

# ARISING STARS



**T**HE last time, which was also the first time, I went to Chittagong I didn't know the difference between history and geography. So I decided to make another trip there, not to know Chittagong's history or geography but to see the much-heard-about Foyez Lake, Potenga, War Cemetery etc. It was more of a wish than a decision (coz I'm not at a decision-making age yet) and somehow the wish was granted.

The fairy godmothers (and fathers) were my uncles and aunts. So a gang of 11 people reached the port city on the first day of the last week of the last month of the 94th year of this century.

The journey to Chittagong is as same as a journey to any corner of the country from the capital, so I won't bore you with NGCF (never gone to Chittagong fellows) with that. Instead, let me tell you some interesting stuff about Chittagong that may not be listed in the tourists manuals.

My first Chittagong experience was within half-an-hour of our arrival at the relatives' house we were staying. After the initial 'salaams' and 'how-are-you's all the 20 people (9 more in that house) divided into groups age-wise. I spent, sometime in my group, then went in search of the elders (where conversation is more juicy). They were in the dining room and no less noisier than the kids in the huge verandah. A sort of Nani (I'll spare the network relation) handed me a glass of something and said, 'have it. You must be tired after the long journey.' I nodded. But lemonade in the end of December! Oh well, the world is full of crazy people. I drank the lemonade and instantly spluttered 'out what is this?'

'Water!' then came the explanation. It's salty isn't it? Well Chittagong water contains too much sodium and so is of different taste and colour.

So, NGCF get mentally prepared for your H<sub>2</sub>O drink if you go to Chittagong.

You guys probably know that Chittagong is a hilly place. Well I expected hills here and there and I saw them, too, but nobody told me the city itself was on a hill. Now, although we had our 2 main meals at the relatives' place we slept and had breakfast at my uncle's guest-house which was nearby (5 taka rickshaw fare). So at 10 am it was a trip to the rela-

## A Glimpse of Chittagong City

by Zinnia Ahmad

live's place from the guest-house and at 10pm vice versa. My cousin and I shared a rickshaw.

The rickshawallah must have guessed we were non-Chittagonians so he decided to amuse us instead of following the other ricks (containing my mother, aunt, cousins), he took us in a roundabout way. It was fine at first. Then suddenly we were descending down a

The baby taxis in Chittagong are wider than the Dhaka baby taxis. Three grown-up people (excluding abnormal hip-sizes) can sit quite comfortably. The back of the baby taxi which is open in Dhaka is covered by a transparent plastic in Chittagong. On these are written stuff like 'Happy New Year'

'Lucky-7'. 'Shubechcha' (Best looking guys but mark my words, Chittagong guys are a lot better looking than the Dhaka guys (no exaggeration)).

Then there's something you NGCF won't miss 'If you go where I went. It's the drains! I hardly know the Chittagong map so I don't know all the places where I came across those conspicuous drains. I remember the drains at



50km slope (my estimation) and worse we were going round a bend. There were ricks and cars coming from the opposite direction and our rickshaw was going zigzag down (literally) the road. My cousin was whispering prayers while I had my eyes shut tight. After what seemed like eternity the zigzagging stopped. I opened my eyes to see whether I was in heaven or hell. No, we were both still on this planet in the same rickshaw with nothing broken.

This is a trivial observation but an observation after all. Wishes. Dhanya Baad and other nice messages that show that Chittagong people are nice and hospitable.

And while you are travelling around this nice and hospitable city you will be sure to notice shops named 'Unik Tailors', 'Tasty Bakery', 'Elegant Furnitures' etc. Well, they certainly need some more English, spelling and grammar lessons.

And guys, the guys! I mean, gals, the guys! I almost forgot to tell you. Of course you might not be as lucky as I was with a neighborhood of several good-

Battery Goli (weird name yeah? well we got Bhuber Goli here). There were 1-1/2, feet wide drains on either side of the road and narrow stone bridges over the drains from the shops to the road. There were 2 feet wide drains on one side and half feet wide on the other side of the Mehdiabaag road. There were also 1 feet wide drains on either side of the road to the War Cemetery!

