemma of the pupils, employ P.T instructors to come in a couple of times a week to give them what they so badly need. Unfortunately, there are not many young people who would like to be told how to spend their games period and the whole thing just falls apart. You are back to square one wishing you could have a proper dose of tiring activity, instead of being chained to a desk.

Then again, there are the rains. Bangladesh's chief season, with a high disrespect for time, seems to be the monsoon. That is one time (other than exam times) when you're likely to see long faces looking out of the classroom windows cursing their luck. Some of those faces belong to the teachers who have the burden of seeing they stay out of mischief, when the pupils are deprived of their exercise.

Back to the subject of no grounds outside schools for games and sports. It is pointless to complain of no options other than sitting at home because, "Please sir, there is no where for me to play!"

Because there are quite a few open fields, all ours for the taking! But, the little ones are faced with a great problem — a question of life and death: theirs. At most parks (the very word conjures a picture of

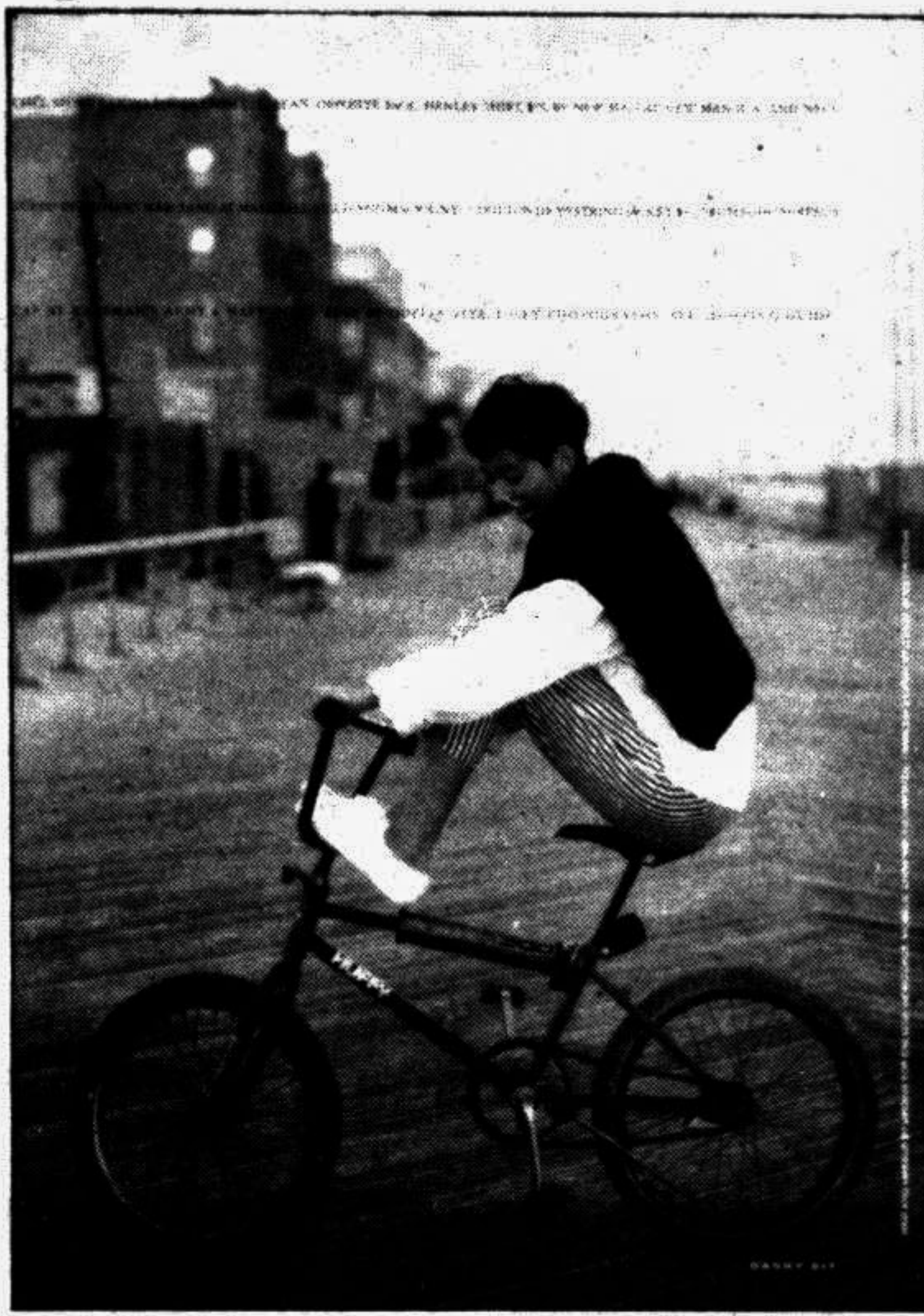
giggling children enjoying their games) you're most likely to find "biguns" than "littluns". If they are not couples walking arm in arm, they are the living proof of men who will never grow up to be men!

