

RISING STARS

A Strange Encounter

by Adeeb Z Mahmud

ONE of the most notable features of Aftab Khan's characteristics was that he was rarely surprised. What, to most people would seem amazing or even frightening would hardly be a cause for Mr Khan to raise as much as an eyebrow.

So, one sultry August night, during the regular load shedding, Mr Khan wasn't very surprised or shocked when he found a total stranger wandering about in his bedroom. At first, though, he was a little frightened. After all, if there was a trespasser in your bedroom at 11PM he would, in most likelihood, prove to be a burglar or a thief.

Although Mr Khan was physically quite fit, he was nearly fifty five and the fact that he was alone in his apartment made it seem unlikely that he could put up a strong defence against a young criminal. In spite of that, since the thief had not apparently yet seen Mr Khan entering the room he decided to shout.

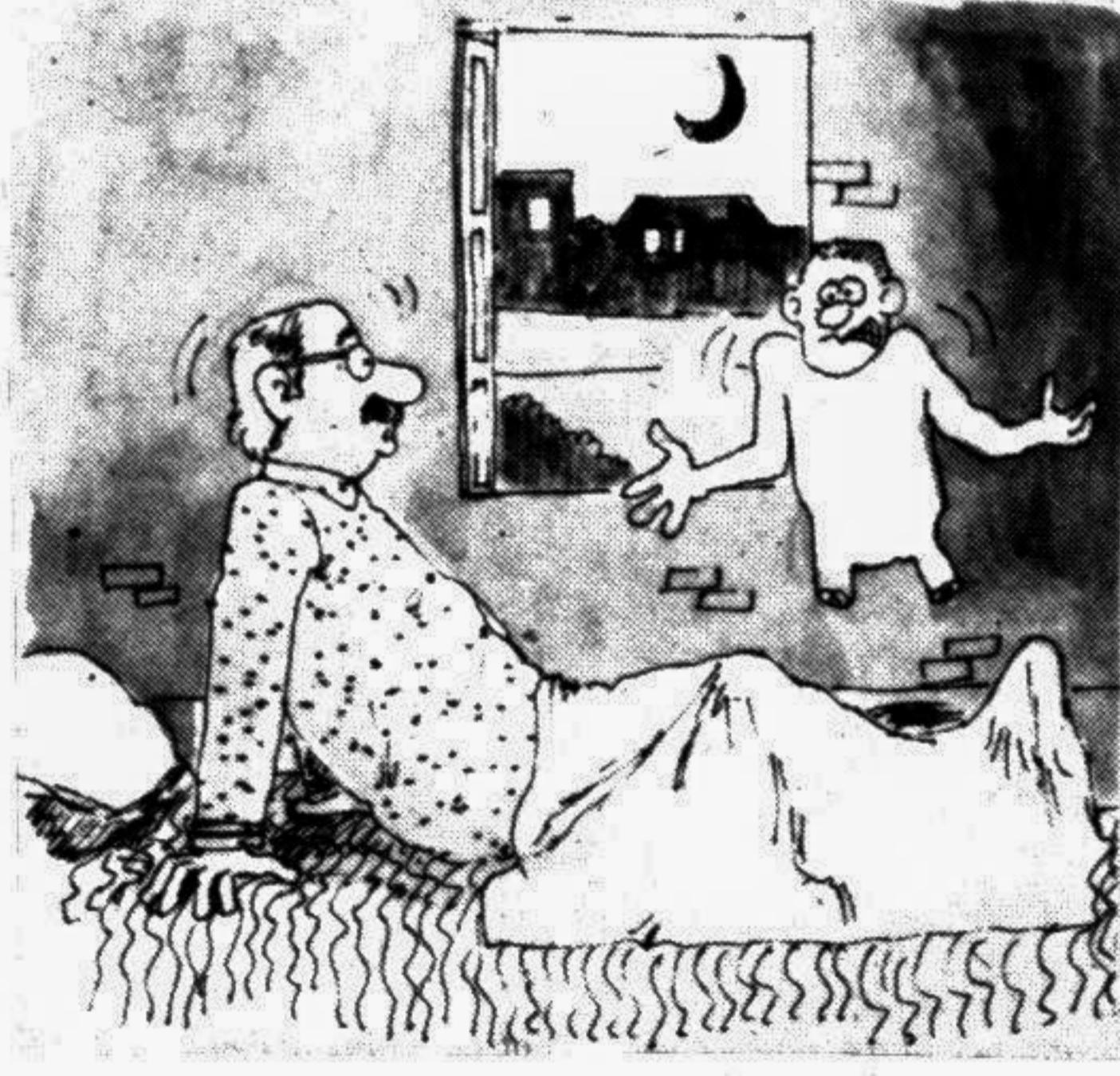
Whose there? Mr Khan mustered all his courage and shouted out in his heaviest tone. Oh please, sir, I'm sure I had them when I left the morgue. But I can't seem to find them any more.

