

RISING STARS

Strange but true

The Roof Garden in the Desert

ALTHOUGH few of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world survive, it has always been possible to imagine what most of them looked like.

The Colossus of Rhodes seems to have been an enormous statue, but it was still no more than a statue, while the huge Pharos at Alexandria was basically just a lighthouse.

For centuries, however, the legend of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon has preyed on men's minds.

Were there really gardens in that ancient city in the desert? And if they existed at all, why were they built, and for that matter, how?

Until the end of the 19th century it seemed highly unlikely that anyone would ever find out, for all that was left of Babylon were a few mounds in the sand, 80 kilometres south of Baghdad.

Five thousand years ago, Babylon, together with such other early Mesopotamian cities as Ur, Sumer and Nineveh, had seen the beginnings of civilized man. Even so, it was not until Biblical times that it reached the height of its splendour, under King Nebuchadnezzar (sometimes spelled Nebuchadnez-zar).

By then, Babylon was so magnificent that the Greek historian, Herodotus, wrote in the 5th century BC that no city in the world could rival it.

It was situated on a vital trade route, and must have been wealthy. But just how many of Babylon's glories were really mere travellers' tales?

Few of the cities of the ancient world survived into modern times, and the huge walls of Babylon were eventually destroyed by Xerxes, king of Persia. The inhabitants of the once great city lived on in the ruins for a while, and then drifted away.

Workers knocked down the empty houses in order to provide bricks for new buildings that were going up elsewhere. Little by little Babylon sank back into the ground, where it was undisturbed for 2500 years.

The approximate site of the ruined city was frequently visited by Biblical scholars from the 12th century onwards, but it was not until the middle of the 19th century that anyone gave any serious thought to excavating Babylon.

Fortunately, the fact that the Euphrates had moved its course considerably over the centuries confused the enthusiastic but unskilled Victorians, who often did more harm than good, and the city escaped the diggers until March, 1899, when the brilliant German archaeologist, Robert Koldewey, started to uncover Nebuchadnezzar's long-lost capital.

He had a first-rate team of assistants, most of whom were architects.

Some idea of the sheer size of their task may be obtained from the fact that they laboured on the excavation of Babylon without a break, summer and winter, for no less than 18 years.

Even then work would not have stopped had it not been for the fact that World War I had broken out and British forces were advancing into Mesopotamia. Koldewey returned to Germany, broken by

the climate and sheer, back-breaking work.

But war or no war, Koldewey had done enough to establish a very clear picture of what Babylon looked like under Nebuchadnezzar.

