



TOONS

Young, bright and dedicated cartoonists among our readers and Rising Stars members are requested to send us their cartoons. Please enter your name, age, school and class. Looking forward to share few laughs.

RS Editor



School Forges Good Citizenship out of Tragedy

by Martin Revis

WHEN fairground thugs attacked schoolboy Marlon Thomas, leaving him permanently brain damaged and incapacitated, feelings among his school-fellows at the Fairfax grammar school, Bristol, were, in the words of the Deputy Headmaster Marius Frank, 'Running Pretty High'.

The challenge, Frank explained, was to channel the outrage constructively. A non-violent campaign for justice was mounted by the school when it appeared at first that Marlon's several attackers might escape the imprisonment they are now serving.

Since the crime, the school, which has equal numbers of Asian, Afro-Caribbean and white pupils, has involved parents in its social education programme and Marlon's parents have established an achievement award in their son's name.

Fairfax, the winners in the youth category, was one of four organisations and individuals receiving cheques for pounds sterling 1000 and trophies at the 1996 citizenship awards ceremony in Birmingham on Thursday, 28 December.

Sponsored by the Trustee Savings Bank, the awards have been jointly created by the commission for racial equality,

the watchdog body which monitors the effectiveness of Britain's antidiscrimination legislation, and the Institute for citizenship studies.

In the adult category the judges chose Eunice McGhie-Bergrave, an Afro-Caribbean catering supervisor in the Birmingham Probation Service, for organising a group of women who took action to rebuild community links in handsworth in the wake of the 1985 riots. The result was shades of black, a self-help family project which provides entertainment and involvement for the whole community, including the young unemployed and the isolated elderly.

The award for an organisation went to the punch and Judy Family Centre in Earls Court, London, which offers facilities and information for local residents on low incomes, refugees and homeless families with children.

Guyana-born Herman Ouseley, Cre chairman, who presented the awards chosen from 200 nominations across the country, said the occasion provided an opportunity to acknowledge the good things about living in a diverse society and to celebrate individual and groups aiming at good citizenship. (LPS)

"Alone"

by Nabilah Islam Khan

CRYING wouldn't solve anything. Didn't I know it? I'd shed the last of my tears. And I was well aware of it. But then, why did I keep thinking that there might be a glimmer of hope. A hope that would awaken me. And protect me from being tied to life with a rope? I was alone; that was what I feared. And there was no satisfaction in knowing it. If only there was a ray of light. And a safe way out of it. Darkness was my only companion. And it was something I despised; I felt like it was spying on me. And somehow I felt heavily tied. Fear and loneliness was growing inside me. And it was increasing with the passing of each day. I felt like firing my frustrations at life. For having brought me up in this way.

The Destructive Force

by Adnan R Amin

Students are meant to be studying. It is okay that they should engage in politics — but only when the expedient time arrives. For now it is our duty to be a one-track-minded person and finish our studies. That way we'll be able to accomplish much more for the country, instead of dying for petty causes, in the streets.



upon a time, has become a virtual battlefield. During the last five years, how many young lives has perished? Fifty? a hundred? perhaps. But what did we get out of it. What did they get out of it. These remain the biggest questions, for us today.

Anybody who is aware of the current affairs will certainly know what goes on in the name of occupying and vacating the halls. As my visits to the university campus are pretty frequent, I have come to see unimaginable violence in there. I have seen students with shotguns-firings shots at rivals. I've seen people run past me carrying pistols.

What I've seen does not frighten me. But instead I am positively saddened about the

situation in the DU campus. Recently another news appeared along with photos in the newspapers. It was about a alleged attack on the students and residents of Eden college. The picture showed two grown-up women pulling at each other's hair!

That was probably the lowest form (in regards of civilized conduct and decency) that political activities could possibly descend to.

The query that arises inevitably is that where do these youngsters get their incentive from? Simple answer — the political parties!

I've seen how people get involved. During the election campaigns, each individual was paid a handsome amount for joining a march or sitting in

a temporary "publicity hut" that mushroomed all over the city during the election season. I have heard (from the person himself) that he was paid taka hundred each day for his active participation in the campaign work — which is almost enough for a teenager. Rates differed from person to person. Street urchins or Tokals were paid only 20 taka per day and common people taka 60/70; so evidently the business had been deliberately made most lucrative to the students. After this, can we not hold the political parties responsible for all their wrongdoing?