Until now, Mr Khan hadn't noticed but now he looked at the man carefully. He looked like an ordinary person though his appearance was a bit hazy.

You're what?

My legs, sir. I'm sure I had them when I left the morgue. But I can't seem to find them any more.

Now don't you worry about me, sir? He assured, You just go to sleep and I'll be gone in



the morning. No need to be afraid, sir. I myself am feeling a bit scared but I'm sure I can figure out a way if I keep trying.

There was really no point in being afraid of someone who was scared of himself and it was past midnight. Mr Khan retired to his bed and kept a cautious eye on the man.

Presently, he began to run about and jump up and down — the best he could without his legs, that is — as if he were exercising.

I have a suggestion, Mr Khan offered to help. Instead of trying to make your legs appear, why don't you make your... um... upper part disappear also? That would solve the problem.

But I couldn't do that, sir. That's unethical. They would expel me at once.

Who are they? Expel you from what?

That's it! He shouted, Sir, you're a genius. Garlic, why hadn't I thought of it before?

Of what?

Garlic, sir. We're supposed to be scared of garlic. Oh please, sir, if you would just get a piece of garlic...

Find a piece of garlic in the middle of the night? Are you out of your mind? Mr Khan regretted having made that last suggestion.

Oh I beg you, sir, this one last favour. I'm sure I'd disappear if I was scared enough. Please, sir...

Oh well, at least he would be able to get rid of him, thought Mr Khan. So he got out of bed, found a torch and went into his kitchen. It took him a while to find the fine labeled gingers among the various other utensils and when he returned to his bedroom a few minutes later, the room was empty.

Mr Khan went over to the window and looked out. In the moonlight the street looked deserted. Well, maybe he had managed to disappear after all, he thought. He put the piece of garlic on his bedside table and went to bed.

Had it been you or I or any other ordinary person, for that matter, instead of Mr Khan, were that person to survive such an encounter, he or she would certainly have made a fuss about it. But Mr Khan told no one about his experience.

The next morning, when he found a familiar photo in the newspaper, saying that the man had been killed in an accident. Mr Khan looked as if he had been expecting just such a news. After all, if he had been killed in accident, it was possible that he would become an apparition and it was only natural, was it not, that ghosts would haunt the living?

Jokes

phone, television, teletext. 'Telephone' is made up of two words "tele" and "phone" (sound). So telephone is an instrument which carries sound over a distance.

A little girl attending the school clinic started crying as the doctor approached her.

I'm only going to take your pulse, the doctor explained. But don't I need it? sobbed the little girl.

★ ★ ★

Doctor: Now just step on the scales. There, you see? Look at this chart — you're overweight!

Patient: No, I'm not. I'm just six inches too short.

★ ★ ★

What's black when clean and white when dirty?

A blackboard.

★ ★ ★

Doctor: What's your trouble, then?

Patient: Water on the knee.

Doctor: How do you know?

Patient: I dropped a bucketful of it!

Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the second part of The Supernatural could not be published. We regret the inconvenience.

France has been awarded the honour of holding the next and last World Cup of this century.

The French say that the 16th World Cup will be different because American culture and French cultures are different, "we have football in our blood" they say. Besides the size of France is equivalent to one-seventh of the USA. So it will not be a problem for the teams to move about from one city to another. Plus the Mediterranean weather is one of the best on earth, as we witnessed in the 1990 World Cup where the World Cup was held in Italy.

Now let us see what FIFA has planned for the 16th World Cup in France 1998. FIFA has changed a few rules which I or everyone will think will make the game more lively. Firstly, there will be 32 teams taking part in the finals, divided into eight groups. Secondly, the knockout system will be introduced in the first round, thus only the group winners and runners-up will advance to the second round. Thirdly, instead of throw-ins, there will now be kick-ins. Fourthly, the dreaded rule of off-sides will now be abolished; and last of all there will be no longer be a game decided by penalties (that is the tie-breaker system). So I guess with all these new changes the next World Cup is bound to be exciting.

The French football officials have vowed to make the last World Cup of this century one to remember for generations to come. French player Michel Platini, the man with whose brilliant ballwork France managed to reach the semi-finals stage in the 1982 World Cup and subsequently win the European championships exactly two years later, it is due to his endless efforts that

DREAMS-2

by Shumon Momen

Some dreams can be long, some will be short.