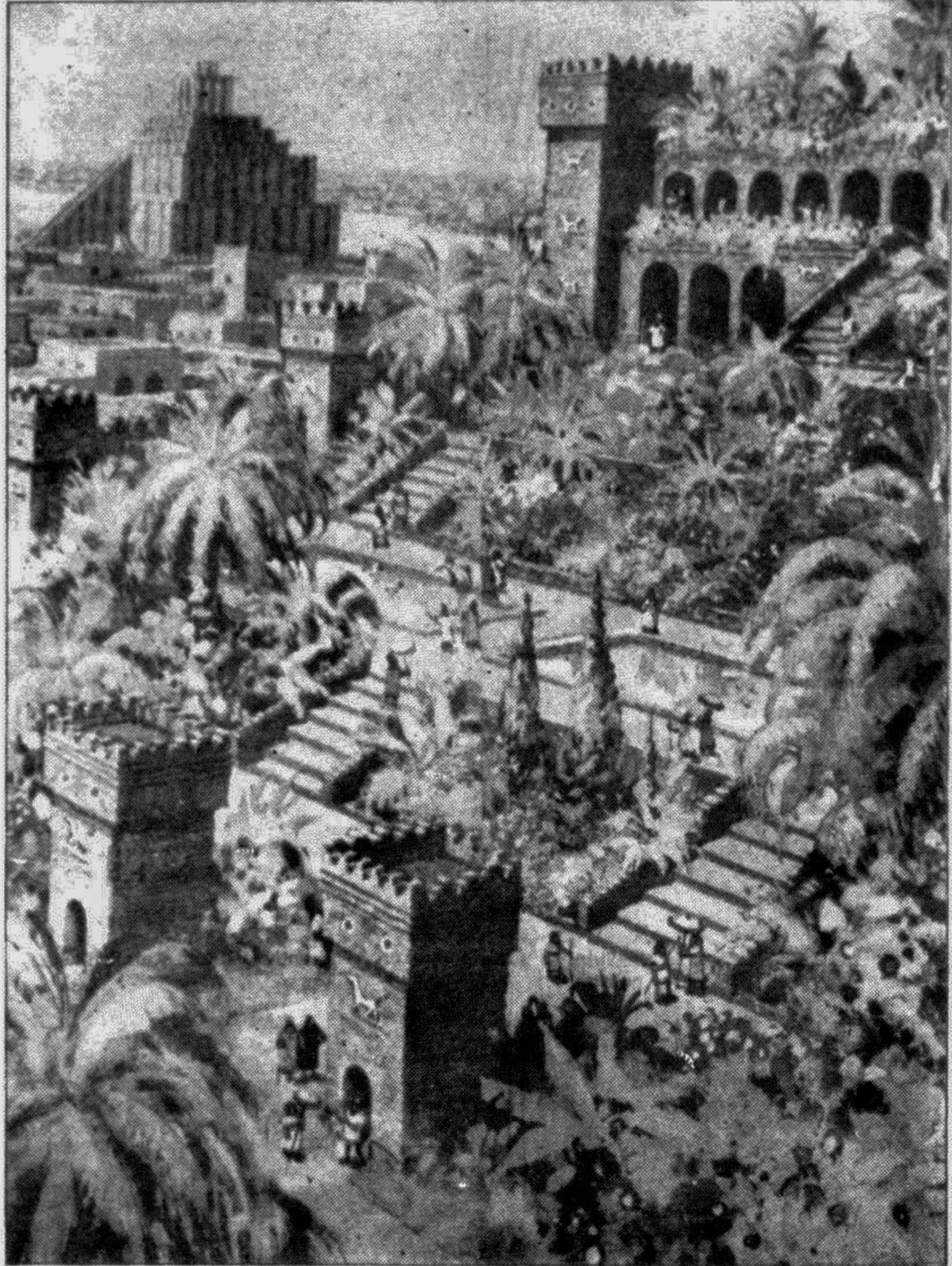
Its most remarkable feature seems to have been that it was built on both banks of the Euphrates, with the most ancient part, the Old City, on the east bank, and the New City to the

This ziggurat was enormously old even in Nebuchadnezzar's time, and it was most certainly the Biblical Tower of Babel. Part of the same temple complex contained a chapel measuring some 20 metres by 45 metres that the king had overlaid entirely with sheets of beaten gold.

The Hanging Gardens were mentioned so repeatedly in early descriptions of Babylon

lifted water from the River Euphrates to irrigate the terraces, and it is not hard to imagine that, when seen from ground level, the gardens of the higher terraces must indeed have appeared to be hanging without any visible means of support.

In the north-east corner of the great palace, Koldewey discovered the remains of two rows of seven vaulted chambers, the inner rooms having thicker



The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Without any visible means of support, trees and plants miraculously grew in the sky above the ancient desert city.

west. The whole complex was protected by fortifications. A double wall of unbaked brick was encircled by a deep moat, the bed of which was lined with brick and bitumen to make it watertight. A second double wall protected the Old City, to give added safety to the palace and temples situated there.

The city of Babylon seems to have been well planned even by modern standards, with an orderly street system and thick-walled houses grouped about pleasant courtyards in a manner that gave maximum protection against sun.

Almost in the centre of the city stood the great seven-storied ziggurat, or temple-tower, which rose for 100 metres, with a small temple upon its summit.

that Koldewey was not altogether surprised to find that they had really existed.