Recently — I went to Dhaka College where — I have quite a few friends. The purpose was to see an open air concert organized by Chhatra Dal. I had missed the previous one which was organized by Chhatra League. As soon as I — along with my friends, reached the spot I saw windshields, bricks and frantic people running all over the place. And from what I heard, I could gather this much that the concert stage and site was rampaged and the accumulated enthusiastic students dispersed, by the arch rivals of the organizers. So we just simply got the hell out of there!

For years we've seen incidents of bright young lives come to untimely ends as consequences of party rivalry. We've seen people being called out of their houses and being made subjects to gruesome murder just as we witnessed innocent bystanders get hit by stray bullets. At this, I simply cannot help wondering what our country is coming to. What will the eventual consequences be? It is really a frightful thought.

Students are meant to be studying. It is okay that they should engage in politics — but only when the expedient time arrives. For now it is our duty to be a one-track-minded person and finish our studies. That way we'll be able to accomplish much more for the country, instead of dying for petty causes, in the streets. It's high time that all of us opened our eyes. It's time to put a permanent stop to the eternal exploitation that, today, threatens the whole student community so let us join hands in unity, for the betterment and welfare of our country.

Special Olympians Vs Not-So-Special Ones

by Ishrak Ahmed Siddiqy

THERE are many people on this earth who are handicapped. But despite their drawback, they are giving their last bit of strength to do what normal human beings are capable of. As technology is moulding our every day lives, everything is possible. Yes I am talking about the special olympics that was held November last at the Chinese business capital Shanghai.

Our olympians did a marvellous job and snatched away 6 golds, 2 silver and 6 bronze. They have made Bangladesh proud! We were just mesmerized by their performance. Wow! what a achievement. These athletes are handicapped but the effort and skill they showed, is a glorious example of what you can do if you have the spirit. The main thing is that they have had a positive attitude and patriotism, which helped them to go so far.

It has been three months since 'Atlanta Olympics' finished. But for once did anyone ask — why this ludicrous performance by our team in the olympics. We Bangladeshis are famous for big talk, and we blabber so much for nothing that we forget to carry out what we are supposed to do. Athletes from USA, Russia, they forget about them athletes from even Nigeria, Burundi, Ethiopia won medals, and gave their best to reach the winning lines, but we tend to run towards the exit of the stadium for it has been our national habit for a long time.

We are participating in the olympics since 1984, without any success. Our athletes don't even have the minimum standard to compete in such international meet. We have not even reached the Asian standard. Today sports does not only give fame, but it has also been one of the most lucrative business ground the world.

We have no ambition. Four

athletes took part in Atlanta games. All of them as usual flopped, except Kinki, who did a little better. (Best of the worst). But he could have done much better than that. Well our Bimal Chandra Tafaard the fastest man and Mizanur Rahman the number one swimmer, vanished from the games village. Many might say that they didn't get enough of practice, well they shouldn't make such pathetic excuses! Because before going to USA all of them received intensive training, and one Rinki was even sent to Germany prior to the Olympics.

Sixteen years have passed by (1984-96) without any success in the international arena, may be it's not enough of time for them, may be they will win medals, when I will be in grave.

Well back to our Special Olympians, they have really showed what they are capable of. Shamsuzzaman, Roma bagged gold in 200m running, Shariful Hassan won in 100 and 200m, Sharmin Ashraf and Shahed Mahmud also got gold in long jump. While Saheli Akhtar made us proud by winning silver, and Sanjida Akhtar won for us the bronze.

We must take proper care of these bright athletes, we must nourish their talents. We must forget that they gave us the glory which we waited for. We must provide them with better facilities. Let us give them our blessings, to do well in future.

Albeit there is an irony you know — again our olympic team will participate in Sydney 2000 olympics, and if you want I can make a prophecy; here it goes — six of them will participate, three will vanish, and the other three will come back with their heads down, and when they do come back, the proud BOA president would say 'It doesn't matter whether you win any medal or not in the olympics, what it matters is the participation'.

