

RIISING STARS

Save your Planet — Save Yourself

Sabah Moyeen

TODAY, we are living a fast-paced life. Suddenly, we find all types of pressure pushing and crushing us: school load, exams, college, jobs, ambition, how to make money. We are all trying our very best to channel our energy and enthusiasm into different channels which will attain for us our dreams — our materialistic ends. Today's man has completely lost touch with his roots. In trying to build for himself the best possible establishment, he has forgotten his original and ultimate home — Mother Earth. We have ceased regarding the earth as the living, supporting, feeding and nurturing home that it is. We have taken for granted the immeasurable bounties of Nature and betrayed her shamefully.

Even looking at the world, there were always other threats which seemed much greater: nuclear war, crime, drugs, disease, famine, poverty. But now it is time to sit up and think about our planet, now when the earth itself is retaliating in response to the gross injustice done to it. If we are perceptive, it is not difficult to detect the warnings our planet is issuing: devastating floods, life-taking famines, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones, storms etc. If the earth is powerful enough to nurture us, it is powerful enough to destroy us too.

We were not always oblivious to the problems which have today placed our ecosystem in jeopardy. On April 22, 1970 more than twenty million Americans rallied in cities and towns to raise national consciousness about the deteriorating condition of our planet. As a result, remarkable changes were brought about. The Environmental Protection Agency was established, the Clean Air, and Clean Water acts were passed, the US army at war in south east Asia was forced to give up using defoliants like Agent Orange etc. Despite this memorable Earth Day and its many redeeming consequences, the sad plight of the planet continues. We are a part of the earth. It is up to all of us to form a solution to the earth's problems.

THE GREEN HOUSE EFFECT

This is a very apt term describing the real danger. Due to modern technology and increased industrialisation, the amount of poisonous gases in the atmosphere has increased. These gases get trapped in the atmosphere and act like the glass of a green house, allowing sunlight to penetrate, but not letting the reflected infrared heat out. The supply of Carbon dioxide in the air has risen dramatically due to increase in power plants, cars, large-scale burning etc. Our forests and oceans are now unable to filter all the carbon-di-oxide produced, which is as a result getting trapped and polluting the earth. To prevent this, consumption of energy and electricity must be reduced.

Burning fossil fuels (coal and oil) as a source of energy must make a transition to replenishable sources — like solar-power, which do not contribute to global warming. Gas mileage for cars must be improved. Trees are natural store-houses for carbon dioxide. Planting more trees could be a major earth-saving step.

DESTRUCTION OF RAINFOREST

Rain-forests are vital for environmental safety. They are a major source of oxygen: they moderate our climate and prevent floods and soil erosion, they also recycle and purify water. Many medicinal ingredients are found in the trees of the rain forest. They are home to millions of birds and animals. Burning of rain-forests releases fantastic amounts of

carbon dioxide and precipitates the greenhouse effect. Many countries allow their forests to be burnt so as to make room for pastures and grazing grounds for cattle to ensure more meat. It is outrageous, yet true, that one thousand plant and animal species become extinct each year due to destruction of rain forests. Last but not least, we cannot underestimate the loss of natural scenic beauty brought about by the destruction of rain forests.

THE OZONE LAYER

The Ozone layer is 7 miles up in the air and is a shield against the sun's ultraviolet rays. Man-made chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in refrigerators, air conditioners, Styrofoam and industrial solvents, are eating away at this natural shield meant to protect earth and us. This also adds to the greenhouse effect.

DUMPING GARBAGE

Instead of dumping garbage and polluting the air, we must implement ways to recycle stuff: like throw-away aluminium, glass, paper, cardboard etc.

CHEMICALS, TOXINS AND PESTICIDES

By spraying pesticides, dumping chemicals on farmlands, using hormones, growth stimulants and antibiotics on animals, who ingest them first, toxins accumulate in animal tissues and build up in higher concentrations along the entire food chain. We sit at the top of the food chain, so whenever we eat something from nature, we are swallowing these toxins too.

