

# RISING STARS

## This Generation's Dilemma

by Sabah Moyeen

Last year, after our O'Level exams, it seemed as though all our worries were over. Scarcely had three months passed when we discovered that our hopes were ill-founded. Although we had settled down with our A'Level courses, the one imposing question that haunted us continuously was 'where to apply for higher studies?' Suddenly class-room, common-room and telephone conversations had all turned stereotyped: 'UPEN or UWC, MIT or BU.....' Details about various universities and colleges, group discussions on scholarships and academic aid followed ad nauseam and became an integral part of our daily life. Our results were reasonably good. Along with them came higher aspirations: 'Harvard, Cambridge, Yale.....' why leave them out? Applying abroad is an expensive and hectic affair. You cannot rely on your parents, since most of the work is demanded of you alone. I was, it seemed, the only aloof observer in this Pandemonium, since I had already decided to go to India. Nevertheless the excitement was contagious.

Tension was tantamount when the TOEFL and SAT exams approached. Essential to students applying to the US, these exams are no child's play. They require both proficiency in English and a keen aptitude for Mathematics. Needless to say, the wait for the results was a treacherous nightmare. Meanwhile, digging out old reports, desperate sorting out of applications, and of course — the anxious line outside the Teacher's Room for recommendations, continued. For a person not directly

involved in this process, life turns a little boring (although he/she could be the only one affording to laugh at certain times). For the person who starts eating, breathing, sleeping and thriving on hopes of getting accepted somewhere, anywhere, there is no night and no day. After all, the application deadlines are ALMOST OVER!

After a few more months of cribbing and bickering, one or two stary eyed people come into school, throw up their hands and let out a victorious cry 'I got accepted.....' at least in one of them! The rest eye them with a pinch of awe, and a lot of envy. Yep! Perseverance is the name of the game! Whatever the choices ahead, one thing was for certain: in order to seek further studies, we were all having to leave home.

This is the single most striking reality of the situation. Why should we have to leave the country? Simply because we lack an organised and efficient system of education. The current state of Dhaka University is particularly deplorable. Staffed with a highly qualified and competitive set of professors and attended by a majority of eager learners it is sad to see this former 'Oxford of the East' diminish into a volatile war-ground; defamed by a minority of bigoted students who give priority to politics rather than education in the campus. Perhaps a term more apt is 'rowdy politics'.

The situation is such that during times of political upheavals or conflicting political views, if you can reach home without a bullet in your body, or being trampled out of your skin, you

should count your blessings. Anywhere else in the country, student unions, uncompromising interference teachers on strike etc. make the completion of courses during the stipulated time a rare miracle. Thus the exodus of the student generation that has come about in recent years.

For students coming out of English medium schools, pursuing higher studies in Bangladesh has further drawbacks. The standard of English in the Intermediate and HSC exams is far below the mark. The British and the Bengali system of teaching is worlds apart, text books are very different, and most importantly, the medium of instruction is different. To adjust to such differences after years of grounding, is a mammoth task. On the other hand, a majority of students from Bangla medium schools aspiring to go abroad; find it difficult to get through the preliminary stages — the TOEFL and SAT exams.

It is time to set aside prejudices. The standard and the rate of implementation of English in our educational spheres must be improved drastically. It is the only internationally accepted language, and as we know, without effective communication with foreign nationals, our progress will be sluggish. The question, as some people think, is certainly not one of superiority of one language over another, but one of practicability and utility.

Students going abroad to study are often victimised as selfish beings, even anglicised traitors sometimes! Should our predicament not be considered before passing judge-

ment? Friends, family culture and ethics all bind us to our native land. Leaving it calls for a great deal of sacrifice. True — the splendour of London and America away from our own very stringent social outlook often seems an attractive prospect, but the very real fear of cultural alienation is not neglected. Not every one of us are blinded by just the glamour of foreign countries. Some of us really want to go to study. Human nature is vulnerable and we must not forget the importance of peer pressure.

Some people do come back completely changed — cases which are talked about as 'loss of identity' and 'half-breeds'. It may be mentioned that people here cannot mind their own business. What they do not really talk about is the fact that people often grow even closer to their native land and all it stands for, when they stay away from it. Some find it extremely difficult to adjust to conditions prevailing abroad — a completely different culture, religion, people, social outlook etc. Disillusionment is always a rude shock. Suddenly they feel as though the glitter and glamour is but a halo over a dark abyss, the sugar coating over a capsule of bitter medicine.

