

TEENS and TWENTIES

Bangladeshi Foreigners

by Muneera Parbeen

EVERY summer so many friends and acquaintances come back home from the western horizon (where they are studying) and lecture us on how boring it is here back in Dhaka, how dull and slow life is and here and how they absolutely fed-up they are, that they won't be coming back next summer.

I do agree that Dhaka is not the most entertaining of all places in the world but then again holidays spent under the wings of parents and families can be utterly dull and boring than time spent alone, away from home, where one is free to do almost anything.

It is actually quite absurd how young boys and girls (not to mention older men and women) get so adapted to their new residence in the west, that they find it so very difficult to adjust back home again. After spending almost all their life over here, with hardly any visits anywhere, except perhaps one or two neighbouring SE Asian countries (and we know what life there is like!), they suddenly are unable to step into their own cultures again after their short stay abroad. It is difficult for them to feel easy in shalwar kameezes, it becomes more difficult to eat rice with their bare hands and even language proves to be (!!!) a barrier for them!

A typical example was this classmate of ours who spent 1 1/2 yrs in London doing her A levels (coming to Dhaka thrice in this period). On her first visit back home, she suddenly discovered that it was very difficult for her to pronounce Bengali properly anymore and she couldn't venture out anywhere in this 'damn polluted (in her language) city. In fact she was so bored, she swore repeatedly never to come home again every time we spoke to her. (She has been talking in this 'pan-panah' English accent - sorry no English for that word - ever since!). Well, our Bangalee foreigners adapt rapidly to their new life styles. Names like 'Al-Hamrah' suddenly become 'AL' (Pronounced like 'al' as in 'pal') and so many Shereens become 'Sharon's' and so forth. It's easy, they prove, to forget

the streets of Dhaka as well as its standards and ways and lifestyle.

Well, there shouldn't actually be anything wrong with all this as everyone has his own priorities and standards. Yet these young people find it so

selves in the city they grew up. Even food at the Fast Food shops are so boring. I know that there is a difference between hard work and soft work from my knowledge of science but being a very much 'deshi' at heart. I forget that there is also

talk about "a crow decked up in peacock's feathers" but we pay so little attention to our 'grammar' anyway.

Of course, in the same perspective, it's also very interesting to see how locals take to the 'new' amenities (i.e., imports) to the country - one should remember that not everyone is the down-to-earth type. Many people simply worship these freshly put-on standards of returns from the west. 'Oh look how smart (meaning smart of course) they are!' People drool over every 'Oh sh...' & 'Oh damn' swore by them and pant after them to such an extent that those self-proclaimed 'great-ones' soon find themselves on such high pedestals that even their heads whirl around. This kind of grand reception only manages to pump up the egos of our Bangladeshi foreigners, and they just advertise loud and wide how very foreign they have become.

There is never anything wrong with one's own culture, as every level-headed person understands. Eating 'deshi' food as 'bhorta' and small fishes, wearing 'deshi' clothes (which by the way are simply marvellous) and speaking in one's own mother tongue i.e., Bengali (which by the way is one of the sweetest languages of the world) is nothing shameful. Like too much 'spirits' can manage to imbalance one's state of mind, too much exposure to a foreign culture without much base in one's own, brings about very much the same effect. For that alas, we all are to blame, in some way or the other, some more and others less.

Over 200 years ago, the British, the French and the Portuguese, all came to rule us. In those days, the new-born British-Indians would do anything in their power to try and ape their 'firing' (foreign and fair-skinned) masters, in order to be accepted by them and in order to move into their elite upper classes. We have since proved our own worthy identity and independence to the entire world. It's therefore sad to see that the former sad trend still goes on among some (?) in our society. Shame on them all indeed!



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fashionable to act foreign, that it actually becomes embarrassing even to be around them at times.

These self-declared foreigners utterly fail to enjoy them-

the distinction between hard drinks and soft ones! Parties held by us 'deshis' are also very dull to them. It remains a mystery, what glamour the west offers to our 'fellow young pals'.

B.D.F is Here to Nurture the Culture of Debate

by Shahed Latif

B.D.F or Bangladesh Debate Federation emerging as an organization in the early 90's, right after the SAARC debate in 1990. The people who were involved in its formation were national debaters.

