

# RISING STARS

The Young People's Page

## Environment, What Does It Mean to Me?

Kang Hao

As I open my photo album, two pictures, one old, one new, appear before my eyes. The background of the old one shows a simple, large and quiet courtyard. A grape trellis is visible, as are pots of flowers. It seems peaceful. The new one's background shows some fine factory buildings and towering chimneys, all neat and imposing.

The old photo was taken when I was very small. The little courtyard was in fact my home.

My home was in a small town in the Yangtze Valley. Regarding the scenery, it was typical of the area south of the river. A limpid stream meandered quietly from far away through the centre of the town, washing away all the dust and then silently flowing on. Flanking the stream were neat, small courtyards around which grew flowers, tufts of grass and high trees, a paradise for birds and singing cicadas. The fragrance of flowers, the chirping of birds and the gurgling clear water added much charm to this quiet little town.

My home, situated in a corner of the town, was particularly tranquil. In our courtyard, grapes climbed the trellis, under which stood rows of

potted plants and flowers. The sweet smell of the flowers and the refreshing grapes made one intoxicated: emerald grapes and pink roses delighted one's eyes. In the evenings sometimes, I would sit close to my father and listen to his fascinating stories. How we enjoyed ourselves! I took all this for granted and had never considered what it would mean to me and to all the people living in the little town if it should one day disappear.

The new photo was taken when I was a boy. The factory building seen in it was erected right on the spot of my old courtyard.

Several years ago, when I was no longer a naughty boy but a youth beginning to understand the world, the roar from the huge machines of the modern industry broke the silence of our small town. As tall factory buildings and a forest of chimneys appeared, our little town, which was so small that it was not even marked on a map drawn on a scale of ten thousand to one, became well known for its huge iron and steel works.

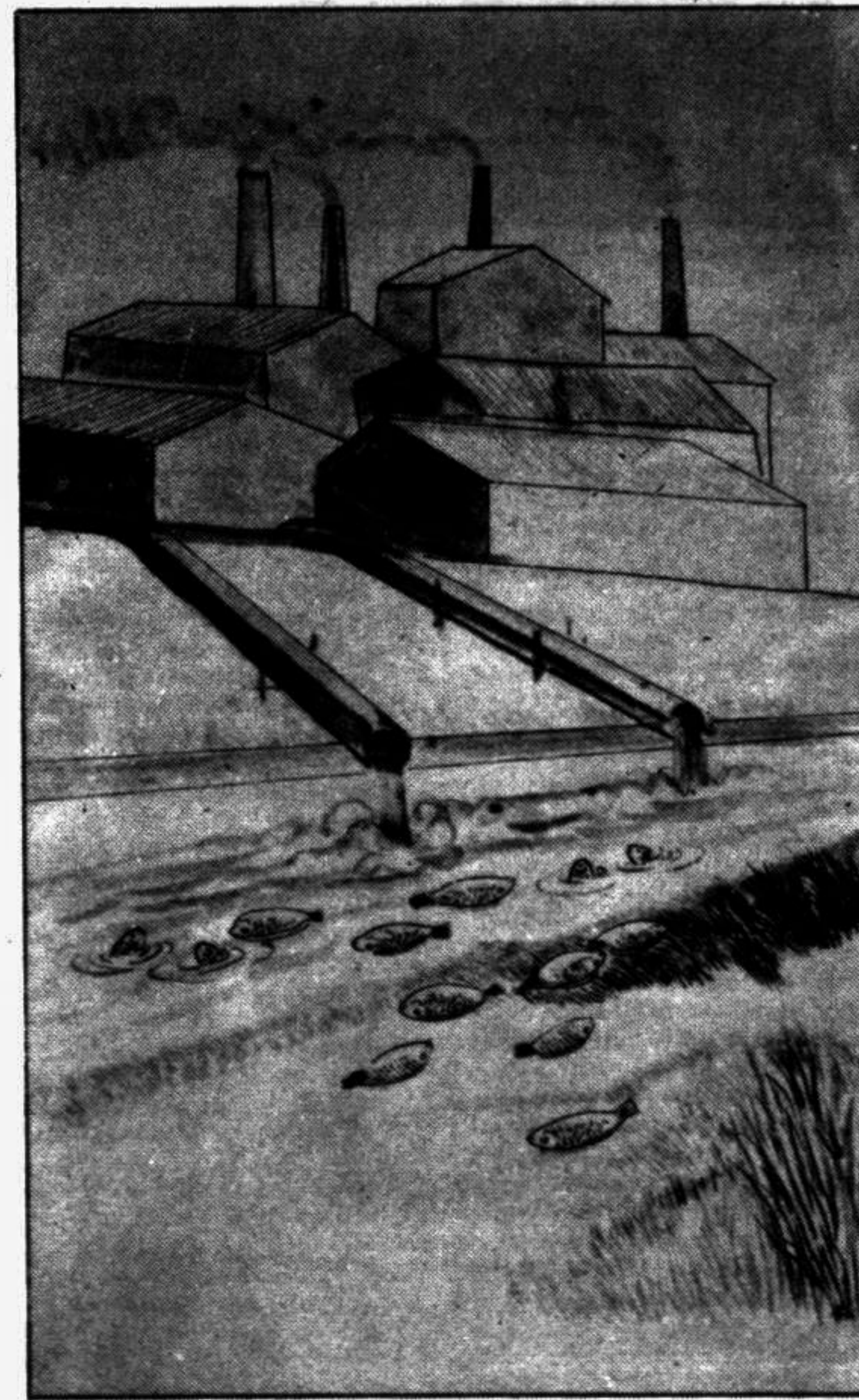
I observed all those changes with curiosity. When we moved into our new living quarters, we felt reluctant to leave our