Speaking of the War Cemetery, its the Chittagonian Ramna Park if you know what I mean? (We cousins and I walked past a couple wearing

college uniforms and one of my cousins said, loud enough for them to hear, 'Ooh! It's fun bunking college. Then we sat near another couple where the girl was wearing excess make-up. The same cousin said in a sickly sweet voice, 'Oh, I forgot to bring my lipstick.' I said in an equally sweet voice, 'Maybe you can borrow from somebody.' Yeah, our mission was completed. They got up and left.

Somewhere in the middle of our Chittagong holiday my mother had bought a beautiful bedsheet from a 'Dubai Market'. It was quite far from our place so I was told 'no when I wanted to go there. But fate was on my side. The day before we left the 'cousins gang' (including me) made a second trip to Potenga. On the way back we were supposed to stop at this Dubai Market.

**A**ARGH, help me guys: that snake will kill me!

'Oh God, help us.' Janvir joined in. 'Will you stop all this racket and listen to me.'

'Masud, Atiq and Yousaf — you three can sleep in the larger tent. We will sleep in the other one. Tomorrow we resume our hike. Has anyone got any suggestions?'

A short pause followed.

'Well I see that everyone is quite content.'

'I have something to say,' spoke up Masud. 'Take Atiq's goggles away.'

Everyone gave out a loud guffaw.

'O.K. Let's call it a night.'

Tanvir couldn't sleep that night. He got up from his sleeping bag and peeped out of the tent when he heard a sound. He heard gruff voices not far away. He took his goggles and peeped in his pocket. He ventured ahead though he was afraid. Observing behind some bushes he saw two men — one short, stocky and the other tall and rangy — crawling upstream. The tall one asked:

'Did you pass the message to number two that we are bringing the goods tonight?'

'Yes I did. He will be waiting for us with his client. This time we are to meet at the cave.'

After overhearing this, Tanvir was intrigued. He decided to follow them and then return to inform the others. As they were five boys and had the sleeping gas they might be able to stop them before the scoundrels did their job.

After an hour of stealthy movements, he saw a light flash off and on. The men in the boat did the same thing; Hassan thought it must be a code. At the rendezvous, there was only one man. Tanvir wished now that he was strong like Hassan. When he saw one of them brandish a knife, he was terrified. He decided to retreat and call the others. He moved as quickly and carefully as possible. He froze when then there was a loud crack sound. He stepped on a dry twig!

'What was that sound?' the tall man asked with a touch of alarm in his voice.

'There goes a boy. Tail him, fool.'

'Young lady you need to be taught some manners!'

'ME? Hah! You're the one who has been sitting there and I was standing here for... for... who knows how long! And you say that I am the one at fault!'

'Oh no! I blew it. My tongue had done it again. I hate it when Shehryar is always right.'

'You — you're...' he stammered angrily.

'Fired. Isn't it obvious? We've been going through this routine over the past couple of months. And I am tired of it.'

He looked as if his eyes would fall out of their sockets. He picked up the phone and pushed a few buttons.

'Shehryar! Get in here on

## A Camping Met with Adventure — II

by Nahid Hussain

The short man ordered taking off himself after Tanvir. Tanvir's heart hammered against the gap between them shortened. Hassan tripped over a branch. His glasses came off. He found it and quickly put it on when he was grabbed by the tall one who questioned:

'Who are you? Start talking before I get rough and tough.'

Hassan was rather thirsty. When taking water from the thermos he couldn't believe the sight that met his eyes. Tanvir's sleeping bag was empty. He called the others and checked out the place.

'Maybe a ghost took him away,' Masud quivered.

Hassan, quiet, moved towards his tent. When he took out the device he understood the other part was taken away. He called the others.

'I think he took off after something he saw nearby. We must follow this signal. I think he is in hostile hands. We better not waste anymore time. Atiq, bring the rope and sleeping gas spray along.'

Whenever they were going the wrong way, the gadget made a shrill sound. Everyone of them admired Tanvir's ingenuity. They moved quickly and carefully along the same path taken by their friend. They heard the same voices when they neared the cave.

Whatever, what's taking your client so long? You are not trying to double cross us this time, are you?'

