

# RISING STARS

IT'S Christmas season once again. Time for good cheer, good food, good presents and a generally good feeling. It is the time for singing carols like 'What child is this' and 'Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer' with all your soul, yet you probably don't know much about any of it. Ever wonder why

## Myths About Christmas

by Judith G. De Costa

Christmas is celebrated during December? Or if Jesus Christ was really born during this month? Or, perhaps if Santa Claus really existed? No, I guess it may never have

occurred to you to ask. But you'd be surprised at what I'm going to tell you. The legend of Santa Claus, St Nicholas, springs from actual fact. However, like most

legends, it has been twisted and turned in many ways but the gist of it is still very much the same. He lived from around 271 AD to December 6, 342 or 343 AD, statistics are not exactly sure which. He was born into a wealthy family and brought up as a devout Christian. He joined the priesthood, did lots of charity work and then went on to become Archbishop of Asia Minor's little town called Myra.

During his life, Nicholas was charitable and pious and performed his humane duties as well as one could expect. However, his presence was found to help others through their trials in life, even long after his death. He became a saint, when desperate sailors invoked his help. Prison walls crumbled as victims prayed to him for their salvation. He saved small children from the butcher's knife and dropped down into the shoes of penniless maidens. In due course, the good Bishop became Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of many sailors, merchants and especially children.

The remains of St Nicholas

were carried to a park in southern Italy, where people flocked to worship him. From there the cult spread rapidly to coastal towns along the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. In the 13th century in Holland, more than 20 churches were built in his name and Rome decreed that December 6th as became his official calendar birth day.

By the 14th century, St Nicholas was corrupted into 'Sinterklaas' and his name became a household one synonymous with festivity and he a figure of benevolence. By the 17th century, the feast of 'Sinterklaas' was so firmly established that Dutch painters and writers were inspired by it. Even folk songs were composed in the legend of 'Sinterklaas'. The Dutch took their tradition with them to the New World and even there his image was untouched by that of the fat jolly Father Christmas, of British fame. Thus 'Sinterklaas' evolved into Santa Claus and, like most great stories go, the rest is history.

Thus it was how Santa became a Christmas figure. Christmas, the time for goodwill and festivity could not be blessed by a more suitable

figure. So why, if the Feast of St. Nicholas is on December 6th is he affiliated with another occasion celebrated on December 25th? Tree celebrators of Christmas take most of the month of December as Christmas Season. They wait for the first opportunity to sing carols and decorate their homes and don't stop glowing all over until around 'New Year's. The religious observers of the occasion make preparations through a four week period preceding Christmas. This is called advent by remembering the purpose of Christ's birth and how everyone of us is responsible for our own salvation. But it is not a scientifically proven or certified fact that Christ was actually born on December 25th when the religious preparation for Christmas culminates. Even the Bible is not specific about his birthday.

The first known Christmas celebration took place in the fourth century AD after Emperor Constantine, replaced paganism with Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The 25th of December was chosen because it was already significant as a pagan holiday. This day marked the winter



The Santa in the picture is actually Johannes Cajetan, father of the Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh Mr. Cajetan.

So, when the length of the day begins to get longer again and the sun shows that it is yet unconquered. Hence the name of the holiday 'the Feast of the unconquered sun. The appellation of the feast day was played upon and some theologians say it became the Feast of Christ in other words, 'Christmas'. My piece of advice to all observers of Christmas is don't let facts disrupt the flow of goodness. Christmas bring out of you. Big deal we're not sure



## The Retaliation

by Sonia Hossain

A massive dense dark cloud rose in the sky, somewhere from the Baltic Sea. Miles away from the arid dark cloud was just enough to suffocate anybody, and even to kill. No living organism is reported alive anywhere near it. Some thought it was hell, which came to earth, whilst others thought it was the beginning of doomsday. Panic broke over everywhere, as the news travelled. Everybody perplexed and tremulous ran over to their temples, mosques, churches, synagogues, gurudwara and other religious places. They begged their gods for forgiveness, and promised they would be better persons. In the confusion, houses were looted, murder, rape were committed. No one trusted no one anymore. Everybody became aggressive, impetuous, doing anything, everything in their capacity to survive. Hell hadn't come to earth, but earth turned into hell — and worse.