"B.D.F's main objective," according to Imran one of its members and General Secretary, "is to enhance debate in our country. They want debate to become a co-subject in the

"Debate can create interaction between all the debaters of the country, and make people become even more interested in this witty game of words and the media would soon follow them to publicise their effort. These debates are usually held in public library," he commented.

"The participants in this second debate festival doubled those in the last one, we intend to organize this after every two

direct members, which is a good enough number to organize a debate festival alone."

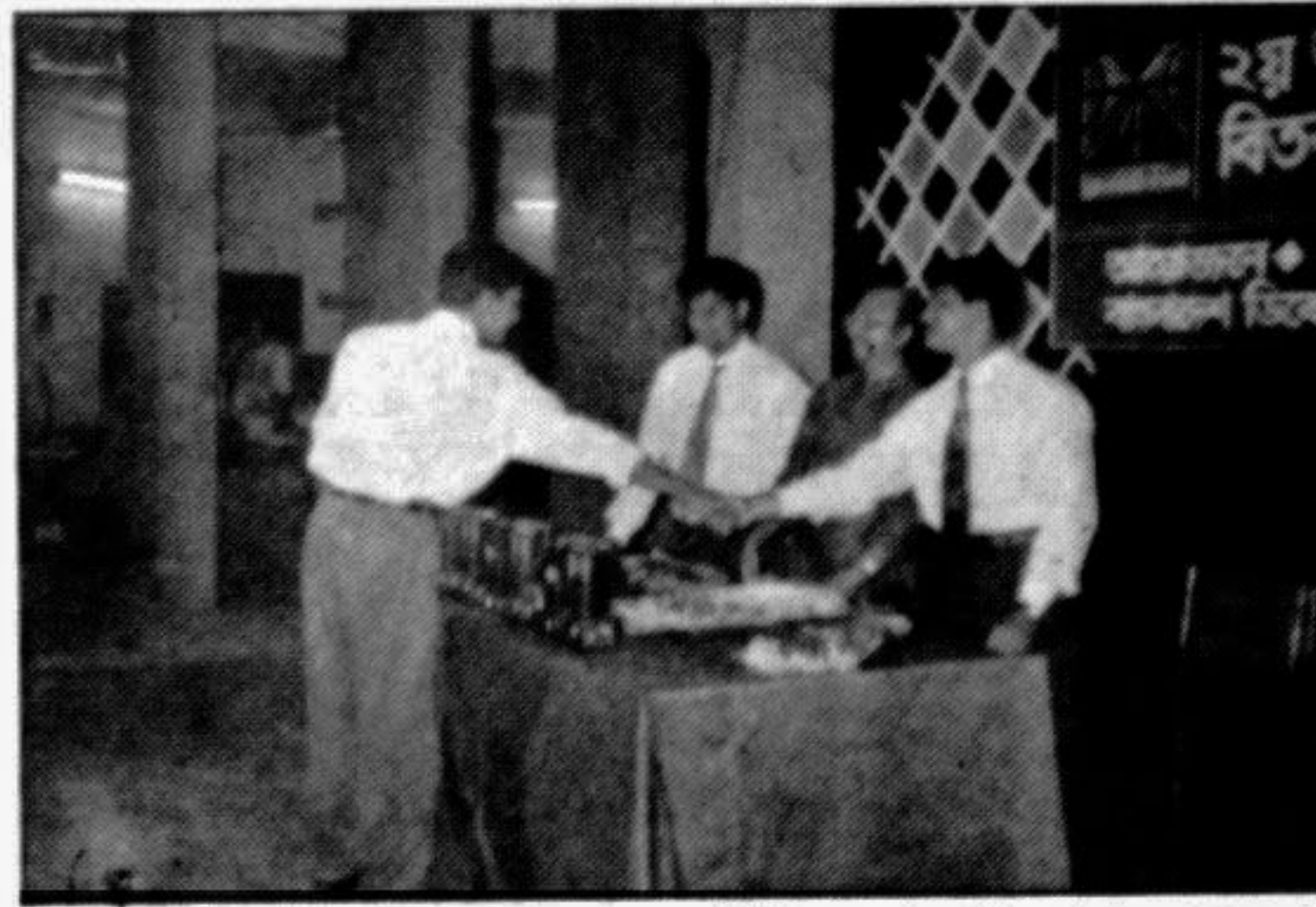
"We are here to nurture the culture of debate in this society. Schools and clubs that are interested and want to participate have to pay a Tk 100 fee each for registration formalities with B.D.F."