Whether they were constructed by Nebuchadnezzar or some earlier monarch is uncertain, but they were apparently made to please a Babylonian queen who hated the sandy wastes beyond the city walls and longed for the trees greenery of Persia where she had been born.

In order to please the homesick girl, the king raised a series of terraces, 25 metres high, supported by a series of arched vaults. According to classical authors, each terrace was properly waterproofed with bitumen, baked brick and lead, and then filled with sufficient earth to support even the largest trees.

Special mechanical hoists

walls than those on the outside, just as would have been required to bear the weight of terraced hill of earth.

Apparently the early historians had spoken nothing but the truth, and their descriptions had been surprisingly accurate. Babylon was by no means a small city, it is estimated that it had a population approaching 250,000. But unlike modern cities, there was no sprawl of suburbs, for every Babylonian lived within the confines of the city walls.

As Babylon was built in open country, the sight of the Persian Queen's Hanging Gardens apparently suspended terrace upon terrace above the city walls must indeed have been one of the world's wonders.

Courtesy - Young Times

A friend

by Aliya F Khan

THE first time I saw her she looked pathetic. Her hair which was full of split ends was in such a frenzied state that one wondered if she knew what a comb was? Her face and hands were filled with dirt and soot. She was small and skinny and looked much younger than a ten year old as she later exclaimed herself to be. I met her during one of my frequent walks to the park. I usually go there when I have quarrels with my mama and as I was sitting quietly and thinking about how unfair life was, I met her. She came up to me and offer me some flowers, I naturally refused and to be honest I was repulsed by her appearance. I myself was just a few year older than her and yet. There was this barrier between us which made me shrink a way from her. When she saw that I had no intention of buying her flower she sat a little away and started playing. But as I looked back her sweet innocent smile had moved me. Gradually I lost my inhibitions and asked her name. It was Brishiti, a beautiful and simple name. I was amazed to realize that both of us were soon engaged in a conversation and that it was nearly evening. Next day I went to look for her and couldn't find her any where.

I finally came home, forlorn and rejected. I went and sat beside my father who was reading the newspaper. I saw Brishiti's picture in the newspaper, and snatched it away from my father. I was numb and shocked. I felt as if the world was collapsing as I read that Brishiti had been run down by a fast moving truck.

A Poem

by Anjum Hossain

Letters,
Words,
Phrases,
Sentences,
Stanzas
— A poem!

A written picture,
A visualized dance,
A silent song,
A lavish description,
An ancient, yet contemporary,
form of art
— A poem!

Thoughts,
Feelings,
Emotions,
Anything
— A poem!

Notice

"What's your New Year's Resolution?" Please write very briefly about 5 lines, clearly in your own hand writing, your new year's wish, your name and drop in at our office by 29.12.93. Wait for the next issue.
— RS Editor

My friend is a rather old-fashioned lady, always quite delicate and elegant, especially in her language. She and her husband were planning a weeks vacation in Arizona; so she wrote to a travel-trailer court and asked for a reservation.

She wanted to make sure the campground was fully equipped, but didn't quite know how to ask about the "toilet" in her letter. After much deliberation she finally came up with

Sixth SAF Games — Can We Ever Climb to the Top?

by Rabeth Khan

PARTICIPATION is more important than winning. This was our motto, previously but nowadays winning is much more important than just participating.

Now in Bangladesh for the second time, the South Asian Federation Games (SAF) are being held.

The eleven disciplines of the Sixth South Asian Federation Games are football, kabadi, table tennis, boxing, judo, volleyball, wrestling, tennis, athletics, swimming and shooting. Out of these events, the medal prospects differ a great deal with one another.

The prospect of kabadi is very encouraging. The kabadi federation pronounced with great optimism that the kabadi team will present a stiff challenge to their Indian counterparts for the gold medal. The Indian coach, G Reddy who is

looking over the national team said that, the gold medal is within reach.