little courtyard. But as soon as I saw the new buildings I was delighted. In comparison with those courtyards in the small town, the rows of apartment buildings looked more imposing. I went to the balcony and looked out at the old town which had changed beyond recognition. The low houses had been pulled down and new factories were being erected one after another. Instead of tall trees were towering chimneys which made one dizzy to look at. The kitchen smoke of the town appeared fine and weak compared with the belching dark smoke from factory chimneys. The chirping of the birds was drowned by the roar of the machinery. The slow flow of the stream could never match the boiling molten steel. Those changes excited and inspired me.

The machines roared, chimneys emitted smoke, and the factories turned out their products. But they also produced waste, which brought worry and uneasiness to the people living around. Flowers and grass were polluted, the stream water was no longer clear. The fragrance of blossoms was diluted by smoke; birds' chirping was drowned by noise. Every household was enveloped in dust and smoke.

Smoke and dust made my ailing father even more emaciated. Loud noises irritated and depressed him. He coughed more and more, and I never again heard the clear voice in which he used to tell me stories. I myself could not get used to all these changes. I wondered, if we did nothing about this smoke, dust and noise, what would happen to me, to the people and our posterity.

Gazing at the dark smoke in the sky, I remembered the tale of a fisherman in The Arabian Nights that my father had told me. A strange idea occurred to me. Those chimneys looked just like the magic bottle mentioned in the tale could subdue the monster. I would make the monster hand over the fortune it has hidden so as to benefit the people. Then, I would take a new photo of the same spot. In the new picture, the fine factory buildings are set against coloured clouds: light smoke flows from towering chimneys. Green trees and grass add more beauty to the people living around. Flowers and grass are not polluted, the stream water was no longer clear. The fragrance of blossoms was diluted by smoke; birds' chirping was drowned by noise. Every household was enveloped in dust and smoke.



## ILLUSIONS . . .

By Naheed Kamal

Sometimes I feel like a tourist on earth, I walk down the street and suddenly its like a moving post-card all around me: "People on earth live in box-shaped houses to keep out the 'rain' and 'sun' and 'snow', with holes cut in the sides to see out. They move around in smaller boxes of different colours, with wheels on them.

They need this box-culture because each person thinks he or she is locked in a box called a 'body'; they have eyes to see and ears to listen with, they speak but nobody listens and they do but nobody sees, because their 'souls' are turned out. Odd little green planet".

This earth of ours is full of ups and downs, left and right, full circles and squares. There's much for us yet to know and learn, the good with the bad, the ugly and the beautiful. There are precious moments to treasure and bad times to try and forget. Yet in spite of all our human aspects we are automated; we have all but forgotten how to "live life". We think too much and too deep for everything and in the process we forget to experience, to feel.