After a long debate, disagreement, and scruple the UN unanimously voted to appoint a four-member crew to

investigate and unfold the mystery of the malevolent thing. The four member consisted of an environmentalist, a journalist, and two scientists whilst the team were preparing for the operation, which was now known as 'Operation Hell', the media kept the people informed of the movements of the crew. Without procrastinating any further the crew left the next day.

They least expected what they found out. They almost laughed at themselves for all those foolishness about superstition and hell. But it was hell all right. On their arrival 36 hours ago, and after a battery of tests and experiments, they were finally able to reveal the mystery behind it. The whole thing was nothing more than an island of garbage disposal.

Years and years of solid wastes — plastics, glasses, papers, metals and other non-biodegradable products and plenty of other disposal somehow congregated to a titanic heap. Industrial wastes, from chemical and petrochemical — deadly toxic wastes, poisonous

phenol, sulphides and ammonia. Radioactive wastes, uranium and plutonium from Nuclear Power plants, pesticides, fertilisers and municipal sewage, which consists of carbon compounds, heavy metals, oil bacteria, viruses and other substances, all coupled with the heap. Together they went through plenty of chemical actions, breaking off carbon atoms and forming deadly compounds. As a result, these dark black clouds were formed, as a form of retaliation of what we had done. It had formed into a perfectly hazardous area — A DEAD ZONE.

Who is to blame for all this? Our planet is being poisoned by our own extravagance and ignorance. It is time for a change. It is time we realise the consequences and do all in our capacity to save what is only ours, before we regret it. We must build up an amicable relationship with the environment, if we want a healthy ecosystem once again. It is our responsibility to stop all the toxic pollution. It is time for a cleaner earth.