Bengali people specially, are very culture oriented. During Eid, family weddings and reunions — that's when, sitting far away, you could be envying your cousins back home! Some people are able to strike a fine balance between outward conditions and the principles and ethics innate in them. They have happily.

And all this in a bid to further education and knowledge, the basis of ones life.

Everybody talks about the weather, goes a saying, but nobody does anything about it. When you have nothing better to do then you talk about the weather but these days the weather has everybody wondering what went wrong and where. Whoever said that we don't do anything about the weather was wrong because everyone of us as we go about the mundane business of existence are in one way or other helping to alter the weather. We are changing every aspect of life on this fair planet. I suppose there is no excitement in a mundane existence and so we must create for ourselves some form of diversion... and what better source of conversation than the weather!

The South Americans cutting, shredding and burning their way through the rain forests in search of a better life (?); a billion Asians belching black coal smoke stacks and marching towards the 21st century and a meeting with modernisation... we are all in some way changing our way of life.

Somewhere in Hawaii a mysterious instrument records the concentration of carbon-dioxide dumped into the atmosphere as a result of all the activities we partake in. A wobbly rising line is traced and it is getting steeper and steeper showing the rate of carbon-dioxide rising at an alarming rate. Within the next 50 years, Climatologists claim that all the carbon-dioxide will trap the sun's heat like a greenhouse (thus the "greenhouse effect") and smother the planet and us, raising temperature, turning farmlands into deserts, swelling oceans to a height of above 20 feet. Then it is goodbye Venice, goodbye Bangladesh. Goodbye to millions of species of animals, insects and plants that haven't already fallen prey to acid rain, ultra-violet

## Killer Instincts

by Naheed Kamal

radiation leaking through the damaged ozone layer, spreading toxic wastes or bulldozers (town planners). Its goodbye to all of us!

A species that can change its planet's chemistry just by its day-to-day activities has, I suppose, achieved a kind of coming-of-age. Now you can

but a wobbly line on a graph and a handful of numbers and colours on a computer print-out-telling us red means danger, blue means water and green means forests? Dare we change on the basis of a wobbly line on a graph?

Articles proclaiming that the end is near come to you a



"APPARENTLY THEY'D JUST ACHIEVED TOTAL DISARMAMENT AND THEN SOME HOLE IN THE OZONE LAYER GOT THEM..."

celebrate with joy or tremble with fear.

What can you do if its not war but progress that is killing us? When it is not the actions of fanatics or deranged dictators threatening the world but the ordinary people and their ordinary business? When there are no bombs dropping and guns blazing, nothing to fear

dime a dozen. Nearly every page of every newspaper or magazine contains one such chiller. After a while everybody gets sick of it. But how can marching to save the Earth possibly save it? How can a seminar save us?

If we could only do something concrete and Hey Presto you have an Earth saving

gimmick! Alas... that has yet to come.

Like cowboys and Indians we are playing at saving ourselves while we forget that the other species has just as much right to live. The danger began when Columbus landed on the shores of America believing it to be India. Soon the indigenous group began to disappear. The cowboys razed the Indians to the ground. The plants have been thriving on this planet longer than humans but yet we seem to be razing the plants to the ground. Polluting seem to be human nature.

It used to be so simple when we were in first grade and were learning science. The plants give out oxygen and take in CO<sub>2</sub> and we take in oxygen and give out CO<sub>2</sub>, so we are balanced. But what do you do when there are more humans than there are plants to give us oxygen by taking in the CO<sub>2</sub> we give out? Its a simple question and the answer is even simpler... "plants more trees." But the truth is rarely pure and never simple... there is no place left for us to plant trees in because its all concrete and steel.

All we ever seem to do is sit around and ask questions but each time we ask a question instead of getting an answer we get two more questions. This article will not save the planet either but sooner or later we will realize that praying alone will not save us. The days of miracles are gone forever, the Powers that be have no time to spare to come and show us the right path. God's children have come of age and they should be able to choose the right path without mummy and daddy holding their hands.

We can choose the right path and do the right thing but we cannot rely on prayers alone.

Just remember... When the gods want to punish us they answer our prayers. Kazantsakis.



## "Tips on Hair Care"

By Samia Israt Ronee, Class X-B; Agrani Balika Bidyalaya.