The best way to pay for a lovely moment is simply to enjoy it. Even when we dream our thoughts are restrained.

Our dreams are shattered by petty compromises. We are afraid and this fear keeps our minds bound up in chains and armours of steel.

There's much for us to see, yet we never allow ourselves to be totally enchanted with anything. What ever enchants us, also guides and protects. Passionately obsessed with anything we love — airplanes, butterflies, cats, dogs, flowers or sailboats — an avalanche of magic is created, it flattens the path ahead of us, levels rules, reasons, dissents and bears us with it over chasms, fears and doubts. The choice to be carried away is our own. The path opens up to us and it is for us to choose which way to go. Without this love and its power we are like boats on a calm sea, right before the storm breaks. We live with the illusion that the deadly calm will last forever . . . when the storm does break we experience total bliss . . . excitement. Like a surfer resting on a board, all at once some monster energy wells up, grabs you without asking if you are ready, spray flies all over, you are caught on to this massive, deep power, the wind pulling a smile around your mouth. Charging a mile-a-minute you can forget that if you are not terribly skillful, the next surprise is often called a WIPE OUT!

## THE BIG CATCH

by Sagheer Bin Faiz

JIMMY was a mugger. You could call it his profession. A black boy raised in the repressive neighbourhood of Harlem by an alcoholic father who was often violent, he had learnt one thing: money wasn't everything — it was the only thing.

And having never been taught the value of hard-earned money as he grew up in a street habituated mostly by hardened criminals, he learned to make a living the easy way.

He was just 19 years old and already a master in his trade. As he sat on his haunches against a wall on the dark New York night, waiting for a victim hopefully loaded with cash to come his way, he stroked the glistering blade of his knife against his leather

glove. The job often required patience, though the patience was usually rewarding. Jimmy heard footfalls round the corner and stood up, ready for action. Just as the passerby rounded the corner, he grabbed him by the collar of his shirt and slammed him against the wall, brandishing the weapon.

"Your money or your life," he snarled.

He gave his victim a critical go-over. The man was in casual wear, with a rucksack slung over one shoulder. Jimmy pulled it off his back.

Before he had time to ask the man what else he had, he heard the all too familiar sound of a police siren and saw the beam of headlights round the

corner. He ran off into the darkness along with the rucksack. The police never even saw him.

Jimmy was in his pigsty of an apartment, half an hour later. He sat on his bed, looking eagerly at the rucksack. He reminded himself not to get his hopes up to high; after all how much could that guy carry around in a rucksack anyway?

He went over to the fridge to get himself a can of beer and then came back to the rucksack. He unzipped it and was forced to draw his breath. His jaw dropped and so did the can of beer from his hand. He couldn't believe his eyes, as he upturned the rucksack to let all of its contents fall on the bed.

Again, he sucked in his breath what had fallen out of the rucksack and now lay on his bed were 20 stacks of ten 50 dollar bills?

He never bothered to wonder what kind of fool would carry 10,000 dollars in a rucksack, at night, in New York city.

His mind was too abused with so many possibilities, so many open doors. He couldn't get the prospect of a new apartment, possibly a penthouse, out of his mind. He would get a sportscar to go with it!

A whole new wardrobe to make him look like one of those posh Wall Street bookers would be nice too. He could run his own operation in something more profitable than mugging.

He hardly slept that night. He was afraid that if he fell asleep he'd wake up and find that this was all a dream. He simply lay on his bed looking out at the slum he lived in, holding the rucksack close to his chest.

He slept late the next day; very late. He woke around six in the evening, and he switched on the TV out of habit.

The six o'clock news was on and Jimmy, the 19 year old mugger, received his second shock in barely 24 hours as he saw what he couldn't have possibly known.

The face of the man on TV was that of the man he had mugged the night before. The police had been on his tail and had arrested him late last night. "Must've got him when I ran off," Jimmy thought as he stared at the screen in stunned disbelief. The incriminating evidence that the man possessed had been stolen from him, the newscaster said.

The man was carrying \$10,000 in counterfeit cash.