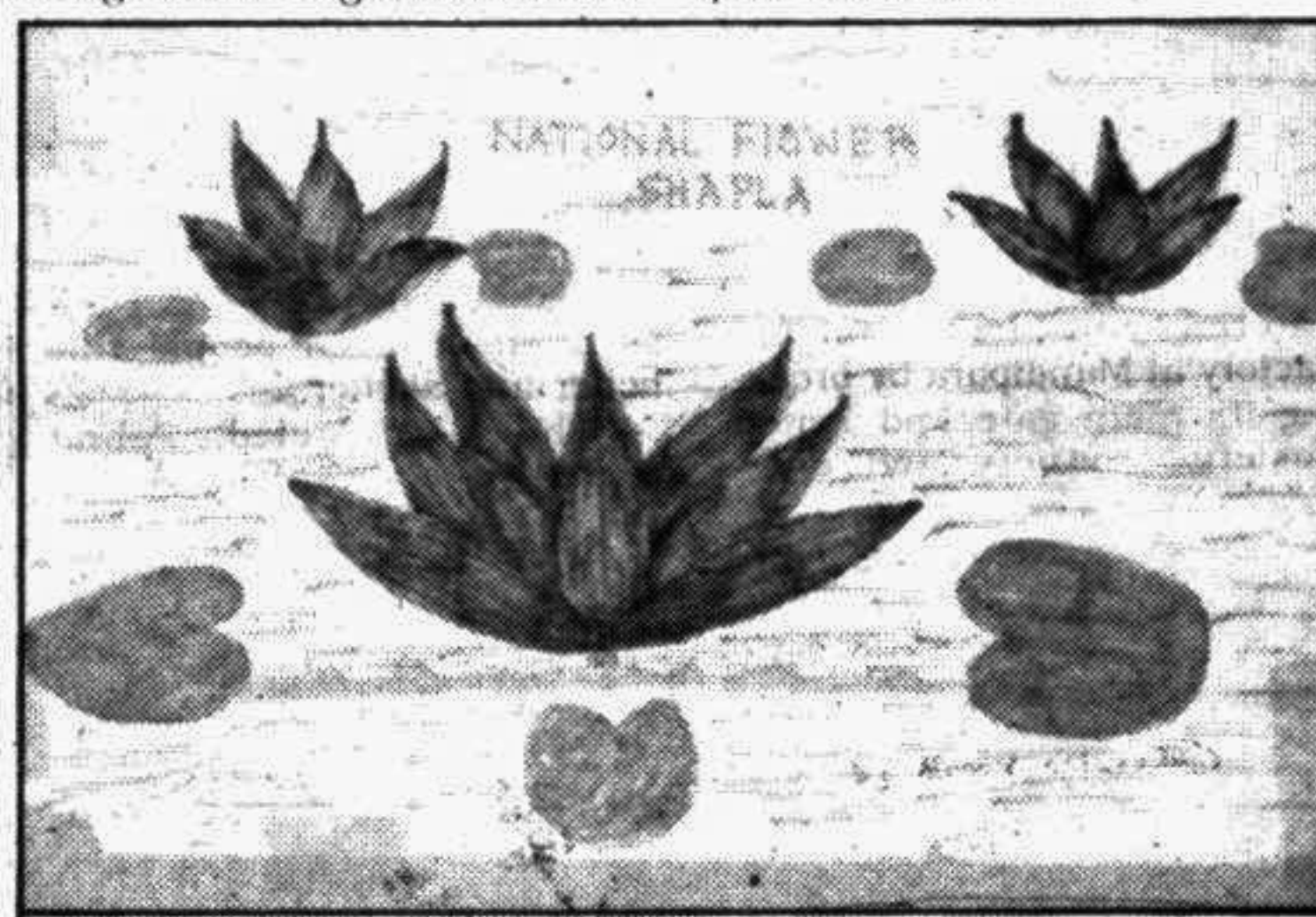
## Our National Flower

by Afnoor Jamilee Class III

THE white water lily is our national flower. Its Bengali name is Shapla. There are two colours of Shapla — red and white. The white Shapla is the national flower of Bangladesh. The Shapla is very well known in Bangladesh. It grows in fresh

water and its leaves float on the surface of water. Its time of blooming is very regular. Each flower opens and closes from one day to seven successive days.

In Bangla-desh's long spongy stalks are eaten. It is quite delicious.



## Never Cry

by Trishna

HURT, pain, sorrow and everything that falls in the same category are expressed through tears. Crying makes hearts melt and softens the soul. But there are some stone-hearted people who enjoy watching others cry which is a sort of entertainment to them. Let me start with the ones we should respect the most — parents. It is not a rare incident here that many children get beaten up until they start to cry and express their pain and emotion. But this sign of the paid often delights them and makes them feel rather proud to be successful in filling the children's soul with agony. A child's tears are no big deal, and that's what the respected teachers think too.

Punishment for negligible things are still necessary and calling the child's parents, giving the child a sharp lecture and accusing him/her for every wrong thing on earth until the child cries are not uncommon incidents in schools today. The tears of the so-called culprit to express the truth don't matter as long as the teacher is judged to be strict. Discipline, is one thing that they believe in blindly and anyone to step out of that borderline is doomed.

Take these happenings for example. A student brought a magazine to school intending to show his classmates the pictures of the cyclone-hit people. It will be wrong to say that his intentions were bad, but if caught by any teacher the students will be accused for looking at the pictures of the models in it. Then again a student who has to leave school, may want to take friends' autographs and keep the sweet memories in mind forever. But when confiscated this personal thing remains no more personal. The poor student's worries being aware of the fact that what is to come next after the teacher finds out about the friends' secrets, (no matter how normal they are). Her pleading, begging or even cry-

ing wouldn't matter to the discipline worshipping teacher.

