

Bengali Bideshis

by Shenaz Rahim

SUMMER. The season of monsoon showers, of stifling heat, of funny accents at Bongo Bazaar, miniskirts in rickshaws, and blue-jeaned crowds at Aarong. It is this time of year when many of the Bengalis living abroad come back to the Old Country. Even though it's not the best time weather-wise to visit the tropics, their three-month long vacation from school is a definite advantage. They want to be here as long as possible.

But why? What charms can this place hold that draws them back again and again? Certainly not the climate. And to say that Bangladesh's tourism industry is second to none would have to mean that it is next to nothing. Yet Shahreen Khan from California says enthusiastically, "Dhaka beats Paris any Day! Are you kidding? Shahreen? Most Dhakaite can't wait to get out of here. Obviously, we don't appreciate what we've got. Maybe we can learn to value our country by watching these Bengali Bideshis."

In New York they call themselves the ABCDs, or American Born/Brought-up Confused Deshis' confused because most Deshis feel a bit lost in the West. Parents want to maintain the old culture and absorb the new. "Let's celebrate Eid and Christmas too!" or, "Sure you can date, but only date Bengalis." Then there are the non-Bengali friends in shock: "Arranged marriage! No way!" It is a constant struggle to balance two very different ways of life, which makes for a very uncomfortable situation.

Here they are among people who share the same values, ideals, and religious beliefs. It

is wonderful to turn on the TV and watch Indian music videos," one boy says. "And we can relate to the shows. Sitcoms in which the parents take pictures of their daughter with her prom date are just not realistic for us."

"My favourite part of Bangladesh is visiting family. I have an endless number of relatives, people who care about me. I see the house that we have lived in for generations and know who I am and where I come from." Texan Bushra Rahman tells me.

Trees can't grow without their roots and neither can people. These three months are like a crash course in tradition, a thing no one should be without.

Shahreen adds in, "I love the scenery. It is so green." Say what? "No really, like when I visited the village it was beautiful, very different from Dhaka. And we had a family reunion picnic there. I'll never forget it."

A small but growing trend among the ABCDs is to pack up and move back "home". Mothers worried about the upbringing of their children in the corrupt West have decided that this is the answer. This is how Rumana Habib finds herself here in Dhaka, so far from sunny California. "I have not regretted it at all, and in fact I wish my parents had done it sooner. Then I would have learned more by now. After all, even if she didn't forget her culture, her kids probably would have. She agrees. They would believe what they saw on TV, that the country they are from is not really a place but a series of floods and cyclones!"



What Is Life All About?

by Sumit Roy Chowdhury

TRAVELLING invariably provides enlightening experiences, not only because it leads us to see new places, face queer predicaments, make innovations but also as it gives us opportunities to meet interesting people.

I was totally exhausted as I took my seat in compartment number S5 of Hawrah Mail, scheduled to go to Calcutta from Madras. It was after a gruelling trip of South India where, we (my parents and I) covered more than 10,000 kilometres by land in a week. With about half an hour before departure, my father went out to make a phone call. Twenty minutes passed and he was not back. After five minutes my mother and I were frantic. We were faced by a choice of either losing the luggage or leaving my father behind. We got

his weird surname had caused him to trace back into his ancestry and he found out that his progenitors came from a village in Austria, 100 miles from Munich. Knoblock, as he said, was a very common name in those parts. He found out that his ancestors were farmers and that the name Knoblock comes from garlic.

Jonathan had turned vegetarian ten years ago for health reasons. He had a very good response for changing his diet. He still "likes the smell of meat", as he said, but confessed that he would never be able to eat it again. The people around were quite mystified hearing him.