## Drug addiction and our society

— Shejuti Amin Khan

DRUG addiction is one of the greatest social menace both in developing and developed countries of the world. It is needless to emphasise that drug abuse can ruin a person not only physically and mentally but also one's family psychologically, socially and economically.

In our country many of the young boys and girls are cursed with this monstrous habit. Once an innocent victim who is unaware of this basic fact, gets hooked to this hard drug, it becomes extremely difficult to leave the habit on his own.

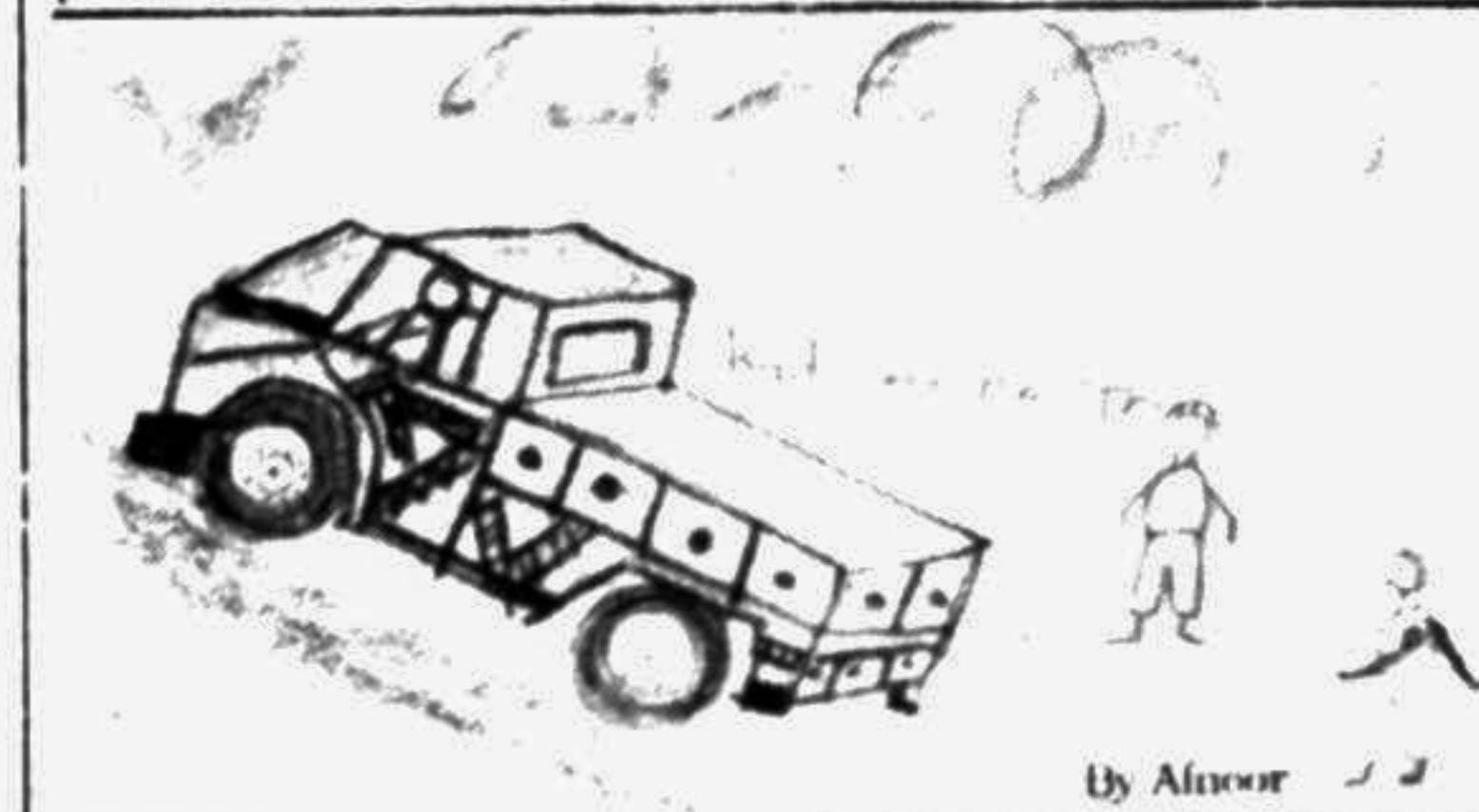
Some young boys and girls take drugs for the fun of it or out of frustration. In some cases it has been found that, working parents are not in a position

to give the needed attention and care to their children. As a result children get involved with companions who are drug addicts.