Football which is the most popular game of this country, is so far yet to grab the elusive gold medal. But this time they might be able to break the shackles of misfortune under the proper training and guidance of Swiss coach Oldrich Srab. Under him the national outfit looks much more organized and determined. The national squad has played twelve games at home and abroad as a part of the preparation. Most recently they have defeated the visiting Myanmar national football team by three goals to one in two matches. If our national players play to their full potential, the gold medal shall be ours.

The swimming squad is being trained by a Chinese coach. The athletics squad Bangladesh people a satisfactory result. Though, the Indian team is expected to sweep the athletics medals, Golam Ambia is expected to win either the 100m or the 200m sprint. 400m Hurdler A R Natim has vowed to go all out for the gold medal in his event in spite of the fact that the winner in that event is Golam Abbas, a Pakistani athlete who is also the Asian Champion.



Out of the other events, good results are expected in boxing and shooting. The boxing squad under a Korean trainer is expected to fetch two golds in the least. While in shooting, the experiences of gold medalists in the Colombo games K Shahana and Atiqur R are somewhat sure of grabbing six gold medals while in tennis, table tennis, judo, volleyball and wrestling we have to be satisfied with silver and bronze medals. Of course no doubt that the sportstars of this country will try their best to make us proud.

He ran up the flight of stairs in a dilapidated three-storeyed building in the middle of nowhere. He had hidden everywhere. This building was his last hope. He had been running for the past three days. How the Russians had found out that he was an American agent, he did not know. Maybe it was Maria who had betrayed him, or maybe it was Antonio. At that moment, he did not particularly care. When one's life was in danger, other things did not matter much. When had he last eaten? Twenty-five hours ago, or maybe twenty-seven? He was too exhausted to calculate or to care. Nothing mattered except his life and getting out of the goddamn country alive and in one piece.

By the time he reached the second floor, he could hear Major Shukovich giving out orders to his men. Two of the soldiers were to search the building while the others dispersed around it. He turned around to see where he could go next. The walls between the rooms were all broken. By standing in one room, anyone could see everything that was going on in the rest of the floor. None of the windows had glass. Maybe he should try shooting down the soldier under one of the windows, he thought drily. But that would draw the attention of the others. Taking on a dozen soldiers who were armed to the

The Pursuit

by Gulnaz Alam

teeth and had orders to shoot to kill with a single .44 Colt didn't seem like a very good idea. A bone-chilling wind swept through the building. He shivered. God, it was cold! And the thick snow outside did not make things easier. He left tracks where ever he went. The soldiers were on the first floor then. It wasn't long before they came up. His sharp eyes scanned the room again and spotted a large, ancient trunk at the far end. Hiding in it would be most obvious, but he didn't have much choice other than jumping out of one of the windows. He lifted the heavy metal lid of the trunk and slid in. Though the container was huge, he too was a very big man. And there wasn't much room for both him and the spider. Funny, wasn't it? He who had gone on a number of very dangerous assignments, was usually terrified of spiders. And now, hardly noticing it, he crushed it with his long, rough fingers as if it were a mere mosquito pestering him. He was damned if he was going to give up without fighting. He shut the lid and waited. He was ready for the two soldiers.

They didn't stand a chance at such a close range. As soon

as they opened the trunk, he shot one through his heart and blew off the other's brains.

Thank God for silencers, he thought to himself. The sudden rush of adrenalin made him fly down the stairs. He didn't pause to think. He headed straight for the army jeep he had seen earlier on from one of the windows. Suddenly he heard Major Shukovich yelling at his men. He had been spotted. He ran as he had never run before. When he was about ten yards away from the jeep, something caught him in his left knee, sending him tumbling on the snow. As he staggered on, he felt three more bullets enter him: one in the lower abdomen, one smashed into his collar-bone, and the other in his chest. The last had pierced a hole in his lung; blood was oozing out of his mouth almost instantly. He knew by then that he would never make it. But he kept on crawling towards the jeep. He had to reach it. He had to return home. He had to see his wife, Martha, and the kids.

One by one, their faces passed through his mind, Martha's face fading into a blackness as he reached for the jeep door and crashed to the ground.