At one point in the conversation we began to talk about American politics and the

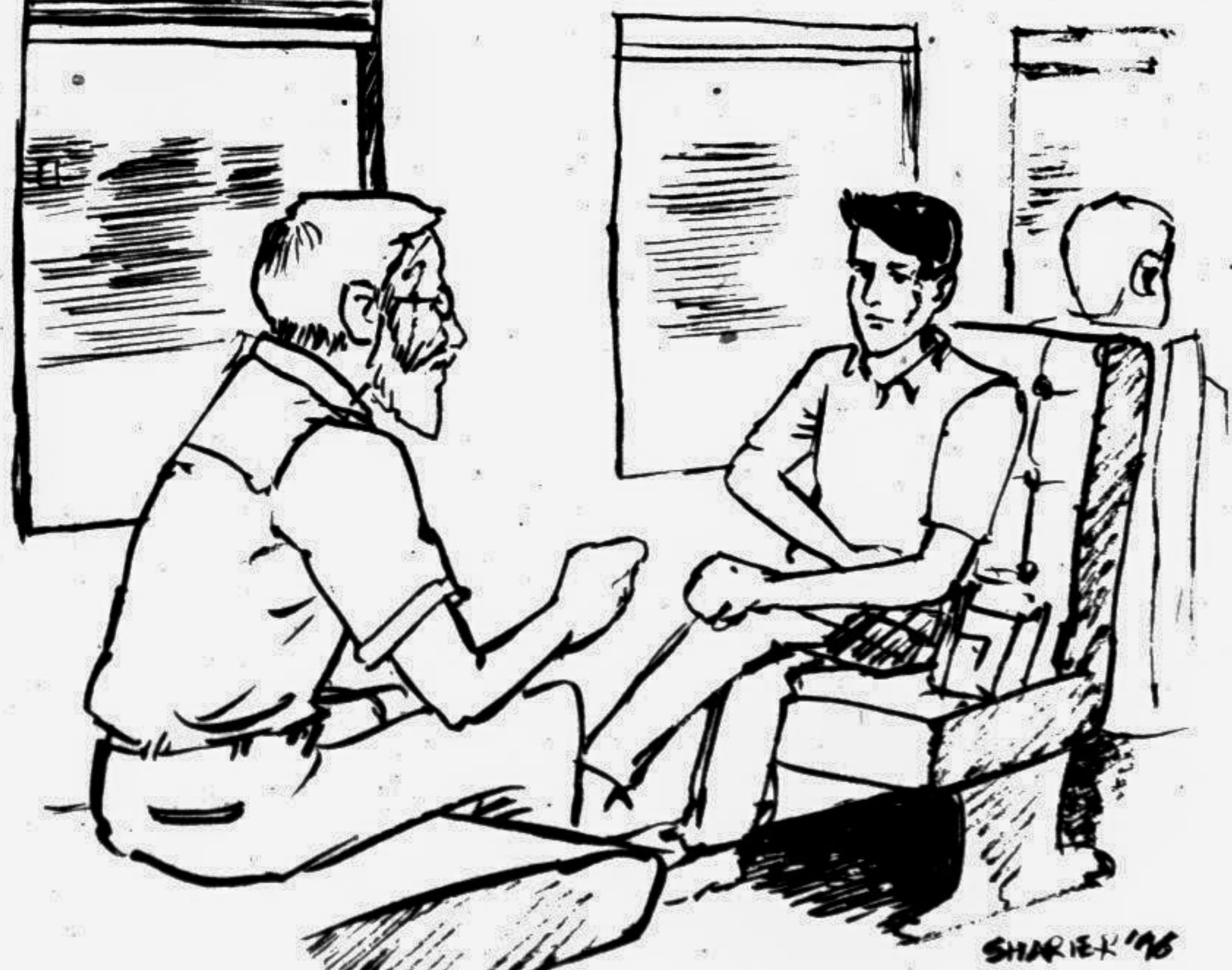
time and, in the mean time, in a fit of eccentricity, take to Hinduism or Buddhism to enlighten their souls. But ultimately these guys get tired and go home. Most are hypocrites.

But as the day progressed, Jonathan gave us a brief summary of his past. I had to change my mind. He had once possessed immense wealth. After graduating in Civil Engineering from University of California at Berkeley, he slowly shined in life and in course of time became the president of an oil company. He married an American Indian woman when he was about twenty-five. They had three children. But Jonathan and his wife separated and now he calls his wife the "mother of his children."