How much more will it take to make us see that we are, by being oblivious, not only torturing the earth, but also working towards our ultimate destruction. A lot of charges will have to be brought about. We cannot wait for everyone else to do it — to change the world you must change yourself first.



Ghostly in the background, an encroaching sand dune meets trees planted to stem desertification.

'When are We Going Home?'

S. Bari

LIANG remembers a time when she had a home. There were cows, the green fields, and her mother, her father, her brothers and sisters. Then the soldiers came. Men with harsh voices that shattered Liang's dreams. Everyday men came, and the fields were no longer green and friendly. One day Liang crossed a river, cold and frightening, and she never saw her home again.

Liang lives in a refugee camp. She fled her homeland with her family, and they may spend the rest of their lives hoping to return. In the camp, they share a lean-to shack with another family. Liang waits all day for something to happen, but nothing ever happens in the camp. Nothing except waiting. Waiting for someone somewhere to clear their papers, so they can go to America, or France, or Australia; or maybe the war will end and they will go back to the green fields.

Half the world's fifteen million refugees are children. Wars, starvation, state repression, all these are reasons for people leaving their countries. Caught in conflicts they cannot understand, children are torn away from the world they knew, dragged through unspeakable horrors, and dumped in camps with uncertain futures. Often they witness scenes of torture that leave them scarred for life. Once in the camp, there are very rarely educational facilities, rehabilitation treatment, or even a healthy growing environment.

A whole generation of children knows only one home, their camp. Palestinian babies born in camps have attained adulthood and are now fighting for a freer life. Vietnamese children finally accepted in some country of asylum take months to adjust to what the rest of us consider a normal childhood.

Refugees must first be recognised as such by the international community. Bodies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees determine whether a person has left their country out of a real fear of persecution. The refugee is interviewed at length, and so are the members of his family. This is to make sure that someone is not just trying to emigrate and get a better job. Because many people pose as refugees, this is harmful to genuine refugees, who will really face trouble if they return home.

The next step is finding a new home for the refugee. The waiting list is long, and it takes years before children like Liang see the outside world