Come on, people let's face it. We are prisoners of society, in spite of all the bloodshed for national independence, etc. There is really nothing to gasp about if you hear someone say — especially a young woman — "why can't I be seen jogging down the street at dawn or performing calisthenics up on my roof-top?" Without being able to stop yourself, the first thing you find yourself saying is "It's just not done, that's why!" Only then will you stop and think: what's wrong with it?

One would have to be blind if he/she were to miss the way we women are disregarded when it comes to sports. We are forbidden by a nameless force to be seen riding a bike in streets or parks or just sitting astride one! If you, dear reader, are one of the luckier ones, do write in and let me know how you handled the barbarism of the opposite sex in the streets who saw you riding through town. It wasn't very nice, was it? That is just part of the whole business.

Don't you feel awful that you can't go out and play like one of the boys, the way you used to when you were younger, just because of the things you have to hear? There is only so much you can pay a deaf ear to. Ironically, grown women and young kids face the same problem: if the little kids try to take over the "biguns" space, they get bullied. Don't you think we get treated the same way, too?

So, may be you and I don't



want to be known as the next Flo Jo or P.T Usha; we just want to go out and have some fun. But we remain in perpetual jealousy of the women in the other countries who go out for their daily jog without a care in the world. We are the common folk. But what about those women who are chosen to represent Bangladesh in international sports events? For every woman you see in the team, you'll see four (if not many more) men. Women are captives under the myth of a woman's place being at home. It is up to them if they want to change their position or not. It is obvious that they do.

There is little point in sitting and waiting for a miracle to take place, if nobody is going to start making changes for the better, either in their attitude or other approaches. Women find little refuge from the narrow-minded society of Dhaka city in the Women's Sports Complex where they can indulge in exercises in a free, uninhibited way. It is for the benefit of both the present and the future generations that something has to be done to improve the sports facilities available. We haven't come a long way, baby, but we can still make it there.

Log of Wood

LETTER TO A SON

by A Mawaz

Never become a log of wood.

A log is a dead tree. You have seen such logs being carried in trucks to timber factories to be cut into boards for making furniture, doors etc. A tree is alive, and is growing all the time.

You would meet many persons during your lifetime who would remind you of logs of wood. Their mind is dead. It means that they have stopped thinking. They are either lazy, or not interested in life; and what is going on around them. They live in small circles of their own personal lives. They are under bigger circles, called society, nation, and the world.

They have lost one of life's greatest tools — curiosity. The doors and windows of their minds are closed. Fresh air and sunshine cannot get in. What comes out of their prison cells (minds) are old knowledge, ideas, opinions, and views, which they had stored long ago. You have to keep your mind up-to-date. Throw out old knowledge, information, and opinions which you do not need, and fill in with something new you have learnt. Experience is a good teacher, but it takes time. A person is a student all his life. He is always learning — and 'thinking'.

The formula of this thinking process is the magic word: 'Why?' All the time you should be asking yourself 'why?'. When you hear or read something which you do not know, or about which you are not sure, go back home and find out if your knowledge (stock)

is old and out of date. Don't feel shy to change your ideas, because you have to renew your knowledge from time to time. Always remain a thinker. Thinking never stops. You are 'dead' the moment you stop thinking. You must change slightly every year. If you have not changed, then you have not progressed.

Never argue. You argue because somebody says something which you did not expect to hear, and it does not agree with your knowledge or view. Before telling that the other person is wrong, you must be

sure you are right. Never be sure about yourself. Even if the other person is wrong, be polite in your reply, and give a hint indirectly. Let him find out.

So here is another formula: if he is right, you will find out; if you are right, he will find it. There is no hurry. Let it take time. The person who is wrong will lose the time, not the person who is right.

Take care that nobody points at your back, and whispers "He is a log of wood."