B.D.F is financed by some business enterprises and they get all sorts of financial help from them whenever it is re-

on to say that they intend to go to U.S.A., Geneva and other countries."

B.D.F elects its president and other members judging their potential and none can be a member of the organization until and unless he is a debater at the school level, clubs level and national level. They have to submit their debate certificate before they can be in the B.D.F.

It is indeed a very good move.



This year's prize giving ceremony of the debate festival.

scenarios so that Bangladesh can produce world class debaters and over the years we become world debate champions like Australia is currently."

The posts of the B.D.F are formed through votes from the clubs that are directly involved with the B.D.F. There are 50 clubs directly involved with the B.D.F and about 150 indirectly involved with them; where one club has one vote.

years. B.D.F helps organize debates in the school level, in club levels and also helps organize the television debate shows," he said.

"B.D.F organized the first festival with D.U.S.D. but this time they have parted and B.D.F organized it alone, because debates are meant for cooperation among the debaters. Moreover, B.D.F has fifty direct members and one hundred and fifty in-

quired. Till now B.D.F has not organized any international debates, but they do hope to organize it someday. But, debaters from our country have participated in the world school debate and they reached up to the quarter final stage. He also said that overseas Bangladeshi students can also join this debate festival like some of them have joined from the London School of Economics. He further went

because in our country, people without any potentials ruin an organization and people with the capability and potential are left behind. If B.D.F can keep this trend of giving appointments to capable members only then it is definitely going to be a success and they will become the world debate champion like Australia is today and make our 'Sonar Bangla' proud.

How About A Trip to Mars?!

by Marcia Dunn
AP Aerospace Writer

ITS cleaner than a hospital operating room and safer than a bank vault, reports AP.

Welcome to NASA's Mars waiting room where a six-wheeled, 25-pound (11-kilogram) rover is being checked, double-checked and triple-checked by engineers and scientists covered from head to toe in tight, white jumpsuits for its Dec. 2 launch and July 4 landing on the Red Planet.

The rules are strict and clearly posted outside the first of four doors leading into this air-conditioned, nitrogen-cooled, methodically vacuumed and scrubbed sanctum of the Mars Pathfinder:

No perfume, aftershave, make-up, aerosol spray. No eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum. No one with a cold, excessive coughing or sneezing, severe sunburn or flaking skin.

No more than five people allowed within 16 feet (five meters) of the lander and rover, and they have to wear latex gloves in addition to their so-called bunny suits and face masks, and be grounded to prevent static electricity.

"Tourism is not permitted," the sign adds.

Tourism here? You've got to be kidding.

Visitors must pass through Kennedy Space Center security checks and be escorted by NASA personnel to this gray metal building, locked and equipped with surveillance cameras. Even those with special badges and access codes must adhere to the schedule; anyone entering the building after hours triggers an alarm and, within minutes, encounters armed security officers.

The explanation for all this is simple: the National Aeronautics and Space Administration doesn't want to contaminate Mars with earthly germs. If scientists are to ever determine once and for all that life exists or existed on Mars - that's not a goal or this mission by the way - you don't want bacteria from Earth scattered all over the place.

If one person sneezed, they could wipe out the whole spacecraft," explained launch operations manager Curtis Clevon, who was arrested his first day here in August trying to get in. (He'd forgotten about the security.)

The worst is dirt. "In general, if somebody coughs on the spacecraft that's not nearly as bad as if somebody dropped a bunch of dirt on it," microbiologist Bob Koukol said as he prepared to test yet again for clean air on the first morning of October.

"We're looking for the most resistant bacteria forms that we can find," said Koukol, who like Clevon normally works at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Spore-forming soil bacteria, for

instance, could survive the flight to Mars "quite nicely," he noted.

The maximum number of spores allowed on Mars Pathfinder is 300 per square

171 million. Clevon said. Only part of Mars Pathfinder was baked before it arrived at Kennedy Space Center in August, namely the aluminum frame of the rover and

For planetary protection engineer and chief cleaner Jack Barengoltz, it seems harder this time around.