We all know how satisfying it is to have a good head of hair, wellcut and cared for by quality hair products. It enhances our appearance and can make such a difference to our confidence. But beautiful hair needs a lot of looking after. It's therefore important to understand how hair is structured, what affects it and how best to care about it. While hair helps us look attractive it also performs an important role in the functioning of our bodies. It gives our body surface extra-protection. It helps to insulate us against heat and cold as well as giving us a special sense of touch. Just as a cat can sense things with whiskers, so we can feel

the slightest movement of our hair.

Hair in good condition should be shiny, smooth, easy to manage with no flyaway, and easy to comb, wet or dry. Sometimes, however, you know your hair isn't looking good as it should. Here are a few tips on what can go wrong with your hair.

1. When you live in town your hair can get very dirty quickly. This can lead to problems like dullness or lifelessness, if it's not washed enough or 'flyaway' if it's over washed with too harsh a shampoo.

2. Another problem is greasy hair. It's usually caused by an excess of 'SEBUM' (the

hair's natural conditioner, which tends to make hair look greasy) from the scalp. Hair hangs limp and flat and lacks body.

3. Hair can also be too dry. This is caused by too little sebum. Hair looks dull, feels rough and brittle and it is unmanageable.

4. Fine hair can also be a problem. It usually tends to be flyaway. It should be shiny and full of bounce to give it a full appearance.

5. Weakness or roughness is another problem. It can be caused by overtreatment or damage, like over-heating the hair.

'BRUSHING' is a good and perhaps the best exercise for your hair. A good daily brushing routine keeps your hair bouncy. It is very important to use the right brush or you may damage your hair. Rough brushing can cause damage by lifting up the 'CUTICLE' scales and eventually breaking them off.

Be sure to clean your brush each time you wash your hair. You can do this by removing any hairs left in the brush, then soaking it in lukewarm water mixed with a little shampoo. Heat damages natural bristles, so let your brush dry naturally.

### HOW EXTERNAL FACTORS CAN AFFECT YOUR HAIR

1. When you go on a holiday be sure to use extra conditioner. This is because over-exposure to the sun's ultra-violet rays damages the outer layer of the hair and can lead to hair roughening, splitting and breaking.

2. If you use hair-dryer you

## Mystery at Mandrake

by Munazah Alam

... As the story continues at Mandrake... Our heroes are now in a dark kitchen with nothing but a stove in the corner. But wait — there is a door that leads to something. Read on to find out more...

Spying a door — the only one in the room other than the one through the one which we had entered — I went towards it and pressed down the handle. It opened.

Chris and I investigated the whole ground floor but obtained no clue as to the whereabouts of our friends. Room after room we searched, knocking on the walls and looking for hidden buttons on the backs of the few cupboards we found; but all to no avail. Either there weren't any se-

cret hiding-places there, or, if there were, they were very cleverly cancelled.

It was while we were on the first floor that I received a severe shock (the shock of my life so far, actually).

I was just coming out of one of the rooms I had searched. (Chris was in the adjacent room doing the same). Since there had not been any sign of any person in the house other than Chris and me, I guess I had dropped my guard a little. I opened the door somewhat carelessly and it creaked.

And...and then a man's voice said from somewhere outside the room, "Hey! Who's in there?"

I stiffened. Until then — that moment — I'd never really believed that one's heart could really skip a beat. Mine did then. Rather, it skipped several beats. Everything is over. I thought despairingly. I'd let my friends down. I'd let myself down.

The sound of footsteps, sharp and sure on the wooden floor, echoed in my ears. They came nearer...and nearer...and stopped — just outside my door! I flattened myself against the wall beside the door, hardly daring to hope. A handle turned — and a door opened — but...but it wasn't the door to my room — it wasn't! Still I held my breath, hardly able to believe my luck.

The footsteps entered the room opposite the one I was in. The harsh voice swore angrily and muttered something, of which I could catch only...king...

Then there was the sound of a switch clicking and suddenly I found myself swamped in complete darkness. There had been a slight glow on the wooden floor near the door, which I had not noticed before, but after the switch clicked, it disappeared. Realization dawned upon me. So that's why...Seeing the light under the doorway the man had thought that there was someone in the room opposite. Another switch clicked and the glow reappeared on the

floor: the dim corridor light probably. Chris and I were still safe and...