Oklahoma and his beloved home in the mountains, if he had to continue. By then he had lost conviction and was too fatigued to proceed any further.

As a result he sold all his shares, even though they were very low and got free from his company. Next he emptied his house by giving away all the furniture, electronic goods, exercising equipment and everything else to relatives, friends, and even to mere acquaintances. He felt light after he got rid of all these mundane possessions. The last thing of value he had was a gold Rolex which had escaped his notice in a party his friend offered \$6500 for it. Instantaneously he gave it up.

Throwing away all his worldly possessions, Jonathan Andrew Knoblock is now living in India like a nomad. He, who once had millions of dollars, now lives in cheap hotels and allows himself no luxuries. His only possession is his pack, with a bit of money, some clothes and a lot of books. He spends two hours in meditation and another two in practising yoga.



down from the train. But he appeared in the nick of time and as we boarded, the whistle sounded and the train was on its way.

In all the tension I had noticed an amicable looking foreigner, about six feet tall, with a big beard and round glasses, taking a seat in the same compartment as ours. As we collected our nerves, I engaged in conversation with the man. I learned that he was an American, born in a suburban town in California, who lived most of his life in Oklahoma. His name was Jonathan Andrew Knoblock. Jonathan told me to remember his name by seeing the hardware on the door. The nice friendly smile that he had encouraged me to discourse with him further. In course of time he told us that

Independence of Bangladesh. He was only 21 in 1971 and said that although the US government was against the formation of Bangladesh, the American public was with us. He had been commissioned to fight in Vietnam. Jonathan did not support the war there and declined to fight. He was threatened to be imprisoned. However, he escaped and worked in a civil ship till the war ended.

The night grew older as we went to sleep in our respective bunks. Jonathan took out a small reading lamp and read till very late. He woke up late next day. Lunch was lousy. But when I asked him how it was, he said, "pretty good." I felt that he was one of those soul-searching hippies who come to India to have an exotic

I was quite perplexed at this. Although I knew that this is very common in western culture, I could never understand it. To me "falling in love, marrying, and living happily ever after" seems to be the only agreeable package for marriage.

According to him, as his children were now grown up, he took the opportunity to escape from his old life. Jonathan said, "The speed of the metropolis always baffles and tenses me." And that was the reason why he left his life of affluence.

It so happened that after working for a few years, his business began to grow, too fast for his comfort. He had to expand and had to work all the time. At one point he had to shift from the quietness of

A feeling of reverence towards him came over me. We reached the part of the journey where Jonathan would get off the train and we would continue. With a heavy heart I bade him farewell.

After some time I asked my father how was it all possible. My father was much more experienced in life than me. He had actively taken part in the Liberation War of Bangladesh and had travelled all over the world. So he had no difficulty in conceiving what I had no cue to. He explained to me, "Only a king can be happy by giving up everything and becoming a pauper." As Jonathan had reached pinnacle of affluence, he had nothing else to see in a wealthy life. So as he possessed all that he could ever need, he was able to give it all up and turn to what he is today.

I didn't know why I felt so sad after parting from this stranger, a one night's acquaintance. Perhaps it was because he further confused my discursive teenage mind concerning what life was all about.

THE SNATCH



The 26th Olympiad: A Success or a Failure?

by Ishrak Ahmed Siddiky

ON the 19th of July the 26th Olympic games were opened by the US President William Jefferson Clinton. In 30 venues, the 26 events, took place within 16 days. It was a superb effort by all the athletes. But a question remains, whether the games were successful or not. The opening ceremony of the games was just fabulous. Especially the song sung by Celine Dion was eye-catching. Then there were the speeches of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch and the Atlanta Olympic committee President William Polter Paine. The new stadium designed by Indian architect Sian Arjan was really a stupendous effort. Record number of crowd were at the stadium, and everyone appreciated the opening ceremony. There was also a fine brand of fireworks shown. The most unbelievable thing happened when Mohammad Ali, lit the torch. He is still the idol of thousands of people. He took the torch from Janet Evans, because he can't run due to Perkinson's disease. But many people still say that the opening ceremony of the Centenary Olympics did not uphold the old standard. They also say that the opening ceremonies of Seoul and Barcelona was much better. But to me it was really nice, and most people of Bangladesh really enjoyed it.