No I am not. If I wanted I could have done that a long time ago.'

Hassan had a good look at the situation. He told the rest the plan they would take to save Tanvir.

'We have to take a risk. I don't think that they will have anything above daggers, because their idea may be that no one will suspect what they are doing here. The police less suspect these places.'

He then filled them in. Yousaf crouched up behind the short, stocky man. He tapped on his shoulder. The man turned, called out:

'What? Hey who are —'

A punch in the midsection caught him in his words. But that was more than enough to alert the others. Hassan jumped on the tall, rangy guy while the two took care of member two.

Yousaf landed several jobs on his opponent. But his adversary did not know how to quit. The man gave him a vicious left kick that sent him to the ground. There was a loud screeching where Masud fell. Atiq was in action.

'Masud, get him, get him. — Ow, not me! Atiq exclaimed.

Hassan's adversary was powerful and tactical. Whatever he tried was warded off. The man sneered and taunted him. This time he drew the first blood with a brilliant upper hook. Hassan blocked it and gave him a lightning reverse jab. This threw the man off-guard. Hassan took full advantage of the situation. Two lightning jabs followed by a flying kick blacked him out.

(To be concluded next week)

The short guy said 'He told everything but he denies that he knows something about us. His friends are somewhere in the woods. They're unaware of his absence.'

'I think he is telling the truth,' number two said. 'He was pretty shaken during the questionnaire which was fruitful.'

### Abbracadabra

#### 'Levitating Wand'

by Magician Subrata Biswas

The magician causes the wand to cling to his fingers as in diagram — (1). Diagram (2) shows how a six-inch ruler, attached by means of his watch-strap is responsible.

The ruler can be pushed up the magician's sleeve to both hide it and release the wand.

**O**not Not again. I jumped out of my bed and looked at the bedside clock. It was twenty past eight and I had to be at work by nine o'clock.

In a jiffy I got ready. I ate a light breakfast and then ran outside to my car. At that moment I remembered that I had left it somewhere in my room. As usual my room was in a mess; everything was topsy-turvy. So it made no difference as I rummaged through my things. It was not there. I searched in the other rooms, but all was in vain. I could not find the key anywhere.

It was quite hard to get a rickshaw, but fortunately I found one. We were caught in a jam.

'That's all I needed,' I muttered. 'Now I'll really be late.' I thought it was better sight seeing than sitting like a duck, so I let my eyes roam in search of something.

There was another rickshaw between a bus and the rickshaw I was in. A boy was looking out of the window. He looked sick. His mother was stuffing his mouth with food while he complained.

Inevitably it had to happen. The boy's face shot out of the window and he threw up right then and there (after all, what goes in must come out!).

I was crying in my mind. 'If the signal doesn't change from red to green then I'll scream!'

'Aargh!' I did scream but not because of the signal. I closed my eyes to get rid of the horrible sight before me.

'Apa, O' Apa, kichhu diben?' said one of the two men.

'Go away,' I said shouting them.

'Kichhu denawa...'

The young man's attire consisted of a dirty torn banyan and a pair of trousers or what looked like the remains of one which barely covered his legs. His companion wore the shortest lungi (this should be recorded in the Guinness book of world records) I had ever seen and — Oh! He was practically naked!

I took out a two-taka note and handed it to them. The green light blinked. We were off again. On the way I was thinking about the encounter I would have with my boss.

'Most probably he'll fire me,' I thought aloud. 'So what? I never did like that old baboon anyway. He is a pain in the neck.'

## You're Fired!

by Nishat Hussain



The rickshaw puller gave me an odd look.

'Look where you are going or you'll get us both killed,' I said crossly.

'When we reached the office building it was way past nine. I had just walked into the building when Shehryar pulled me into the Cafeteria.

'Hey! What's the big idea?'

'Do you know that you're late again?'

'Yes I do. So?'

'So? Uncle is gonna fire you.'

'The boss is a nice, forgiving man. He wouldn't hurt a mouse.'

'You know that flattery doesn't get you anywhere.'

'O.K. O.K. But the old bab... I mean your uncle, has been firing me from work for the last couple of months every-time I have been late. The next thing I'll know is that, I am back in this office working as if nothing had ever happened. Just like before.'