A hand closed round the handle on the other side of my door...and a head appeared — a dark silhouette only vaguely distinguishable from the slightly lighter background. I tried to make myself invisible and pressed harder against the wall, not daring to breathe. But, to my immense relief, the head withdrew after a quick look around the room, and the door was closed. The corridor light was switched off: the footsteps receded and gradually faded away. Whew!

It was quite a while before I dared to step out of that room. When I did, I went straight into the next one to find Chris. Like all the other ones this one was dark too. I shone my torch around and whispered Chris' name. But no reply came forth. Somewhat alarmed I began to look about the room.

It was a bedroom. A large single-bed stood against one of the walls. There was also a chest of drawers and a wardrobe which took up the whole of another wall. Surprisingly the doors of the latter were locked. But still no sign of Chris.

My breakthrough came while I was knocking on the wall beside the mantelpiece. Accidentally my hand knocked against a statuette standing near its edge. Expecting a crash on the floor, I was astounded to hear a humming noise instead! And the next thing I knew was that there was gaping hole where the fire-place had been just a moment ago!

A secret hiding-place — at last! The statuette hadn't fallen off because it was fixed to the mantelpiece, and upon examination, I found that it was fixed in a little groove in the marble

so that it could be activated like a switch!

The opening in the wall was just big enough for a fully-grown man to go through. I shone my light into it. The torch's beam encountered some carpeted steps. I ascended them and shone my light around.

My eyes nearly popped out at what I saw! Inside was a small room with a low ceiling, fully-furnished — complete with bed, desk and wardrobe!

I took a hesitant step forward. At a slight movement beside me I turned abruptly to come face to face with Chris!

"Oh, it's you!" she sighed with relief. "You scared the life out of me!" She fumbled in the darkness and pressed a button on the wall, and the fire-place returned to its original position.

"How did you find this place?" I asked excitedly, completely forgetting to lower my voice.

"Shh! Keep your voice down, will you!" Chris whispered fiercely, and then con-



'Happy Home' by Namrata Bauri Class III, Assam, India

tinued, "I was fingering that statuette when I realized that the fire-place had moved, so naturally I decided to investigate. And boy, did I find something! But first tell me, how did you get in here?"

So I told her all that had happened since we had separated. Incredibly, or so it appeared to me, she hadn't heard the man who had scared me to death!

"Look what I've found!" Chris said when I had finished my story. "It's pretty serious."

She led me towards the desk and, opening a drawer, shone her torch into it. The light revealed some polythene bags containing a white powder.

I stood perfectly still, unable to say anything. "Is it — are they...?" I got out finally.

"Yes! I think so too! Drugs! This is turning out to be more serious than I thought it would be! Somehow or other we've got to make the police believe us; but the question is, how?"

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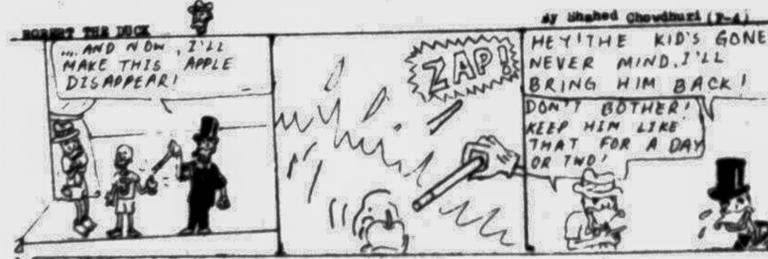
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To be continued

## QUIZ CLUB

- Here are this week's quiz questions. If you can answer all correctly
- Who wrote Jane Eyre?
  - What type of music is Bob Marley known for?
  - Who built the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta?
  - Who is the best-selling classical pianist in recording history?
  - What is a tuba?
  - Which city is called 'The Big Apple'?
  - Where is the sunniest spot in the world?
  - What is a constellation?
  - What is the name of the space shuttle that took off on March 16th from Cape Canaveral?
  - Where is Adam's Peak?

- Answers to March 6th's Quiz Club:
- 1887
  - Lord Baden-Powell
  - 1869
  - Dirham
  - A half size flute
  - The five circles represent Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe. They interlock to show friendship of the people of the world and the colours are found among the flags of all the countries of the world.
  - It has a high concentration of hydrogen sulphide. a deadly gas which colours the sea floor black.
  - Kepler Wessels
  - England and Australia
  - Suzil Cavuskar.



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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