skirts of Dili a place called, 'Dili Rock', where you have to walk a few hundred feet from the main highway to reach the shoreline.

During our orientation with the scuba diving equipment inside the pool, I didn't realise how heavy the oxygen tank would be until I had to carry it on my back across the shore. I had to put all my strength and focus to make sure that I didn't stumble with the scuba gear and make a fool of myself.

It was a different world down there. We had to swim away from the shoreline about 50 metres. With our instructors command we deflated our BCD and slowly started our descent into the depths of the Timor sea. Every object suddenly appeared 3 to 4 times larger.

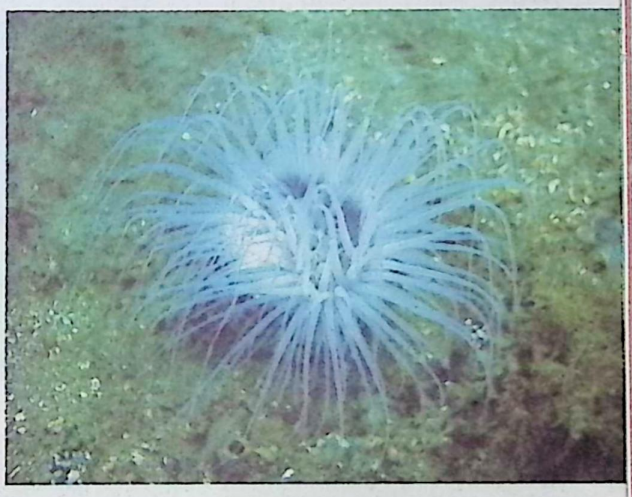
It was a strange feeling when for the first time I had to use my mouth regulator to breath under water. It was making a noise similar to when you blow on the mouth of an empty bottle. The bubbles from my mouth regulator as I exhaled looked like small, sparkling, shiny diamonds, which were going beyond my reach.

Most of the aquatic life under the ocean revolves around the coral reefs. So it was very easy to spot colorful sea mollusks, crabs and even sea warms!! A few of the mollusks had a very sophisticated camouflage technique. They would appear as an extension of corals or rocks, it is only when you accidentally go near one of them, they would sprint away from you leaving behind a trail of sand.

Then we came to the edge of the reef where I found a sharp fall from the fringe of the reef into the deep blue abyss. You couldn't see anything except a bluish darkness from there downwards. It felt as if I was standing on the edge of the cliff that was so high that you couldn't see the ground.

Suddenly the unthinkable happened. One of our diving buddies, Anusha got detached from the group. Eric left us at the end of the reef and with hand gestures told us to stay there until he came back. And then off he went and disappeared into the blue in search of her. My mother held my arm really tight. Her magnified eyes which already





Few minutes into our descent we hit the seabed. The first thing that I tried do was stand up on the seabed. When I managed to do that I felt like I had reached a milestone in my life. As if I had completed a task from the 'to-do list before you die'. Underneath the water, there was a world full of colours. 'Full of colours's would be an understatement. It was as if every single colour had a thousand shades. Especially when we reached the reef, surrounding the shoreline. A magical place, where a wide variety of fishes have made their home, among the corals and sponges. I managed to see beautiful starfishes, as well as several types of clown fish, black hawk, butterfly, queen angel, rock beauty angelfish are just few of them.

The corals and the sea urchins were sawing along with the waves. It was like a rhythmic motion, as if they were dancing with the waves. appeared as the eyes of a Martian, now looked terrified. I also had the same sensation. Both of us stranded in the last place we would want to be, 60 feet below the Timor Sea. A few agonising minutes later, to our relief Eric came back for us and we went up to the surface. Later we found Anusha had safely ascended to the top after a jellyfish had stung her. But the time we passed before we saw her again, in a word, was horrifying. Throughout that time we assumed the worst - that somehow she might have drowned.

The disappearance of one of our diving buddy, however, made the expedition even more exciting; a double shot of adrenaline. Those who try scuba diving for the first time are bound to get addicted to it. It is a very powerful drug indeed! After that fisrt dive I did five more dives and earned the license of a professional open water scuba diver. ■