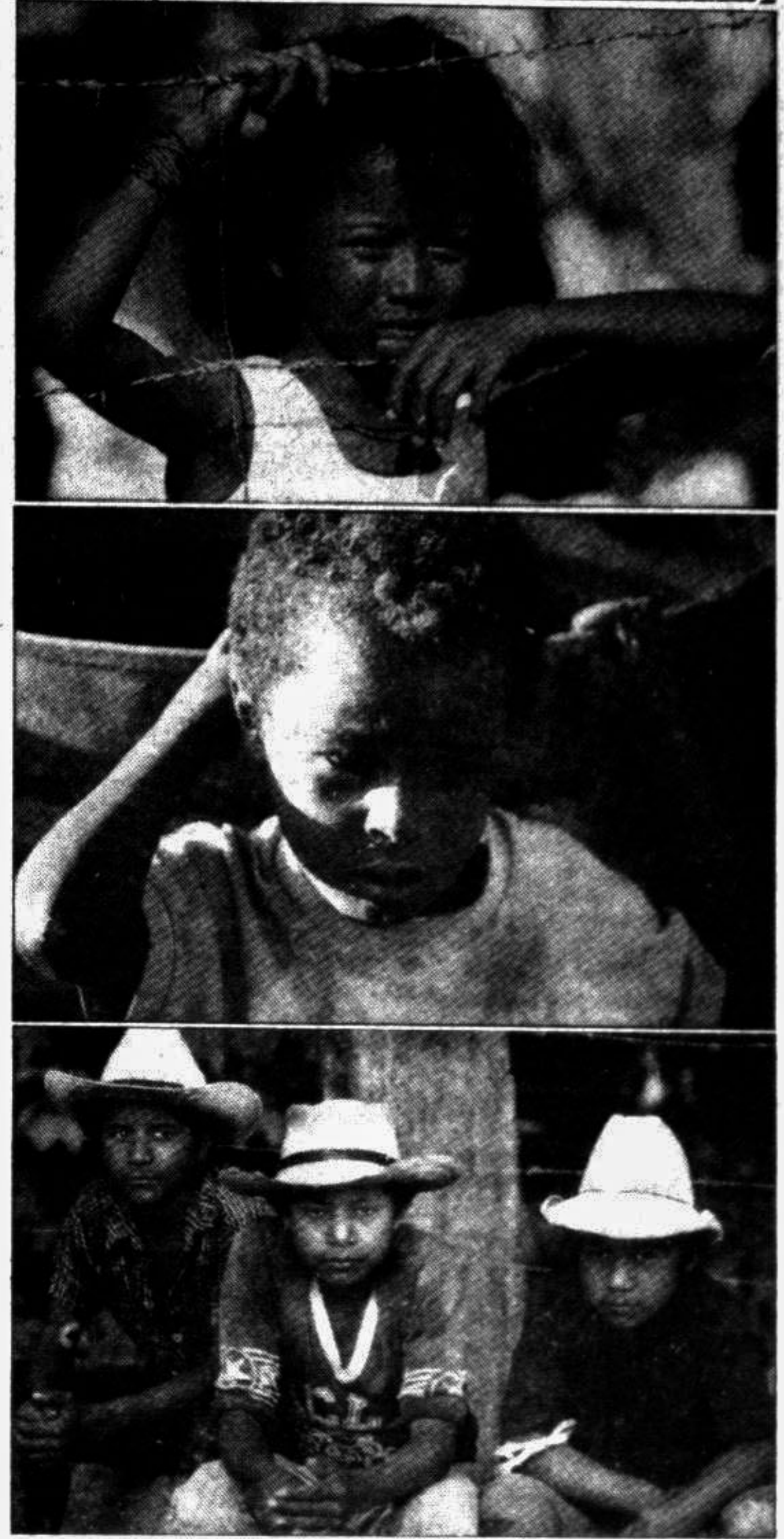
again. Till a country is found willing to take them, they wait inside the barbed-wire camps. Because it costs money to educate refugees and make them a part of society, countries sometimes hesitate to accept them. Sometimes, no one wants them, and they are shipped back to their country, where they are sure to face hardship and death. When refugees return to the country they fled, it is called repatriation.

Repatriation is not always against the refugee's will. If the war back home ends, refugees return on their own. This is what happened to the nearly 2 million refugees who were staying in Pakistan and are now moving back to Afghanistan, though peace is not yet certain.

Often children are left orphaned by wars, and the whole process is doubly complicated for those who have no parents or guardians. Children who get lost in the escape from home and are accidentally separated from their families have little chance of finding them, though UNHCR and the International Red Cross and other organizations work actively to reunite families.

Refugee organizations also work to help refugees establish themselves in a new country, to learn the language, to look for a job, to counter the culture shock. But the most difficult part for children is forgetting the terrors they have experienced, the cruelty they have seen, to learn to love and trust the world again.

Imagine that you will never see your home again, imagine that you are in a country you know nothing of, where you will spend the rest of your life. Liang is still waiting in her refugee camp, waiting for a new home. Sometimes she asks her mother, "When are we going home?" But now she knows she never will, that the green fields are there, but she will not walk in them again.



Faces of refugee children from three different continents. Looking out towards a world that has no place for them, dreaming of a home of their own. — Photo UNHCR

If you want to know more about refugee children and how to help them, here are a few places you can write to:

International Committee of the Red Cross,

17, Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, P. O. Box 2500 1211 Geneva, Switzerland

UNICEF, 3, UN Plaza, New York, New York 10017

The Perfect Face

Sumaiya Andaleeb

LET'S face it girls, all of us want to look great, and unless we are blessed with a perfectly shaped face and beautiful bone structures we have to use make-up to create pleasing facial contours. All it takes to do an expert job is a sharp eye, a steady hand and a few tricks of the beauty trade.