Let me stop writing about the teachers before I, myself get kicked out and move on to the people themselves. It's really funny that things like movies which were created to make people happy, and entertain them are mostly full of tragic stories and sad endings which again make tears roll down the audience's eyes. Heart-breaking songs are one of the other sources to crying.

The happy creator feels very proud to be successful in making an outstanding thing that could really make people weep.

Tricks played by friends are seldom mean, but when they are, they can hurt the fooled person. But the joke players ignores the fact that the person is badly hurt, so starting from the ones who give us birth to the ones who help us live, we see that all they want is tears. But life is short and most of it cannot be misused by crying.

What did the innocent child do to deserve the harsh beating and finally cry? Well maybe the child just begged the parents for a new toy, said a few words without understanding the meaning herself or told a lie at the most? But do tears bring an end to all the child's mischief? Think about the student who just had the clear intention to keep the sweet memories of her beloved friends in an autograph book but was not even allowed to do so. Likewise, the fooled person did not deserve to be hurt by her friends. But still we ourselves will have to remember that tears aren't worth the ups and downs in life. We shed them for ourselves and they are not to be sacrificed for the world. You smile and let others smile. Never let tears fill your eyes, but always let a smile cover your mouth. Soon, there will be a smiling world in front of you.

## Another Day in Paradise

Joy Alamgir

THESE days, the golden days of the year, with exams just ending, the bells of freedom ringing, without any worry about tomorrow's homework (not to mention tests) makes you feel that life is worth living after all. After a year of work comes this fantastic moment. In short it's like a day in paradise.

Life-style on a typical day in paradise is kind of weird. The 4th of December 1992 was not unlike one of these days. I was supposed to go to meet my friends in 'LABAMBA' at 8 o'clock sharp. But as usual I got up at the aforementioned time. But that's not all. I myself phoned me to say that he didn't have transportation so I had to bring him. And to top it all the driver didn't come. A very good start indeed. But after persuading my cousin we started at eight fifteen. AT LAST!

After picking Imtiaz we reached 'LABAMBA' at eight forty five. Only an hour minus fifteen minutes late. But that's typical me 'cause I have a fabulous record for being late. We went there just to find out that the gang had already gone. Oh well, so we went without them. We reached the site of the 'BAMBA' concert only to find out that the gate had been closed. There was an endless queue. At last we reached our destination only to get a shouting from my friends. But who cares, this is life. And these are the days when paradise comes to earth. It's just the beginning of a day in 'PARADISE'.

## The Shadow

by Faraz Rahman

LAST night I was sitting near the window of my room. Suddenly it started to thunder and there was heavy rainfall. As it was raining heavily, I had to close the window of my room. When I was doing so, I saw that a shadow like thing was coming towards our neighbour's house. It was coming nearer and nearer and then it went inside the house. I heard screaming from that house. Then it came out of the house, with a bag, something in it. Then it turned to our house. As it was coming nearer I started shouting. I was so afraid that I fell on the floor senseless. When I got up, I saw my father, mother, brother and a doctor, sitting beside me. When I saw them I remembered everything. I asked them what had happened last night. They told me everything that had happened. Everything matched except the shadow. I thought that it was a ghost, but they told me that it was a thief.

They also told me that I was the one who helped them to catch the thief because, as I shouted many people came out of their houses, saw the thief and caught him. I felt really funny, after hearing all this. With my fear I had actually done something brave. Indirectly of course!

## An Ode to a Teacher

by Zero

How tears run down my contumacious cheek Whenever I must hear you speak Of words, numbers, concepts, and food That grate so heavily on my delicate ear A cause of insanity! A reason to brood A base attempt to reduce me from the Dude What had I done, my damning sin? That should be sentenced to suffer such pain Of meaningless ordure pounding on my brain I can cope with this no more, do you hear? My parole, my freedom, is drawing near That ten point five years with you and your kind — enough! You confounded me, bored me, marked me sadistically Mindless heathen monsters! And I am free finally

## Bet You Didn't Know

Why Don't Sharks Constantly Feast on Humans At The Beach?