Contributed By Adeeb

A Time of Dread

by Syed Nageeb Mustafa Ali

This is a time of dread, where at the end of every night, A person is dead, A time where there is no justice or light. It is a time of fear, A time of starvation, hunger, Terrorism, drugs, war These things have gone too far. Terrorists strike at any odd hour. People are corrupt and want more power. The homeless and the poor face more abuse. And drugs are used without any excuse. These things are signs of no co-operation. No freedom, love or dedication. Everybody thinks himself superior, And all others inferior. This is the cause of our death. And wherever we go we face a threat. Is there any peace in the world to be? If so, please tell me.

Fear of Friday

by Sumaiya Andaleeb

Those of you readers who believe in superstitions are bound to have noticed today's date. You have probably vowed to stay indoors today in the so-called safety of home sweet home. For those in the dark of the significance of this inaus-

picious day, here is an account of just why Friday the 13th is considered so unlucky.

The days of the week were all named after the gods and goddesses of ancient Scandinavian mythology. Friday was named after Freya, the

wife of Odin, the chief pagan god, and the mother of Thor, the god of War. Freya herself was of a very mischievous and suspicious nature, but a favourite among her followers.

Originally Friday was considered a holy day. It still is the day of prayer and relaxation for Muslims, the Islamic Sabbath or Jumma. Christians too used to fast on this day. At the beginning we find that Adam was created on a Friday. Ironically, Friday was also the day Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, after taking bite of the forbidden fruit. We all know that story, so I'm not going to dwell on it.

The number 13 has been considered unlucky ever since 13 people sat down to the Last Supper. The thirteenth person to sit down at the table was Judas Iscariot, the treacherous disciple of Christ, who ultimately sent him to the Cross. And Christ was crucified on a Friday, which later became known as Good Friday.

Books have been written about the subject by famous authors like Agatha Christie, who have noticed that buildings often don't call their thirteenth floors by that name, and that hotels and hospitals never have a Room Number Thirteen.

In many Western societies it is a bad omen if you happen to be invited to a party with twelve other guests, and God help you if it happens to be on a Friday. Most businessmen usually avoid holding meetings on Friday the thirteenth, but superstition has very little place in the business world.

Whether we believe it or not, a little part of us is apprehensive; a lot of people out there won't be taking any risks today! Are you one of them?



Sketches by Wafiqul Hasab

The Key To A Better Life

by Maissa Karim

The sun spat on the pavement, its heated saliva smothering the run-down concrete. Inside the artificially cool Gardenhouse restaurant, the affluent perched delicately on their comfortable seats and sipped cool drinks with chunks of ice floating on top, while I stood, and yearned desperately outside.

I sighed and scolded myself for letting my hunger critic me. I would eat, when there was food, and food would be there when there was money, and when would there be money? That only God knew. It wasn't because none of us worked hard it was simply that whatever we earned wasn't sufficient to buy whatever we wanted, and that consequently led to our present situation — virtual starvation.

My name is Raoul, I have two brothers; Pito and Juan as well as a two-year old sister called Rucia who is perpetually unhealthy and greatly needs medical attention. Mamma is fifty — three now and papa died some time ago; old age they said lovingly. Personally I thought it was because of his indiscriminate love for the ultimate poison — alcohol.

We live in an impoverished slum here in what one would classify as being the most dilapidated sector of the city. Our habitat, specifically speaking, consists of cardboard from an unknown packaging company and plastic bags derived from the local supermarket. Mamma works at the big garments factory on the other side of the city. She has to take a bus there everyday, we spend half of the little money we have on the bus — fare itself.

The sun boiled the surface I was standing on; 'merciless', I thought, just like everything else in life. The withered tree on the roadside welcomed me with its temporary shade from the oppressive heat. I was cognizant that no one would desire having their shoes shined in this unsociable weather. Forecasted thoughts filtered into my mind entwined with the bare facts I already knew, how could I possibly change the future? I pondered with despair.

Yesterday was calamitous, Mamma lost her job, 'too old,' the manager said, 'getting remarkably careless with the stitching, but not to worry a replacement can be found with no difficulty,' he anxiously reassured his boss. Along with this disastrous blow, Rucia suffered from one of her now

frequent attacks of high fever and severe fits of coughing. Guilt welled up in me every time.

I saw her. She was so small, so helpless. I watched Pito and Juan shrivel into skin and bones, their hollow cheeks a reflection of our extensive hunger. Mamma and her portable grief over Papa's death. The dark heights of defeatism that encompassed us completely.