'He calls you back because he can't bear the thought of losing his best fashion designer. I mean, if you weren't here then where would he be?'

He would be at the top like he has always been with or without me.'

'Stop pouting.'

'I am not pouting!'

'Listen. The old man is angry because you had missed today's important meeting.'

'I am getting sick of this. You're fired + you're hired routine,' I said at last.

'Don't worry. Everything will be all right. All you have to do is say that you're sorry and watch that tongue of yours. It always seems to get you in trouble when you're talking with him.'

'I can't help it if my tongue has a mind of his own,' I muttered.

'You say that to the boss and he'll send you straight away to Pabna Mental Hospital,' he said with a straight face.

'If there is anyone who needs to go to Pabna for treatment it's you.'

Shehryar's face drew into a scowl.

'Don't do that. It only makes you look uglier than you really are.'

Shehryar laughed. 'You better go and face the old guy now. Everything will be fine.'

He's a peach.

A nut is more like it, I thought.

'And remember that I'll be here to bail you out,' he added.

'You've been doing that ever since the game began,' I said. He gave me a reassuring smile as he went away. I went to my room.

The phone rang. Sadaf jumped up with a start. 'Where did that come from?' she asked puzzled.

'Shesh! Sadaf, the phone has been here from the day you first came here.'

'How come it never rang before?'

'How am I supposed to know? Now, will you stop this silly jabbering and answer that phone.'

She picked up the phone and said 'Hello?' To my surprise she didn't say another word and kept on nodding her head. And then she handed me the receiver.

'Hello?' I said wearily.

'Is that all you've gonna say to your brother?' Nahid asked.

'Was that Sadaf? She didn't answer any of my questions. I always knew she was crazy, but...'

'If you had called with my number then it would have saved you and me a lot of time.' I cut him off impatiently. 'What do you want?'

'I took your car keys by mistake.'

'You what? Did it ever occur to you that I may get into trouble at work? I may be fired?'

'What else is new?' he laughed.

'Thanks a lot!' I slammed the phone.

This time the phone on my desk rang.

'I don't want to talk to you!' I cried thinking that it was Nahid again.

'Well I certainly have to talk to you whether you like it or not,' thundered Mr Khan, my boss.

'Yes sir, sorry sir. I'll be right there sir,' I stammered.

The door was ajar. I took a deep breath and mustered up all my courage.

'You're late!' Mr Khan boomed out when I peeked in at his door.

'Come inside before I get mad,' he ordered angrily.

Before? He doesn't seem to be in a jolly good mood right now. I walked into the room.

'Good morning sir,' I said sweetly. When I saw his face I

thought that he would say 'What's good about it?' but instead he said 'Ah! What a lovely face. If you had come a second later I would surely have forgotten how pretty you look.'

Now he's making fun of me. He knows it and so do I. That old goat!

He sat on his chair and then gave me the world's longest (I'm exaggerating) lecture on punctuality and then pointed out that I had been late for the last few days. Not only that but I had missed today's important meeting.

'It's because of you that I have been made a fool in this story,' he accused.

'Correction. Nobody had to make you a fool sir. You are a

fool.'

'Young lady you need to be taught some manners!'

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### Joy Joy Awwk

## THE MISSING MACHINE

1. FMY EGOD! FAI FAM FSCOUNDING FSO FODD! FWHAT FHAPPENED?

2. HE REM-INDS ME OF A RAT!

3. DR JAMRUL ESCAPED WITH THE MACHINE!

4. F DOOMED

5. HE TURNED MY LEFT EAR BIG! BIG FTEEH, BIG FEAR... FELEPHANT!

6. FCOME FLETTS FTAKE AN INJECTION FTD FMINIMISE FSIDE FEFECT

7. F DON'T F MEAD DON'T WORRY DR AMJAM WE WILL RECOVER THE MISSING MACHINE!

8. NEXT DAY

9. TWO HURT AT CONFERENCE

10. BAD NEWS... THE POLICE FAILED TO FIND ANY TRACE OF DR JAMRUL OR THE MACHINE