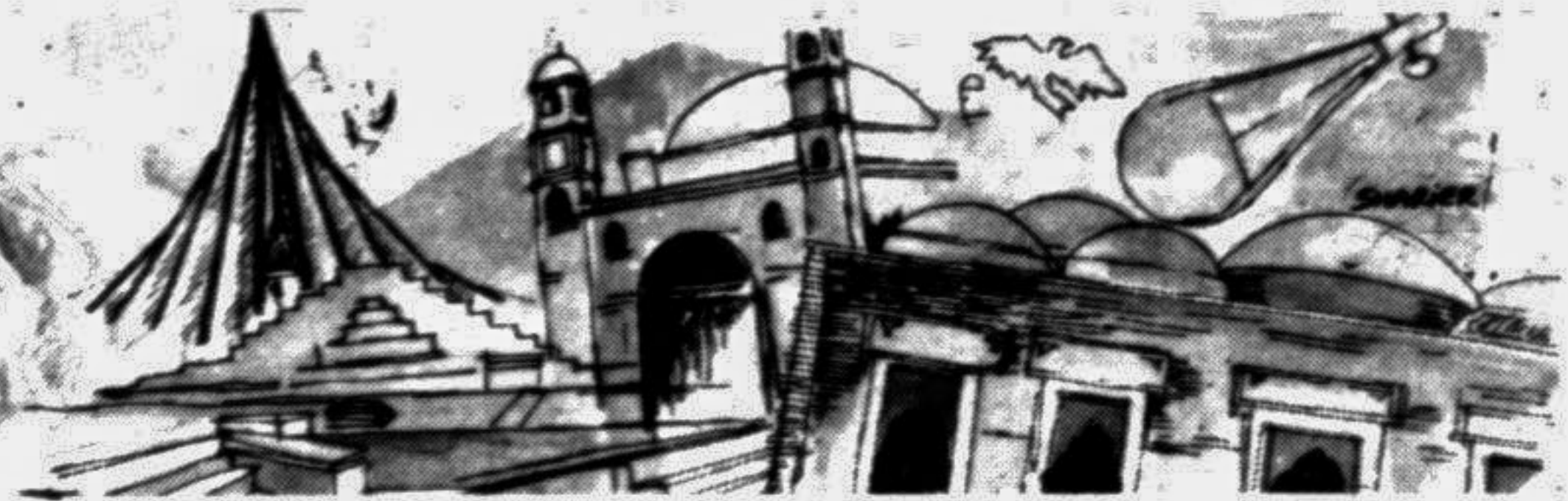




Travel & Tourism



Introducing Chittagong to the Tourist

Chittagong Hill Tracts

RANGAMATI, Khagrachari and Bandarban, these three districts make up the Chittagong Tribal Belt or the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Hill Tracts are divided into four valleys surrounded by the Feni, Karnaphuli Sangu (Sanku) and Matamuhari rivers and their tributaries. The ranges of the hills give the impression of a mighty height as

and everyday life. The tribal families are mostly matriarchal where womenfolk are more hardworking than the males and are the main productive force. Though each tribe has its own dialect, distinctive dress, rites and rituals, their way of life still speak of their distant past. One such example is the pride they take in hunting with bows and arrows.

Rangamati

A winding 77km metalled

flower-vases and silver jewellery and the tribal men and women who fashion them. The visitor in Rangamati should visit the tribal handicraft centre run by BSCIC. It produces varieties of souvenir for one's mantelpiece. Other than these, there are countless things to attract a tourist e.g. the tribal life, fishing, speed-boat cruising, water skiing, hiking or

Paper Mills. There is also a rayon factory near this mill, which produces synthetic fibres from bamboo. The Bandarban district is mainly responsible for providing the country with valuable wood used for various purposes, besides supplying wood and bamboo for the Karnaphuli Paper Mills and the Rayon Mills at Chandraghona. Here one can see how huge logs of wood are carried to the plains by trained elephants.

Khagrachari

If you want to be with nature and picture yourself talking to birds and animals, then Khagrachari is the place for you.

The Hill Tracts are inhabited by a number of tribes. Popularly known are the Chakmas, Tripuras, Marmas, Kukis, Murangs and Tangchngyas. Each tribe is extremely colourful, has its own language, rich tradition and attractive costumes. They use bright colourful dyes made from herbs to make up their faces, the same as we do with cosmetics.



The sea beach at Cox's Bazar

— Parjatan

they rise steeply and then extend to long narrow ridges. The highest peaks on the northern side are Thangnang, Langliang and Khantiang while those on the southern side are Ramu, Kukradang (3000 ft, highest in Bangladesh) Mowdok, Mual, Rang Tlang and Mowdok Tlang.

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road from Chittagong through hills and dales will take one to the headquarters of Rangamati district — Rangamati. "Ranga" meaning red and "mati" meaning soil — (Red soil).