To do the best job, you need the right tools: a foundation that is a shade lighter than your regular one; a pale, creamy concealing stick and a

soft sponge. First, wash your face thoroughly with a mild soap. Study your freshly cleansed face in a well lit mirror and decide which of your features you want to emphasize and enhance and which features you want to play down.

Apply foundation after you have moisturized your face and neck with one that suits your skin type. Blend it well into your hair-line and all the exposed parts of your neck, so that there is an even, smooth

skin tone. Remember that a foundation is not meant to make you look fairer but to even out your complexion. Apply concealers in the places where required in small amounts — slapping on a whole lot will only emphasize the area you are trying to disguise.

In facial colouring, as with dressing, it's helpful to remember the power of colour: light colours make an area stand out, while dark shades make it recede. It's this lip more than anything else which makes correcting facial faults a simple task. Here are a few common examples of facial and their corrections:

SLIMMING A WIDE NOSE: Dot a line of the darker foundation the full length of the nose on both sides. Blend gently with the sponge or your fingertips away from the centre of your nose. Dot on the lighter foundation on the top centre of your nose and blend well so that the effect looks natural.

LIGHTING THE SHADOWS UNDER EYES: Dark circles and puffiness under the eyes can be caused by lack of sleep, nervous tension or a poor diet. If the problem is a serious one, consult a doctor without delay.

If it's caused by too many late nights, or too much TV; warning: get some rest. Meanwhile, you can dot on the pale concealer and blend it gently with the side of your little finger so that it matches the rest of your complexion.

SOFTENING A HEAVY JAW: Julia Roberts' jaw they find attractive, but as for the rest of us: Use a dark foundation along the jaw line, deep at the sides, below the ears and tapering away to nothing towards your chin. Blend well in all directions, especially down to the neck. Add just a touch of a pale highlighter on the pad of your chin and your bulky jaw will look considerably smaller, your chin more pointed.



Sketches by Sabah Moyeen

The magic word is blend well. Remember, practise makes a woman perfect, and so sit in front of that mirror and practise again and again till you achieve that perfection.

The Storm

by Sumaira Azim

The sky had been cloudy all day, and the distant rumbling of thunder could be heard, but not a single drop of rain had fallen yet. My mother and I had been sitting on the verandah outside my room, silently watching the sky, simply engrossed in our personal thoughts. All of a sudden my mother said without even turning to me, "It's late, Khoka, you'd better go to sleep." I left without the usual kiss, or even a goodnight for that matter. She had not even noticed.

One month ago my little sister had died. She was a 'preemie', and there had not been much of a chance for her in the first place. My mother had had a nervous breakdown and it had been arranged for us to go to her family's house in her home village.

It had been a zamindar's house a long time ago. It had once been beautiful, you could tell, but had now fallen into a bad state. No one lived there any more — only 4 rooms were habitable, and they sufficed for us two. I enjoyed wandering about the broken-down parts of the house. I could hear the clink of the bangles that the ladies of the house must have worn: I could sense the trepidation of the servants as they carried food to the dinner table — the master had a headache and yelled at any one in sight; I could see the master himself, collecting rents from his tenants... so much history!

We had been here three weeks now and so far as I could see, the fresh air and quiet had not done my mother any good. She was still as listless as ever. All she did was walk around the house and its gardens. She hardly ever talked. My father had not been able to come, so I was very lonely and lived in an imagined world — the world of those people who had lived here so long ago. But for how long can one live with imaginary people? They could not come and comfort me when I cried out of sheer loneliness. I resented my dead sister for having caused so much trouble. I resented my parents for letting her death matter so much. I almost hated them for leaving me alone so often. You can

imagine how much I cried.