Another problem in our society is that, sometimes young people see others taking drug and just out of curiosity they want to try it themselves.

For a while after taking drug they feel that all problems can be solved by it and after taking this poisonous thing they feel proud of themselves for their bravery but they don't know, how it pushes them nearer to death gradually.

So we must save our society and young people who are the future of the country. We want a drug free society, say "No" to drugs.



## QUIZ CLUB

We are happy to announce that many of you have sent in correct answers for November 29th's Quiz Club. And the lucky winner after our lottery is Md Enam Al-Gader of Shamoli. Congratulations! You will be receiving your prize very soon.

The answers to November 29th's Quiz-Club are:

- 30th January, 1948
- George Washington
- An outlaw who lived in Sherwood forest
- Philippines
- Mamoon Abdul Gayoom
- Robert Mugabe
- Argentina, United States
- Leo Tolstoy
- Dijendra Lal Roy
- 25th Baishakh, 1268 Beng

**VICTORY DAY QUIZ**

Q.1. Who were the five leaders of the Student Action Committee, who raised the flag of independent Bangladesh for the first time on March 2, 1971, at the Dhaka University Battle?

Q.2. When and where did Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman make the speech in which he declared, "The struggle this time is for our

freedom, the struggle this time is for our independence?"

Q.3. On which night did the Pakistan army unleash its genocide against the Bengalee people?

Q.4. When was the independence of Bangladesh declared?

Q.5. When was the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh formally proclaimed?

Q.6. Who led the Mukti Bahini during the War of Liberation as commander-in-chief?

Who were his chief of staff and deputy chief of staff?

Q.7. Which officers led the first three brigades of the Bangladesh army during the War of Liberation?

Q.8. Which seven men were awarded the Bir Shreshtha, the highest medal for valour during the War of Liberation?

Q.9. When did the Indian armed forces join the war on our side?

Q.10. How many Pakistani soldiers surrendered to the joint Bangladesh-India forces on December 16, 1971?

## No Going Back

by Farshed Mahmud

The wind howled through the dark empty streets. I had placed a bet with my friends that I would be able to visit the old Frederick Manor which was supposedly haunted by the ghost of its last owner, Sir Frederick V. As I had no belief whatsoever on ghosts or anything related to them, my adamant attitude readily took me through an ordeal which I thought would be a piece of cake. However, the day before I had planned to spend the night at the manor, I gathered all the information I could about the manor and of course, Sir Frederick V. I learned that approximately a hundred and fifty years ago, this manor, a veritable palace then, was inherited by Sir Frederick V after his father had committed suicide due to reasons unknown to everyone. Sir Frederick's family was a noble and rich one. They never faced problems common to other people. They were a class completely to themselves. Therefore the news of a suicide in such a family was a shock to everyone, especially to Sir Frederick. He spent the next forty-five years alone in that mansion until one calm evening a tremendous shout for help was heard from inside the manor. As people went to investigate they found Sir Frederick's body lying dead on the floor of his room.

After the mysterious death of Sir Frederick V there were constant stories from people about sightings of Sir Frederick himself roaming around his manor. It was from then onwards that Frederick Manor carried the reputation of being haunted and not a single soul dared to move into the mansion, though there were a few certain brave ones like me who tried to spend the night there but gave up after an hour or two.

Although I knew I would be playing with fire by agreeing to spend the night at the manor, my colours were nailed to the mast. I approached the dilapidated manor. I walked up a gravel path and came up to the door. The wind suddenly came up and the door slowly creaked open. As I entered the manor, I found myself in a large dark hall. Thick cobwebs covered every corner of the hall. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I looked around with great eagerness. The first thing my eyes fell on was the spiral staircase leading to the first floor. The adept woodwork on it fascinated me. There were just two other doors on either side of the staircase. I decided to explore the ground floor first.