Virtual Pop Star Digital Girl Is Latest Teen-age Fantasy

by Mari Yamaguchi

JAPAN'S newest pop star never gets sick, never bickers over money, never gains weight, never snubs her fans. She can't.

She isn't programmed to. DK-96 is perfect, a computer-generated teen-age dream.

Japan has a long line of "aidoru kashu" or idol singers — girl-next-door types who, regardless of talent, have sparkling images that pop music promoters have carefully crafted.

Now, promoters have crafted a whole girl, cashing in on the booming popularity of personal computers.

And while DK-96 isn't real, her fans are. One boy even sent her a fax: "You look so cute on your Internet home page."

DK-96 is the brainchild of Hori Production, one of Japan's most venerable music promoters. Her initials stand both for Digital Kid and for Date (pronounced DAH-tey) Kyoko, a name that is typically Japanese.

Her looks, though, leave typical far behind: Her figure is long-legged and busty. Her thin face has delicate brows over big, Western-looking eyes. Her clothes are often sexy — tube tops and hot pants.

"Young people today are in the 'computer game' generation," sociologist Tatsu Inamasu says. "For them, virtual idols are just one of these things. Kids have no problem accepting them."

In Japan's music market, stars often dictate fashions for a whole generation and earn huge profits for their producers.

Right now, the most popular singing star — and Japan's biggest in years — is 19-year-old Namie Amuro. Her songs are heard everywhere, and plenty of teen-age girls dress like her, in black boots and a micro-mini skirts.

But she's a mere human. DK-96, created only a few months ago, has already started to attract a large slice of the young male market, with her sexiness and her constant on-line availability.

Radio stations play her debut dance tune, "Love Communication," and no one seems to mind or even notice that the real singer is a woman with the group "Summer of Love."

The single CD for the song just went on sale. TV talk shows air MTV-like videos of DK dancing and walking through real scenes of downtown Tokyo and New York City.

"She looks almost human," said 29-year-old Masaki Oishi, referring to the 3-D image of DK-96 on the Internet and on CD-Rom. DK-96 even has a past.

According to her makers, she is 17, stands 5 foot 4 (1.62 meters) and is still growing.

She played soccer in grade school, and her first love was an older boy on the soccer team. That's all in the past though. Now she's practicing boxing to develop her sense of rhythm.

She likes to collect sneakers and study foreign languages. Her father owns a sushi shop near a U.S. military base outside Tokyo, and, yes, she even has a pesky little sister.

It's all part of being a super pop idol here. Even the real ones have plastic personas, generated to help capitalize on an audience of teen-agers eager to believe in effortless — if unreal — popularity.



ROBOTS

We Want Two-Legged Androids

by M Ahsanur Rahim

IN the Oxford dictionary, a Robot is defined as a machine made to act like a man; machine-like person.

This says nothing about the extremely complicated machinery required to make one of those machines. My reader need not know about physics, biology and chemistry thoroughly to understand this article as I intend to make a superficial study of Robots and their relation with human society.

Other than dwelling slightly on the point that scientists think it's impossible that Robots will walk on two legs for quite a number of years, this article is mainly about artificial intelligence and how it may help us.

Artificial intelligence which will equal man's is still a long way from being fulfilled in machines. The machinery required is expensive and still quite cumbersome. The intelligence of most Robots today is still at a very primitive stage. The main problem with the artificial intelligence available today is a lack of adaptability.

This means that robots and computers of today cannot function beyond what has been put into them, i.e. programmed into them. They do not have the capability of self-innovation. They cannot create new things of their own. They can derive one thing from another but they cannot make a totally new thing. This arises from the fact that the circuits in a computer cannot, of their own, make new connections. This will be better understood if we make a elementary study of the human brain. All animal brains contain neurones which may be considered as the building blocks of which the brain is made. These blocks are living, i.e. they grow and reproduce. Hence, as a person grows to a certain age, his neurones grow in number and size and make more and more connections with each other.

Electric impulses travel along the neurones. The journey of the impulses starts from the sense organs and into the brain where they activate certain areas of the brain. These areas also contain neurones which send impulses to the organ concerned which should react to what the person has seen, felt, tasted, smelled or heard.