Fifteen dreams in one night are quite usual.

Sometimes the longest one can be remembered.

Sometimes none at all.

The Intruders

by Prima Chowdhury

KASHFI had just settled down on the devan with her books, copies and high lighters. Her grandmother's house was absolutely empty now because everyone had gone out, and she was looking forward to studying for the next two or three hours uninterrupted.

She was a sprightly girl — full of life, and a marvellous sense of humour. However wearing glasses rendered that typical scholarly expression on her face — which is in general, a direct consequence for anyone who wears specs.

The door bell rings. The sound of shuffling feet. Boisterous voice. They sounded

nod promptly. Kashfi smiles and says "of course". She goes to the kitchen and a few instructions are enough to direct the very able kitchen staff of her Granny's — all of them knew their guests' ravenous appetites. No trifles delicacy would suffice — "parata, beef, vegetables, sweets" — on the doobler.

When Kashfi returns from the kitchen she finds Aunt J in all her overwhelming sweetness — cooing affectionately at her eldest daughter. She then looks at Kashfi and says, "Oh when will your granny be back, child? We have important matters to discuss." Meaning you need money, you old bag.

However Aunt J said "Don't be harsh on them, dear." She started quite undaunted, "accidents may happen." Entertaining parents with spoilt children was really frustrating.

"You see dear, I wanted to talk to your granny and your mother about, well about a proposal, a very good proposal, mind you cousin Kulsum." Kulsum immediately blushed. Kashfi couldn't believe her ears! "What how old is she?" She screeched. "Oh she'll be 16 or 17, but what does her age matter, dear? The young man is an absolute paragon — he says no dowry — just imagine." Kashfi blinked. Kulsum

as soot, willowy, unshaven uncultured, uncouth, 35 years old or older, oilstreaked hair wearing a shocking pink shirt and of course loaded with black money! — yes Aunt J would certainly consider that to be a perfect match.

The servants his entered with the food. No cajoling was needed to induce them to start. No hesitation was visible on their part either. The food was wolfed down with much gusto. Aunt J spoke continually between mouthfuls. The children started flicking food at each other with their spoons. Tutul was the worst. He tried to eat all by himself but ended up spilling more than he ate. Then he climbed on top of the table and decided to vomit it all out.

It was all so sudden and so sick that Kashfi restrained herself from following Tutul's example with a heroic effort. Aunt J thought that it was the most natural thing in the world. "Oh he has a weak stomach". She ordered the servants to take him out and give him a good scrubbing. Kashfi was worried because she didn't have any clothes for Tutul to change into but Aunt J immediately relieved and shocked her by saying "Why bother let him roam naked."

When the meal was finished with sighs and loud burps. Aunt J settled down one more on the devan, with her betel leaves. She admitted that the food had been good and then wanted to know what was for lunch.

Chaos and confession followed with feathers this flying every where. Just then a life saving horn honked. The gates opened. "Oh great — Mom's here!" Kashfi jumped and could see her mother, granny and her youngest aunt, Shila through the car windows. She looked at the sky which was turning gray every minor. Maybe a storm was approaching — well whatever happened, Kashfi could feel that fire works were going to blaze that afternoon.