I chose one of the two doors and found myself in what seemed to be a family room. It was partly empty but there were still some pieces of old furniture lying around. The was a fire-place in one corner of the room and an empty bookshelf in the other. I left this room and went to the other. This room was totally empty so I did not bother to look around. This room was also much smaller than the former room.

I was back in the entrance hall when I suddenly noticed portraits of various people, hung on the wall all around. I had not noticed these when I first entered the room. I felt funny about the fact but then I thought it was probably my eyes that failed to notice them although that was quite unlikely unless I was blind. I however tried to forget about it and decided to explore the first floor.

The old staircase just barely managed to hold me as I went up. At the end of the staircase was a long corridor. My bewilderment was beyond imagination as I found the corridor magnificently decorated with sculptures and various antiques. I wondered why nobody had ever noticed these but then I thought nobody ever dared to come up the stairs. I entered the first room to the right of the corridor, a bedroom. The room was beautifully decorated with furniture that

seemed brand new. My heart jumped to my mouth as I saw burning logs in the fire-place! The hair at the back of my neck stood up as I saw the reflection of an old man on the mirror smiling at me. I immediately turned back and all my fretful eyes met with the empty wall. By now I was panic-stricken and I did not hesitate once to turn back and look as I rushed downstairs, with the steps beneath me creaking and making eerie sounds. I ran as fast as I could out of the manor and realized that what I had done had no depth and magnitude and only a foolish person would do such a thing. As I left the neighbourhood of the manor, still running, I promised myself there would be no going back.

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## WHERE EAGLES DARE

By Mehrin Ahmed

I want to go where mountains high,  
Lovingly embrace the sky.  
The glittering snow or their royal peaks,  
Hide bubbling brooks and mountain creeks;

To search for myths and old folk lore;  
To go to sea and not stay ashore;

Uncover treasure from Solomon's Mine,  
See the rubies sparkle and the diamonds shine;

Explore jungles dense and deep,  
This wanderlust haunts my sleep;

To fight with lions, tigers, bears,  
Brave my life in almy quagmires;

To sail in seas wracked with gales,  
Hunt sharks, seals and whales;

To bring a new day bright and fair;  
To totally go where eagles dare.

## The irony of the seasons

By Shaila Anwar From Ottawa

The day is over the night creeps in.  
As dusk falls over the trees.  
All quiet lay the fields of rice  
A calm sets on the seas.  
Fireflies light the darkened paths  
Joining one village to another.  
Along the roads, flower petals close  
In a lazy, solemn slumber.  
(Up in) The still night sky, the moon disappears.  
A void of sound becomes.  
Silent, but for the wind's slow moan  
Like a whisper's desolate hum.

Slowly, gently, a breeze curls in.  
Wrapped round a palm tree blade.  
The wind seeps through the thin bamboo shoots  
From which a small hut is made.  
The smell of uncertainty hangs hauntingly.  
Like an unmentionable fear.  
A sharpened chill cuts through the air  
Above, the sky grows unclear.  
The night grows dense, the air is moist.  
The quiet lives no more.  
A powerful wind comes howling in  
The ocean sleeps no longer.  
A clap of thunder, a flash of light.  
The waves begin to roll.  
Ominous grows, the once-gentle breeze,  
The fear chokes one and all.

Rain cascades down on the sandy coast  
With a steady, streaming beat.  
From inside the huts, children waken  
To see Mother Nature's treat.  
But never-ending, is the summer gale.  
As the sea lets out a roar.  
The sky releases a ruthless crack  
The tide rushes high towards shore.  
The clamouring wind, the angry ocean  
Take prey upon the land.  
As God swoops down to take all life  
With one swift blow of his hand.

With power no human can deny  
On this the 'Judgement Day'.  
The voiceless cries, have been all washed out.  
The night turns into day.  
The violent serenity.  
The morning sun displays.  
Shows the silencing of humanity,  
Into a million watery grave.  
Shaila Anwar is the granddaughter of Poet Jasinuddin of Bangladesh.

Fill out this form and send it to us, and you will be a member of the Rising Star Club. Send in your writings, illustrations, and cartoons. It is an ideal opportunity to express yourself through the print media.

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