With the Viking landers, "everyone who was doing it knew that they didn't have to get rid of every last spore because we were going to cook them at the end," Barengoltz said.

"In this case, there's no cook at the end and so what we have is what we've got," he said. "It won't be sterile, but it's going to be very, very clean."

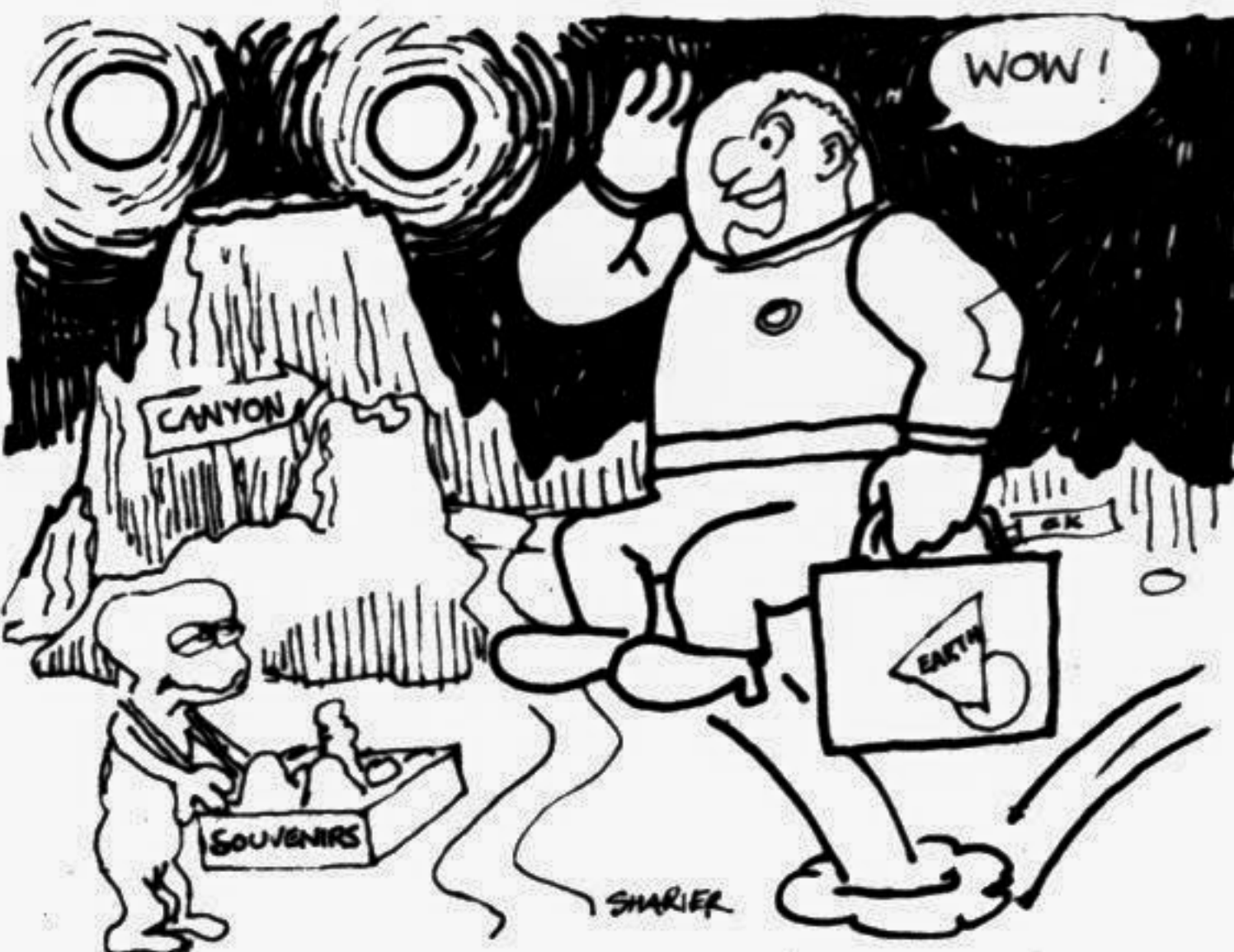
The precautions should ease in mid-October, once the heat shield is put around the co-cooled lander and rover.