The human brain differs from those of other animals as it is much larger and how far more connections. When a person learns something new and more connections are established. Let us take the example of a little child who is about to eat chocolate for the first time.



First he hesitates because he has not seen or tasted this thing before. He reaches out and then puts it in his mouth, as all little children do with everything, and then when he finds that he likes it, his brain acquires a programme by which whenever he sees the same thing i.e. the chocolate again, he should try and get at it.

This acquisition of a programme is done when neurones in his brain interconnect and thus when impulses from his eye arrive at his brain, the brain sends impulses to his hands and mouth so as to reach out and demand that piece of chocolate.

The memory components in a computer or the thinking section of a robot is made of plastic and metal and hence cannot grow new connections. However, if we can replace these inorganic metal and plastic components with growing organic material such as strands of DNA we may be able to build better and more advanced types of memory units. The other advantage of using such units is that they are smaller than the present type. This is because the memory storage depends on changes in the molecular layout in DNA strands in the case of memory units using DNA strands, but, in the case of present day electronics memory is stored in tiny silicon chips. But before DNA can be used in electronic equipment we must find a way as to how we can manipulate the strands of DNA.

Normally, DNA exists in the nucleus of the cells of our bodies and are used in a manner that (probably to the relief of some) need not be described here. All I need to say is that the extremely complex organic processes that

take place in the nucleus of a cell must be simulated in the circuits to which the DNA strands are attached.

Moreover, we must find a method by which we can actually read the DNA strands in the same way that present day computer discs one read in the CPU of a computer.

Another problem with inserting artificial intelligence into a machine is the necessity of extremely complex programming. This sort of thing is beyond the comprehension of any ordinary person. Basic computer programming is quite complicated for us to pass that and go on to programme artificial intelligence into a machine.

Anyway, concerning robot intelligence, there is one question that is debated by scientists, moralists, experts in ethics (whatever ethics they may be) and almost all concerned even before it has become fully possible. The question — should a chunk of machinery perhaps not even faintly resembling humans, be allowed to have human emotions of love, fear, hate and envy? It is something on which hundreds of books fiction and non-fiction have been written. Before making any judgment prematurely, we must first understand that unless and until the behaviour responses of artificially intelligent forms are carefully studied with regard to various stimulus, we cannot predict whether this concept of artificial intelligence is good or bad for human society.

Even if we find that it is bad, perhaps a few adjustments may connect the whole mechanism

One important thing to do while we perform such experiments is to have a clearly unprejudiced mind so that personal opinions do not cloud our judgement.

Scientists are of the opinion that two legged robots are still a long way off, if not impossible. The moments of the centre of gravity of a robot and of the reaction to the robot's weight from what the two-legged robot is standing on makes it a very unstable and precarious state of inertia in which the robot is likely to topple over at the slightest disturbance.

Four or six legs offer more stability and hence the robot stays upright as it is supposed to. The human body stays upright by careful coordination of muscles and bones by the sensory system. If we can make a complex sensory system in robots, we might see two-legged androids walking in our streets.

But how can all the money spent in research into robots help us. Many people fear that if robots are built, they might replace humans in our factories so many people may become unemployed. But we must understand that in this hostile and dangerous universe there are many things that humans cannot do. If we want, to send an explorer team to Saturn, for example, instead of sending unprepared humans to a place about which we know very little, we can send a team of robots to survey and explore the planet first and then make things suitable for humans to travel there. With the mineral resources of our mother planet being used up, we would seriously consider researching into interplanetary exploration so as to find new sources for old minerals and new minerals also.

Deep sea exploration is dangerous for the individual human diver. Well built robots which can withstand the huge water pressure down at the sea bed can be used. After a nuclear disaster, robots can be sent to remedy things instead of risking the lives of humans. In a similar manner, robots can be sent to other disaster zones to help in rescue and clear up operations. These are just few of the numerous benefits that outweigh the cost, and justify the talent spent on research into robots.

If we are successful, we may be able to use living chunks of machinery to make human life more advanced and comfortable than now. Thus, we may now start practicing how to greet our present day electronic and other forms of implements in the forefront that they soon will be able to greet us back!