Rangamati is a poet's dream of rare scenic beauty and unspoiled tribal life. The new Rangamati town is perched on the bank of 680 sq km of crystal-clear man-made Kaptal lake. This lake was formed when the Karnaphuli river dam (153 feet high, and 1800 feet long crest) was built for the purpose of hydro-electric power project at Kaptal, from where the whole of Chittagong city gets her power supply. The old Rangamati town was submerged under water and a new town had to be built in its place. Rangamati is a favourite holiday resort for the tourists from abroad as well as those at home. Rangamati is famous for the home-spun textiles, bamboo handbags,

simply enjoying the virgin nature.

Kaptal

The famous Kaptal Lake is situated 64km from Chittagong. Its emerald and blue water is surrounded by majestic tropical trees. Kaptal Lake is famous for its sweet water fish and provides facilities for cruising, swimming, skiing, angling. Short trips can also be made by country boat called Sampans.

Along the Chittagong Road, 3 km from Kaptal is the ancient Chit Morong Buddhist temple. A beautiful statue of the Lord Buddha can be seen here. Every year in this temple, on the last day of the Bengali year (mid-April), an annual Buddhist festival is held.

On the way to Kaptal, about 48 km from Chittagong is the location of the biggest paper mills in Asia. This mill is popularly known as Chandraghona

A drive of 112 km from Chittagong by an all-weather metalled road to the green forest brings you to this fascinating abode.

Bandarban

A perfect picnic spot on the lap of the hills. That is what Bandarban is. This enchanting place, Bandarban, is just a 92 km drive from Chittagong by metalled road and is the headquarters of another district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The head of the Mogh tribe, known as the Bohmog Chief lives in Bandarban. The Moghs are very simple and extremely hospitable people; and are jovial and carefree by nature. The Murang tribe who

are famous for their music and dance also come from Bandarban. The magic of Bandarban is that, the more interior you go into the hills and forests, the more different tribes of greater interest you find!

There are a few small hotels and rest houses at Rangamati and for the convenience of the visitor Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, the national tourism organisation, has created a number of facilities at Rangamati holiday resort.

Cox's Bazar

When in Bangladesh, one must see Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. The small town of Cox's Bazar founded in 1798 by Captain Hiran Cox of the East India Company, is located at a distance of 152 km south of Chittagong and is connected by air and metalled road from Dhaka and Chittagong.

Cox's Bazar is a beach comber's paradise having the world's longest beach of 120 km blending into the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal. The background of the beach is a picturesque chain of green hills covered by deep reserve forests. The range of the hills run parallel to the beach for about 96 km. Miles and miles of silvery golden sand, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colourful pagodas, Buddhist temples, delightful sea-food — all make your holiday at Cox's Bazar worth remembering.

As the sun rises over the hilltops, and while you are

collecting shells washed on the beaches by night waves, the whole scenery around seem to turn into a 3-dimensional picture card. Everything look so captivating. During the day one can just laze and bask on the golden sand or take a swim in the sea, which is free from sharks.

Evenings can be extremely romantic just by watching the sun go down into the horizon and suddenly finding oneself standing in the twilight.

While staying at Cox's Bazar, drive down to the world's most fascinating picnic spot, Himchari, where you get the beach and hills and light-forest at the same time. Cox's Bazar and Ramu (a place nearby) are rich in beautiful pagodas where several statues of Lord Buddha can also be seen. A trip by all-metalled road to Teknaf, the southern-most tip of Bangladesh, is very interesting. The hospitable tribesmen are eager to show off their home-made cigars and colourful handloom fabrics. On the islands of Moheshkhali and Sonadia, one can get a rewarding experience of sea-fishing. One can also go to the local bazar (market-place) to buy fish of one's choice and cook it to your own taste. Beautiful jewellery of gold and silver with ethnic design can also be bought at Cox's Bazar.

The Cox's Bazar Holiday Complex of BPC, the national tourism organisation, is an ideal tourist resort having a number of facilities for the visitor.



A-Buddhist Temple

— Parjatan

Shafipur Ansar Academy: A Unique Picnic Spot

by Saifa Rashid

WHEN winter confronts its petals, one by one, showering cold weather, dews and mists on Bangladesh then the mind of the city inhabitants dwells on one thing — picnic. The fact that going on picnics is the national winter sport of the Bangladesh can be denied by nobody, especially those who have viewed the many coaches laden with people, food, utensils and coke and blare music as they speed down the Dhaka Airport Road. But where are the buses bound? They are usually bound for the National Park or other picnic spots nearby.

A most enchanting picnic spot is situated near Gazipur at the Shafipur Ansar Academy. Its specialty is its attractive grounds which are decorated by an artificial lake, statues of animals, trees, bridges and different types of flowering plants.

The picnic spots are actually placed within the boundaries of the Shafipur Ansar Academy so to gain entrance one has to ask permission and then proper identification. From the main gate a long straight road leads past the main buildings of the Ansar Academy. But before that on the right of the road there is a pretty lake with bridges and the banks are adorned with a number of small cottages built in separate styles and many flower bushes. The picnic spots proper are situated behind and to one side of the main buildings. They are thickly wooded and artificial animals such as monkeys, lions and tigers are placed at strategic locations.