An hour had passed and the weather showed no sign of improvement. I decided to make my onward journey home. It was so quiet that all I could hear was my fatigued panting as I continued to trudge on. The faded red and white sign of 'Mario's Grocery Store' caught my eye. I looked inside, there was no one. I looked around me, there was no one. I nervously took a step forward, the cash register inside was slightly open revealing the neatly stacked pieces of paper next to each other called

money. Again I furtively surveyed my surroundings; not a single person could be spotted.

It was at this point in my life a thousand questions simultaneously flooded my mind. What would Mamma have to say about this, Mamma who believed so strongly in religion, in morality. I thought about all of us who had been brought up to be as honest and hardworking as possible in our poor conditions. To be charitable to each other as well as other people and most important of all to never get involved with the tempting crimes available in our neighbourhood. Finally I considered each member of my family, their desolate, haggard faces and then at last I thought, 'What about me? What will happen to me if I get found out doing this terrible misdeed?'

I could picture myself standing on the green bank of goodness, peering down into the black waters of evil. I made the decision. I took the plunge.

QUIZ CLUB

The Quiz Club is pleased to announce the winner of last week's Quiz. The winner is — Omar Anam. He will soon be receiving his prize. Here is the next set of questions for Quiz 5. Please send your answers to:

Editor, Rising Stars,
The Daily Star
28/1 Toyabce Circular Road
Dhaka 1000

Answers must reach our office by next Friday.

Quiz No 5

1. What Soviet Republic and American State share the same name?
2. What is C. H. NO?
3. What is Aamer Khan's wife's name?
4. Which city is known as the 'City of Lights'?
5. What is the national religion of Japan?
6. What is sitophobia?
7. What was the capital of England prior to London?
8. Who wrote 'The Sleeping Beauty'?
9. When was UNICEF formed?
10. Who is the champ you love to hate?

Answers to Quiz. No. 3

1. Nitrogen
2. 36,000 feet
3. Albert Einstein
4. Three: Christmas Past, Future, and Present
5. Democratic
6. Venezuela
7. Execute or Return
8. Radha
9. Hollhead's 'Bengali Grammar'
10. Frank Sinatra

Juggling with the Lists

by Zaki Omar

It is our right and duty, as citizens of Bangladesh, to vote. For those of you who are not old enough, yet you will be one day. Therefore it is the duty of the government to make sure that the voters do not have any difficulties voting, as many people faced during the recent by-elections.

The by-election were held on the 11th of September. As always, workers of different parties had gone around and had given out voter number slips.

The slips given to our house had been given by the BNP workers. This time my mother had not received a slip and she was very upset. She thought, though, that she could go to the voting center and find her voter number in the lists which were there.

We went at 11.30 and returned at 1.30 without casting our valuable votes. None of our names were on the list. What had happened was that a new voter list had been made and in this list our names were not present. We looked through all the new lists but it was no use.

We found out that we were not the only ones who had had this problem. When we went to complain the people on duty told us that we had no cause to complain because even the Prime Minister's sons' names were not on the list. As we came out of the polling booth, we saw several people with disappointed looks on their faces leaving. We asked them what the matter was. They told us their names were not on the new list. They told us that they had all voted in the na-

tional elections and they could not understand why their names were missing this time.

Finding so many people who had not been able to vote we all tried to make another attempt. We pleaded with the Presiding Officer to let us vote according to the old list, which did possess our names. But at that moment a candidate came and said that we could not, because the new list had to be followed. Some of the voters protested at this point and demanded that they be able to cast their vote; which they had been waiting to cast for 2 hours. The candidate objected, saying that the old list could not be followed unless there was written permission from the Election Commissioner.

We left sad and disappointed, wondering how many others at other polling centers had also been deprived of their right to vote for the candidate of their choice. Will we also be deprived on the 15th of

Beware the Tooth Lady

Order and cleanliness are Switzerland's two most prominent virtues — and an obsession with both is one of the few national vices:

The Zahnfräulein: To ensure that everybody learns good hygiene early, many Swiss schools dispatch Zahnfräuleins (Tooth Ladies) to

classrooms for surprise dental checks. Lazy brushers are publicly exposed.

September to vote for the type of government we want? I do not understand why in six months the entire voter list had to be changed. Why couldn't they have added a supplementary list to include the names missing in the old list? If the list had to be updated, it should have been so as to accommodate genuine voters who had voted in February elections but whose names were missing from the new list.

The Hausordnung: Nearly all Swiss apartment buildings have a set of rules (Hausordnung) posted in the lobby. They can be pedantically specific ('no showers or baths between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.') or bewilderingly vague ('no smelly objects in apartments').