No changes have been made to the Mars Pathfinder mission as a result of the August announcement by NASA scientists of a Mars meteorite with supposed evidence of primitive life - not enough lead time.

There also were no changes to the Mars Global Surveyor, to be launched Nov. 6 on a mapping expedition. It's expected to orbit Mars for at least 50 years before crashing onto the surface of the planet.

Even though the Global Surveyor isn't nearly as clean as Pathfinder, scientists aren't too worried about polluting Mars when Global Surveyor finally comes crashing down.

"That meets our international agreements for protecting the surface from contamination," said Global Surveyor project manager Glenn Cunningham. "After 50 years, everybody believes that they will have sampled the surface to see what microbes or things are there."



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meter of surface. Koukol said, but the spacecraft likely will have far fewer at launch.

Could stowaway spores cause an outbreak on Mars? "The chance of a spacecraft carrying a life form that would live on the planet is less than one in 100,000," Koukol said.

This will be the first spacecraft to land on Mars since NASA's two Viking landers in 1976. The destination this time is an ancient flood plain with a wide variety of rocks, some 500 miles (800 kilometers) from where the first Viking lander plopped down. If all goes well, the rectangular, robotic rover will explore within 15 to 30 feet (five to nine meters) of the landing site and send back data on the composition of rocks and soil for at least a week, maybe even months.

Another security concern, at least on Earth, are the radioactive heaters inside the rover. The three plutonium-238 cells, each the size of a flashlight battery, are needed to keep the rover warm during the freezing Martian days and even icier Martian nights. Although the radioactive level is low, safety precautions must be taken.

The Viking landers had even more stringent criteria for cleanliness: They were baked and sterilized before launch because of life-detection experiments on board.

There are no such experiments on Mars Pathfinder, part of NASA's Discovery program for low-budget planetary research that limited spacecraft development to three years and dials 150 million. However, because of inflation, Mars Pathfinder will now cost dls

Quotations

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I Corinthians 13:13

Charity creates a multitude of sins. Oscar Wilde

Charm
It's a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have charm, you don't need to have anything else; if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have.

James Barrie

All charming people, I fancy, are spoiled. It is the secret of their attraction.

Oscar Wilde

Oh spare your idol! think him human still; Charms he may have, but he has frailties too; Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.

William Cowper

Dating Frenzy

by Tremendous

A few years ago, a cousin of mine told me that. 'Here, people have to be in love to go dating.' However, as I have seen for the past two years, those days seem to be long gone.

Days certainly have changed, atleast amongst the people I get to meet. It is the teens-agers. Now a days, in Dhaka, you can't even have to look too hard to find people who have had several intense affairs before marriage, intentionally (boys and girls). Now parents may blame 'Beverly Hills 90210' or other cable TV programme for this westernisation, but I think there is a lot more to it than that.

The other day, my mother introduced me to a girl at a social event. As soon as there was no adult in our hearing distance, she told me about her boyfriend and how she can dump him anytime she wanted to. Now it's not that this girl's parents don't watch her or anything, infact they have a body-guard hired for her. I was amazed at how she could talk about their dates with a person she just met.

It's not that she was the first one or anything. I happen to know quite a few people who have gone out with more than five different people by the age of 17 and some such relationship were very passionate as well. Recently a friend of mine broke-up with a boy she has been going out for six months. Apparently, the guy thought they better be 'just friends'. A few days before that his friend had told me about how special my friend was to him.

People these days are dating just for the sake of having fun girls as young as those in 7th

grade are dating guys as old as us. One such guy told me that this girl was too young for him and he is going to end it soon.

I don't know where this 'Dating Fever' is leading to. But I

think people are going too fast to a place totally unknown; I think these people are going to have a very hard time to cope with their future.

We don't exactly live in



HUGE. Mexico City is Huge, sprawling - it goes on for ever. Looking down from the air, it is barely contained by the mountains and desert, spilling over like a heap of dirty laundry, chaotic and gaudy. And it's hot. You are slayed by the heat, defeated by it. Thick, dirty, yellow heat, it engulfs you like a scabrous blanket. The atmosphere is filthy, unwashed, it nearly chokes you but somehow you don't mind - you're in Mexico.