Save Our Environment

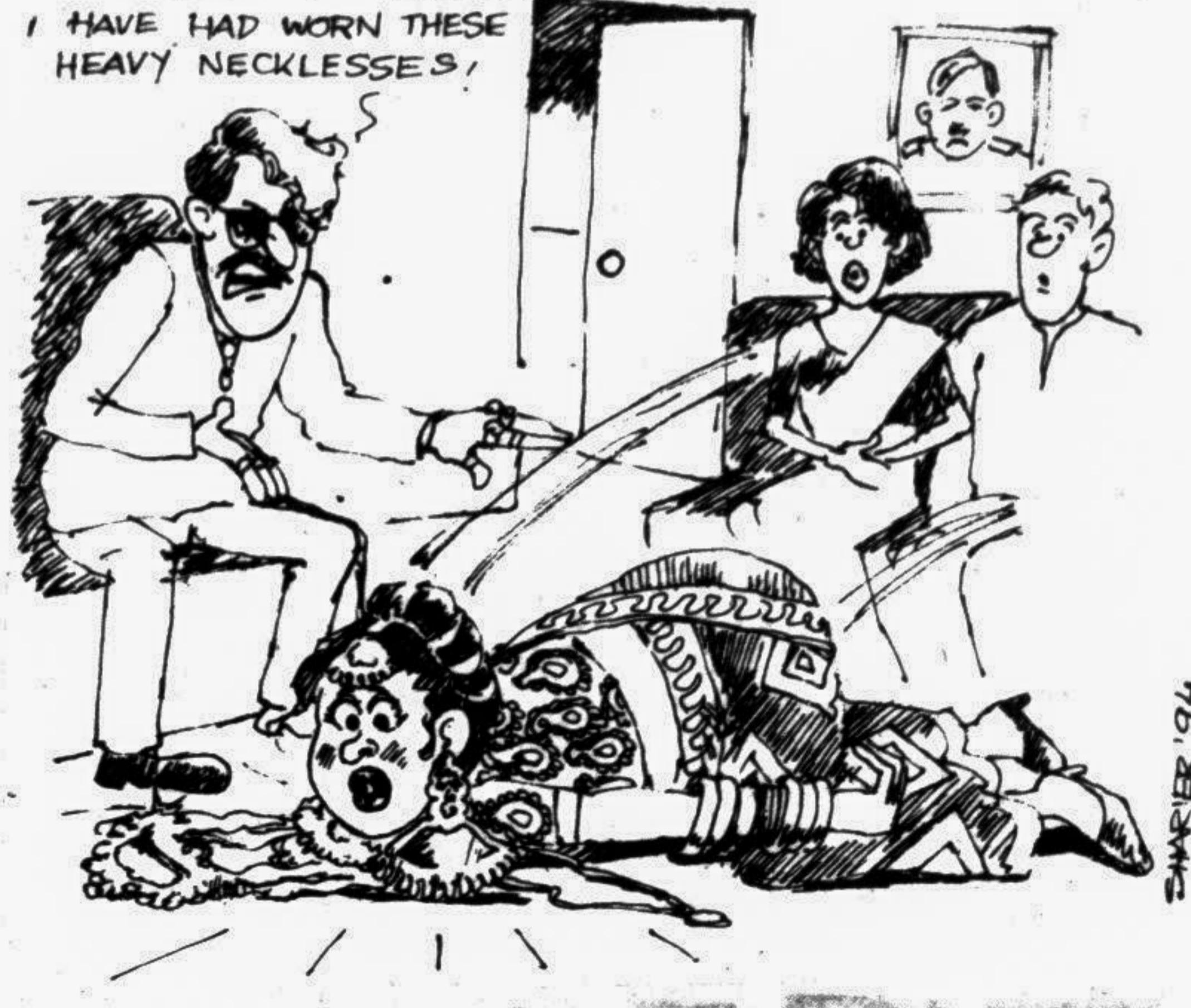
by Iftekhar Rashid

ROBABLY we have all seen stickers, banners and posters written 'Plant Trees Save Environment'. Do we all know what it means?

The problem arising mainly from pollution is very serious. The one and only planet we have got is being polluted by selfish mankind for money and wealth we must save it.

An important way to serve earth is to plant trees. The atmospheric carbon-dioxide is increasing too. Therefore there is global warming and climate change all over the world.

With global warming, part of lots of countries including good old Bangladesh will go under water.



strangely familiar. Oh no, not today, not when everyone's out....

Sure enough — it was her loving Aunt Jeeheela with her darling children — three year old Tutul, 7 year old Sakina, 11 year old Bulbul and 15 year old Kulsum. Long lost relatives of Kashfi's grandmother. A colourful party entered the drawing room.

Indeed, 'colourful' would be putting it mildly. The pinks, oranges and reds were non-descript, they hurt Kashfi's eyes despite the specs. Aunt Jeeheela was a corpulent woman of forty, short, swarthy and stern in appearance. However her abnormal sense of humour made almost every sentence she uttered on purpose good joke.

"Common Kashfi, we have a lot of catching up to do — but first things first — we are all hungry, dear — right children?" The younger two boys are nowhere in sight, but the girls

thought Kashfi. Aloud, "they went out — they should be back in 2-3 hours."

"Why didn't you go dear? This was what Kashfi was waiting for. I have exams next week."

"Go outside now, Sakina dear." Aunt J motioned to her younger daughter, but a moment later Kashfi caught sight of the curtains moving and this time Aunt J volunteered saying "Bully her, Kashfi." Sheesh — what pests these kids were, they seemed to get worse with age. Even Kulsum — she seemed to be in raptures at the very thought of marriage! But then came the surprise of the morning. "What more Kashfi, I asked my future son-in-law to be here at 5.00 pm. Yikes! This was going to be fun. Kashfi looked at Kulsum intently. Underneath all the hideous make up, she really was an attractive girl, a bit on the stout and healthy side perhaps, but that would be a point in favour of her appearance. Kashfi, could just imagine. Kulsum's future hubby — black

was just 2 years younger than her as far as she could remember, that made her just 15. Lord this was barbaric!

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