YOU would think they'd chow down like there's no tomorrow. Go to any major urban beach and the shallows will be filled with slow, helpless, meat-falling-off-the-bone humans. It looks like a shark picnic as far as the eye can see. So why don't they start gorging?

Sam Gruber, the legendary shark man of the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, gives a couple of reasons: 1. We're too big to swallow. 'A human represents a big, unwieldy, unreasonable prey item, something they wouldn't even consider. Basically a shark swims up to the prey and sucks it in, doesn't even bite it.'

2. Beachloads of humans are a new phenomenon and sharks haven't had a chance to adapt to eating us. The human population of earth was paltry until the last few hundred years, and there weren't enough swimmers to represent a major food source. Theoretically sharks could gradually learn to eat us, but we wouldn't stand for it. We'd stay on dry land or

swim in lakes and rivers. We should note, though, that even lakes and rivers aren't totally safe. Sharks live in landlocked Lake Nicaragua. Bull sharks have been found one thousand miles up the Orinoco River in South America. They swim way up the Mississippi. They eat human carcasses in the Ganges River. But don't worry; it probably won't happen to you.

Which is just what everyone thinks seconds before they are turned to ground chuck in the maw of a Great White.

About twenty-five people die in shark attacks worldwide each year. That compares to about two thousand people being devoured by alligators and crocodiles. Fewer than half of shark attacks are spurred by hunger; the rest are just plain aggression — a very persuasive type of social message. The way scientists can determine whether the shark bit a person out of hunger or some other reason is quite brilliant: If the person loses a big chunk of flesh in the attack, or, say, a leg or two, then the shark was probably hungry. Science marches on.

## Picture Quiz

Here is another picture quiz for you. Can you tell where this picture was taken? The answers to last week's picture quiz are: The men in the picture are from the right, Lt Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora, Joint Commander of India-Bangladesh Forces (far side), Lt General Amir Abdullah Niazi, Commander Pakistan Army Eastern Command (centre), and Captain ATM Haider, Commander, Sector Two, Bangladesh Liberation Forces. The picture was taken on December 16, 1971, at the Race Course Ground (now Suhrawardy Uddyan) The occasion was the surrender of the Pakistan Army to the joint India-Bangladesh Forces.



We are happy to announce winners for last week's Victory Day picture Quiz. And the winners are Farhan Raheed of Sylhet and Ahmed Tareq Rashid of Banani, Dhaka. Congratulations to you both! Please contact our office to know when you can collect your prizes.

## QUIZ CLUB

Here are this week's quiz questions. Now don't forget if you get all of them right you may win a very attractive prize. Please send in answers by next Thursday. Participants must be below 21. We are happy to announce December 5th's Quiz Club winner. And the winner is Meenakshi Batra. Congratulations Meenakshi! Please contact our office to know when you can collect your prize.

- Q1. Which is the largest fresh water lake in the world?
- Q2. Name four biggest cities, (in population) in the world?
- Q3. Which city is known as the Forbidden City?
- Q4. What island is known as the Island of Cloves?
- Q5. What is a megaphone?
- Q6. Who wrote 'Doctor's Dilemma'?
- Q7. When did Beethoven die?
- Q8. Who was Firdaus?
- Q9. Who created the famous character Shakuntala?
- Q10. Who invented the flying shuttle and when?

Answers to December 5th's Quiz Club are:

1. Rupiah
2. Fire Temple
3. National Panchayat
4. 1338
5. Battle of the Nile
6. La Paz
7. The Great Bell of Moscow
8. Rome
9. Vladimir Nabokov
10. Thomas Hardy

Dear Rising Stars readers, We would be very happy to receive any suggestions, comments or ideas to help us improve this page and make it more fun for you to read. Please do send your opinions to the Daily Star office. Thanks.

Editor  
Rising Stars