Here, at the airport, is an insight into the haphazard way that the country is run. The customs are has a system of traffic lights flashing on and off at random. You press button, walk through, and if the red light illuminates you get searched, if it's green you're off the hook. It works, purely because you can't anticipate the odds.

The next game is the traffic. In the most polluted city in the world, there is a rule that you can't drive your car for one day of the week, strictly enforced according to licence plate numbers. Of course, it doesn't work. Everyone just bought another car. Now there are twice as many cars in Mexico City.

Then you head for the hotel. There are two types, in Mexico City: de luxe, such as the oak-like new Four Seasons Hotel - quiet, cool and beguiling; and regular, which is usually early seventies in style, with lots of gilt everywhere and a large airport-like foyer where you

Mexican rave

keep expecting to see Shirley Maclaine pop out from behind a display of fruit. The regular hostel have dark, sickly bars where voluptuous waitresses with thick black eyeliner serve giant margaritas out of cactus-shaped glasses. And there are fabulous breakfasts - vanilla milkshakes and sliced papaya with lime, bananas and cream and honey.

There is much to see here, but the best way to get a flavour of the city at its ripest is just to walk around downtown. It's pungent, crowded and exhilarating. The concentration of shops selling a particular type of product seems to be divided by street, thus you have Fabric Street, Electronics Street, Tiny Dress Street, Stationery Street, Cake Street, Bride Street.

In Mexico City kitsch is a lifestyle. And we're not just talking about religion, about the clusters of souvenirs for sale outside the Baslica - holy water in pink plastic bottles shaped like our Lady of Guadalupe and 3-D pictures of Christ with bleeding knees. Even the tasteful places - such as the groovy nightclub Las Veladoras (on Londres, in the Zona Rosa), with its red crushed velvet walls hung with sacred hearts like horse brasses - are deliciously tasteless. Here Mexico's young affluent gather: boys who look like Julio Iglesias acolytes sipping big fluorescent drinks,

and gorgeous, swooning girls. White stilettos are not dead in Mexico City.

There is also the wax museum, possibly the most bizarre I've ever seen. Incongruously housed in a beautiful Art Nouveau building, it contains an odd mixture of stunted icons including Jeffrey Dahmer (sic), Linda Blair, Mrs Thatcher, the Ayatollah, Elvis and a sacrificial Aztec Virgin.

At night, you must pursue Los Mariachis. The Plaza Garibaldi is where they hang out, standing around in groups - swarthy, preening and bursting out of their outfits like so many Engelbert Humperdincks. You can hire them on the spot, or arrange for them to come back to your house or hotel and play at your party, or you can go to one of the many bars that surround the square. The drinks are expensive but it's well worth it, and you'll get a good insight into macho Mexican culture.

This is a city full of contrasts: both Catholic and pagan influences; overtly modern overtones and a kind of old-fashioned ingenuousness; beautiful buildings damaged by huge cracks from the earthquake; a sinking cathedral. But on the whole, Mexico City is much greener than you expected, and much artier, and there is a pleasing atmosphere of insanity, of a city gone wild.

If you want to breathe for a

while, you can travel to the Incan ruins of Teotihuacan, to see the beautiful pyramids of the Sun and the Moon and the Avenue of the Dead. If you can't be bothered with the climb, you can either take the little train that circulates the pyramids at a civilised pace, or you can just enjoy the view from the cafe, where old ladies in Ray-Bans listen to Frank Sinatra on the gramophone, and the sugar looks like bad speed.

A week is enough in the city, and Merida 600 miles to the east, is a good contrast. It's sleepy little joint, a crumbling, colonial splash of a town on the Yucatan peninsula.

On the road to Usmal there are two things worth stopping for. The first is a fabulous eighteenth-century hacienda, the Hacienda Yaxcopoil, privately owned and lovingly restored to its original glory. The other is a Mayan restaurant in Muna called Chun-Yaasche where they serve massive cocktails adorned with flowers, and food cooked in the ground - the traditional Mayan method - like pork chuc and chicken wrapped in banana leaves and sauce made from the Habana chilli, the hottest in the world.

To complete the contrast (urban canned heat in Mexico City; crumbling colonialism in Merida), head to the beach. Cancun is like Miami, or how you imagine Miami to look if you've never been there. It is an extraordinary place.