It must have been just after midnight that night when heavy thunder woke me up. The storm that had refused to break was now raging with astonishing ferocity. I found myself getting up. I say 'found myself' because it was almost as if I didn't want to, but was being forced to — as if someone had partial control over my body. Suddenly, all I wanted to do was walk away from the house — from my mother. There is a door which opens onto the garden from the verandah, and I was just opening it when I heard a voice say, with a controlled urgency, "Don't go this time. Please Khoka."

The desire to get away was still strong, but my mother was pleading with me and I could not turn away from her. Only when I went up close, it was not my mother but a lady who resembled her greatly.

"Come, sit next to me," she said in her gentle voice. Dreamlike, I did as I was bid. She was silent for a while, and I was strangely content in that silence, but I was very interested when she finally spoke.

"I lived here once, long ago. I too had a son called Khoka and I too loved him greatly. I had children after him but they were all too weak to survive. When he was seven years old, I finally had a healthy daughter. She was the first baby in the whole family since Khoka, and everyone paid great attention to her. Khoka was not a jealous boy, but he was used to being the only child in the family. Besides, I must confess, for some time we... well, we almost forgot him. One night, he simply walked out of the house — just like you were doing — and never came back."

I shivered at this. The lady's voice had broken down. After a while she continued, "So, every year I come back and wait for him to return."

Something in me woke up. "But how did you get in? And who are you?" She smiled, a soft, serene but yet tragic smile. "It is time for you to go

back to bed." For some reason or other, I did not want to protest. She sat by the side of my bed and sang a soothing lullaby that soon had me nodding off. Just before I dropped off she said, "don't worry. The storm will cleanse your mother."

"Of what?" I remember thinking.

I was awoken by the sound of singing. Not a lullaby though — a cheerful song. It was my mother. "Come on, sleepy head! Time for breakfast. Hurry up or I'll eat up your food as well as mine. I'm ravenous!" She ran out, laughing.

To say I was astonished would be an understatement. As I got out of bed, I noticed that one side was wet, as if with dew. My eyes widened as I remembered. I rushed to get changed — my mother might really eat up my breakfast: She was a woman of her word.

Outside the sun shone and the flowers bloomed, as if there had not been a storm the night before. The storm had passed forever.

Time Off

Common Sense questions

1. Does evaporation produce heat or cold?
2. What is assembled and then disassembled?
3. What is the most perishable literature?
4. What has leaves and a spine but is neither a plant nor an animal?
5. What's worth more: a coin marked 200 BC or a coin marked 2000 BC?
6. What part of your car never wears out, and may even increase in value?
7. Two men walked off in opposite directions, but both went due south: how?

ANSWERS: 1. Cold; 2. A robot; 3. Newspaper; 4. A book; 5. Neither, the coins are fake, since they cannot be marked 'BC'; 6. The registration number; 7. They both set out from the North Pole. Contributed by Iresh Zaker.

QUIZ CLUB

Here is this week's selection of questions and brain-teasers. All of you enthusiasts, get set! Your answers are pouring in, and next week we will announce our first WINNER. To have your name in the winning list, send in your answers by next Friday to:

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

Quiz No. 4

1. Which is the most common gas contained in the atmosphere of the earth?
2. How deep is the Marianas Trench (or Challenger Deep) in the Western Pacific?
3. Who said "God does not play dice with the world"?
4. How many ghosts did Scrooge converse with?
5. What kind of government do we have that originated in ancient Greece?
6. Where did Simon Bolivar fight for freedom?
7. What key on a computer keyboard makes the computer do what you have just told it to do?
8. Name the woman loved by Hindu god Lord Krishna.
9. What was the first printed Bangla book?
10. Who sang I did it my way?

(Answers in two weeks)

Answers to Quiz No.2

1. Hammurabi
2. 17th March 1920
3. Eva Braun
4. Rafiq, Salam, Barkat, Jabbar
5. Fazlur Rahman Khan
6. Thomas Edison
7. Rathindranath, Madhurilata, Mrinalini, Somindranath
8. Dr. Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank
9. Albania
10. Romulus.