Now let's talk about something else about the co-ordination and about the discipline of the games. Really the co-ordination was extremely poor, a country like USA also couldn't provide satisfactory needs of the journalists. Buses carrying the athletes were some time late, and most of them had no airconditioning. In such a hot and humid weather this is really pathetic. There was also robbery complaints. The place where the Argentine soccer team was staying was robbed just before the finals. It was really disgraceful. And while the bomb of the Centenary Olympic could be heard, the chief of the security agencies were saying 'Atlanta is the

safest place on earth. I think they had mistaken in their calculation. The tickets were also sold at a much higher price. Sometimes it was too much for the people. We will not say these are the best games ever certainly not. The organisation was much better in Seoul and Barcelona. This was told by the vice president of IOC Alexandre Merode of Belgium. The most important thing in the Olympic games is not to take part, after all in life the most important thing is not triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. This was stated by Baron Pierre de Coubertin the father of modern Olympic. I am sorry Mr. Coubertin, no one believes this now, everyone wants to win, and not to lose, and forget all about sportsmanship. I am saying this because the way the American athletes acted was really rude. Michelle Smith the golden girl of Ireland, when she won 3 gold medals, Janet Evans and some of the Australian athletes, said that it was not a natural talent, and she is using steroids. And they made IOC check her several times, and ultimately they made her lose her concentration and she couldn't win 4 gold medals. This nasty tactics used by the Americans are really shameful. They should be sorry for their deeds. They also did this in the other games too. These are all the failures but the good thing was, that there was no boycott of any country, and 197 countries took part in the Olympic games. There were 10,800 athletes and out of whom 3,000 or more participants were women. This is really good, since women are coming back. But there are many miles to go. This year USA topped the medals tally with 44 golds, 32 silver and 25 bronze, with a total of 101. Russia was second with 26 golds, 21 silver and 16 bronze, with a total of 63. Germany became third with 20 golds, 18 silver and 27 bronze, with a total of 61 and China became fourth with 16 golds, 22 silver, 12 bronze

with a total of 50. Now let us look at the results and also at the stars.

Let us start with shooting. Russia became first with 3 golds, 2 silver and 1 bronze, second was Italy with 2 golds, 1 silver and 2 bronze. Reneta Mavrova of Poland was the first person in the Olympics to get gold. In trap shooting Michael Diamond gave Australia its first gold.

In 50m standard rifle gold went to Russia's Boris Kokoev. In 50m prone gold went to Germany's star shooter Christian Klees.

In wrestling Poland leads the table with 3 golds, 1 silver, 1 bronze and Russia was second with 3 golds and 2 bronze. In 90 kg category Rasul Khadem gave Iran its first ever gold. In weightlifting Turkey, Russia, and Greece did very well. Naim Suleymanoglu of Turkey, for the 3rd consecutive time earned gold. Pyrom Dimas of Greece also did well.

In swimming United States leads the medal tally with 13 golds, 11 silver and 2 bronze, followed by Russia with 4 golds, 2 silver and 1 bronze. In swimming it's all USA. There was no one who could catch the US team in swimming. But there were also some swimmers who unexpectedly did well. Penny Heynes of South Africa won 2 golds. It was really exceptional. Michelle Smith, the golden girl, won for Ireland 3 gold medals. She was also superb at the pool. Alexander Popov of Russia is just unbeatable and there is no one to challenge him. He won both 100m and 50m freestyle, his compatriot Denis Pankratov also won.