Error in Understanding

by a Reader

The old-fashioned term "bathroom commode". But when she wrote that down, she still thought she was being too forward. So she started all over again, and referred to the bathroom merely as the B.C. "Does the campground have its own 'B.C.'?" is what she actually wrote.

Well, the court manager, Herman, wasn't old fashioned at all and when he got the letter, he just couldn't figure out what the woman was talking about. That B.C business really stumped him.

After worrying about it for a while, he showed the letter to several campers, but they couldn't imagine what the lady meant either. So he finally came to the conclusion that the lady must be asking about the location of the Baptist Church. He sat down and wrote the following reply.

Dear Madam:

I regret very much the delay in answering your letter, but I now take pleasure in informing you that a B.C is located nine miles north of the campground, and is capable of seating 250 people at one time. I admit it is quite a distance away if you are in the habit of going regularly, but no doubt you will be pleased to know that a great number of people take their lunches along and make a day of it. They usually arrive early and stay late.

The last time my wife and I went, was six years ago, and it was so crowded, we had to stand up the whole time we were there. It may interest you to know that right now, there is a supper planned to raise



Maradona Again!

by Gazala Yasmin Hoque (Urmi)

league championships for two times.

He made Argentina a world cup champion for the second time in Mexico '86. At that World Cup he netted five goals in all. The quarter-final match against England in Mexico '86 was the most memorable, most memorable till now I am sure nobody had forgotten it!

Even in Italia '90, Argentina was able to go to quarter-finals only because of Maradona, as he was the one who gave the national team the 1-0. His failure at the world cup Italia 90 was really sad. In the quarter-finals, against Yugoslavia during the penalty shoot-out, his weak kick from his left foot was caught by the Yugoslavian goalkeeper. The Italians hated him for eliminating their team from reaching the finals, which again the Argentinians won on a penalty shoot-out. You could say that luck really did favour them. Maradona's wish was to win the cup for the third time in Italia '90 but that wish went to Lothar Matheus (Germany's captain), and made Germany

join Italy and Brazil. I am sure everybody saw Maradona crying when he had gone to the platform to receive his medal with his teammates. From toddlers to old people every one was crying after seeing that scene.

Everybody thought it was the end of him in April '91, when he was caught in his flat with the possession of cocaine, but God saved him and he is right back on track.

Let's hope that football lovers will be able to see him in the world cup finals to be held in the United States next year.

CHRISTMAS



by Shumon Momen
Christmas is a nice time, There lots of ice and snow. As you probably gathered it gets very cold. Santa gives you loads of presents All the turkeys had stuffing followed by plum duff.

Its Time to Wake Up

by Trishna

EVERY day criminals are destroying a happy life. People are being murdered in beastly ways, and the next day in the news paper what we see is the horrifying picture of the dead body and a piece of writing on it with the very common conclusion that the culprit has managed to escape but police is looking for him/her. But these murderers are never found even though they move around freely. How many have protested? None.

The Bangladeshis claim to be religious. I wonder why? Growing long beards and covering hands with 'tupis' does not mean being religious. God's two most important commands are to see everyone equally and to always speak the truth. As far as equality is concerned, it is impossible to do so with the prejudice that dwell in hearts of the people. And about speaking the truth, it seems that, like peace, sometime from now truth will also become something imaginary. Those who belong to the so-called brave-nation never dare to open the strings tied

around their mouths.

A month ago a bunch of brave ones brought out processions for a drama shown on the television. They could not stand the fact that an innocent one can get punished. The drama stormed over the heads of thousands and started controversies. A drama could strike their hearts but the real life incidents could not make a person shout out for justice, under the open sky. All the shouting is done behind those miles. They can break cars, blow bombs and shoot the humble ones and all these make the harmless ones suffer. Would they dare to throw a pebble at the White House of Bangladesh? I bet not!

So many women are getting raped; so many assassinated and manifold children being kidnapped and abused. These stories seem to continue endlessly. No one bothers because none of their family members have been yet attacked by the beasts. It is much safer to wake up from sleep and speak out before those criminals track on your door.