They also won silver medals. In the relay, the US team was just superb. Both men's and women's team is just unstoppable. They won 4 gold medals each. Their closest rival was Russia, but still there, there was no one near them. They were just too good. Amy Van Dyken was just superb at the pool. She won 4 individual gold medal.

of them got 9 gold medals. Allen Johnson won 110m hurdles. In women's 400m and 800m running gold went to Russia's Svetlana Masterkova. She is just outstanding. And she also has a bright future. In women's 4 by 100m relay gold went to the US team. But in the men's relay gold went to Canada. The US team who were supposed to win could keep up their reputation. In women's 400m hurdles gold went to Jamaica's Deon Hemings. In women's 100m hurdles gold went to Ludmilla Engquist. In Women's heptathlon gold went to the Syrian Ghada Souva. Jackie Joyner Kersee, was hurt so she couldn't take part. In the pole vault gold went to France's Jean Galfione. In men's 20 km walk gold went to Jefferson Perez of Ecuador. It is the first ever gold for Ecuador. In women's 500m gold went to China's Junxia. She was really very good. In 10km walk gold went to Russia's Yelena Nikolayeva. In 50km walk gold went to Poland's Robert Zeri Owski. In women's 10,000m run gold went to Portugal's Ferrando Riberio. Nurrudin Al Morcelli kept up his reputation by winning 15,000m run. Fatuma Roba of Ethiopia won the first gold for Ethiopia. She is a polite woman. She didn't win or take part in any international marathon. It's really a great achievement for her. Josia Thugwane gave South Africa gold, the first black from South Africa to win gold. Hail Gebr Selassie of Ethiopia won the 10,000m run gold.

In Gymnastics USA's Shannon Miller won gold in the beam balance. In women's apparatus final gold went to Russia's Svetlana Chorkina. In men's apparatus final gold went to Italy's Yuri Chechi. In floor exercise gold went to Greece's Ioannis Melissanidis. It is the first time a Greek has won gold medal in gymnastics since 1896. In women's vault gold went to Simona Amanan of Romania. The young Romanian performed well to take the gold. In men's vault gold went to Rus-

sia's Alexi Nerhov. In women's team event gold went to the USA. It is after a long time that a US team has won gold in the team event of gymnastics. In the men's section the gold went to the Czechs. The Russian's who became 11th in the world championship improved a lot to win gold medal. They were really extremely good. In women's floor exercise gold went to the queen of gymnastics Lilia Podkaya of Ukraine. In women's rhythmic gymnastics gold went to Spain.

In soccer the Nigerian super eagles became champion defeating Argentina.

In handball gold went to the Croatians. They defeated the Swedes 27-26. In the women's section gold went to the Danes. The defeated the South Koreans 37-33.

In tennis gold went to Andre Agassi of US and the Women's section gold went to Lindsay Davenport. The mixed doubles gold went to the United States. In badminton the Indonesians did very bad. Men's gold went to the Danes, and in the women's event gold went to China.

Now let us see what did Bangladesh achieve? Bangladesh's achievement is nil in the Olympics. Burund wins gold, Tonga gets silver, but can't we even get a bronze? We can't even win anything in the Olympics. We are just incompetent fools. It's our failure. We can sleep, eat, and criticize others, but we can't do nothing. Two of our athletes are still living in the USA. They didn't come back. They are spoiling the image of Bangladesh. In fact, Bangladesh has become full of crooks. What is the use of spending so much money on the sports arena, give those money to the jobless people, so that they can improve our economy. We will never see the face of success, not in SAF, not in Commonwealths, let us forget about Olympics, it's too much for us. Well next Olympic games will be in Sydney. First games of the millennium. Well four more year later, see you in Sydney!



Quiz Club

Answer: (9:08:96)

1. 1904
2. Pappete
3. 1971
4. 5882
5. 1908
6. Lev Tolstoy
7. Read-Only-Memory
8. H D Deve Gowda
9. 9%
10. S A M S Kibria

This week's ten quizzes are:

1. Who is the writer of the book, "hotel"?
2. What are complex numbers?
3. What is oompton effect?
4. What is an electrolyte?
5. The longest lake of the great lakes is —
6. Which country is the largest producer of natural rubber?
7. Suez canal is — km long.
8. Who were the summerians?
9. When did Suharto become the president of Indonesia?
10. World Bank will recommend the Aid Group for committing — US\$ in fresh aid to Bangladesh.

Send your answers by Thursday, 22nd August 1996. If your answers are all correct. We will have a Quiz Club prize for you. So, hurry up.