However, the main attraction of Shafipur is the lake and its environs that can be seen from the entrance. Many vote it to be the most beautiful man-made pleasure spot in Bangladesh. It has been the scene of the shooting of countless films and even some television programmes.

The lake is quite large and

has a fountain in the main part. A miniature waterfall is constructed down one bank. The cool, sparkling water tumbles over multicoloured rocks and finally ends into the lake with a splash. There is also a large multicoloured rock mural on a steep bank facing the lake and road. A charming wooden and bamboo bridge spans a slender limb of the lake. The bridge is characterized by a pagoda in the middle. Madhablata plants twine over on iron frame to form a gateway of this bridge.

The other bridge is not a bridge at all since it only leads halfway across the lake. It is made out of cement and ends in a round shelter. The roof of the shelter is held up by a huge wooden pillar with a shelf around it. The shelter has no railing and is quite bewitching. The bridge is white and has brass lamp posts. The opening of the bridge is guarded by two artificial lions. This bridge is the most delightful aspect of Shafipur and sometimes picnicers are not allowed around it, in case they cause any damage.

There are also different types of open rooms built on the banks of the lake, each in a different style. There is a pink Chinese pagoda. Another cottage is built in the Bangladeshi style. It bears paintings of Bangladeshi handicrafts and the pillars are covered in a layer of plaited bamboo. Another one is shaped like a mushroom. The roof is round and curved. The pillar is constructed and painted like a tree trunk. Indeed, it looks exactly like a tree trunk.

The Ansar Academy is also noted for its great variety of flowers, and trees that are planted throughout the grounds. Such profuse growth is an unusual sight, especially to city-dwellers.

Shafipur Ansar Academy is a delight to the eyes and a wonderful place to be. As a picnic spot, it is unique.

Dead End at El Nido

THE islands rise straight out of the water, and their perpendicular cliffs crested with tufts of trees are reflected in the calm azure waters of lagoons on this remote tip of the Philippine island of Palawan.

El Nido gets its name from the Spanish word for 'nest' which early conquistadors found in abundance here. Chinese junkies visited Palawan centuries earlier to gather the swiftlet nests to make soup for the imperial household.

Today, the nests are nearly all gone, stripped off to gourmet restaurants in Hong Kong or Taiwan where they fetch up to US\$ 2,700 a kilogram.

El Nido's natural charms have long been protected by its inaccessibility. But now, like the swiftlet nests, the stirring scenery and fragile of El Nido is threatened by poverty-stricken peasants and tourism development.

The karst cliffs, the coral reefs and the forested ridges of the El Nido islands are so unique that the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) helped the Philippine government set up a special agency, called the El Nido Marine Reserve (ENMR) to see if careful tourism can be used to generate the revenue to protect the islands.

The sandy coves of El Nido are nesting grounds for endangered sea turtles, and the waters are home to the region's few remaining seacow, or dugong.

High upon the cliffs, the swiftlets are busily collecting nest material. Conservationists say the birds will only rebuild their nest five times. But the nests are being stolen almost as fast as they are put together, and the swiftlets are leaving. Rumours of an imminent ban on nest gathering is ironically fuelling a fast-ditch attempt to plunder what is left.

The WWF assistance has come to an end this year, and the government is trying to turn the ENMR into an autonomous foundation that will be supported by tourism.

With improved air services from Manila, tourist resorts

are springing up in El Nido and the government is charging a fee of ten dollars per visitor for a proposed El Nido Foundation for Sustainable Development.

Government officials argue that eco-tourism offers the best hope in the long run for weaning people away from environmentally destructive activities, by offering alternative employment to the locals.

But conservationists are wary of mass tourism once more airports are built, and the road to the Palawan provincial capital of Puerto Princesa is improved.

Activists began worrying when three islands in the area were acquired by one of the Philippines' most prominent business clans, which promptly drew up plans to turn one of the coves into a

sports complex.

But the ENMR has restricted building of hotels on the three islands and a fourth one where a small fishing village already exists. Activists now hope the ENMR's recommendation for a moratorium on the issuance of environmental clearance certificates (ECC) will be accepted by the government in Manila.

But the ENMR is fast running out of money, and influential businessmen could still try to circumvent laws to build large resorts before environmental assessment is done and a master plan is drawn up.

According to current plans, the foundation will call for greater participation from the local community in environmental protection and aim for

more funding from other donors.

Nilda Baling, head of the five-year-old ENMR, is first to admit that the agency needs to tap the community more as a resource, and to cooperate more closely with local groups.

But she makes no apologies for ENMR's focus in the past on 'police work,' reporting with pride that her staff has impounded 50 illegal fishing boats since the agency was set up.

"They do not mind paying the fines," she says. "But what really hurts them is having the boats impounded until their cases were decided in court."

And by allowing sustenance fishing with hook and line only to local fisherfolk, the ENMR was able to coax the residents to stop using dynamite and cyanide which they had relied on before to increase the catch. Reports Baling: "Fish yields started increasing in our very second year of operations."

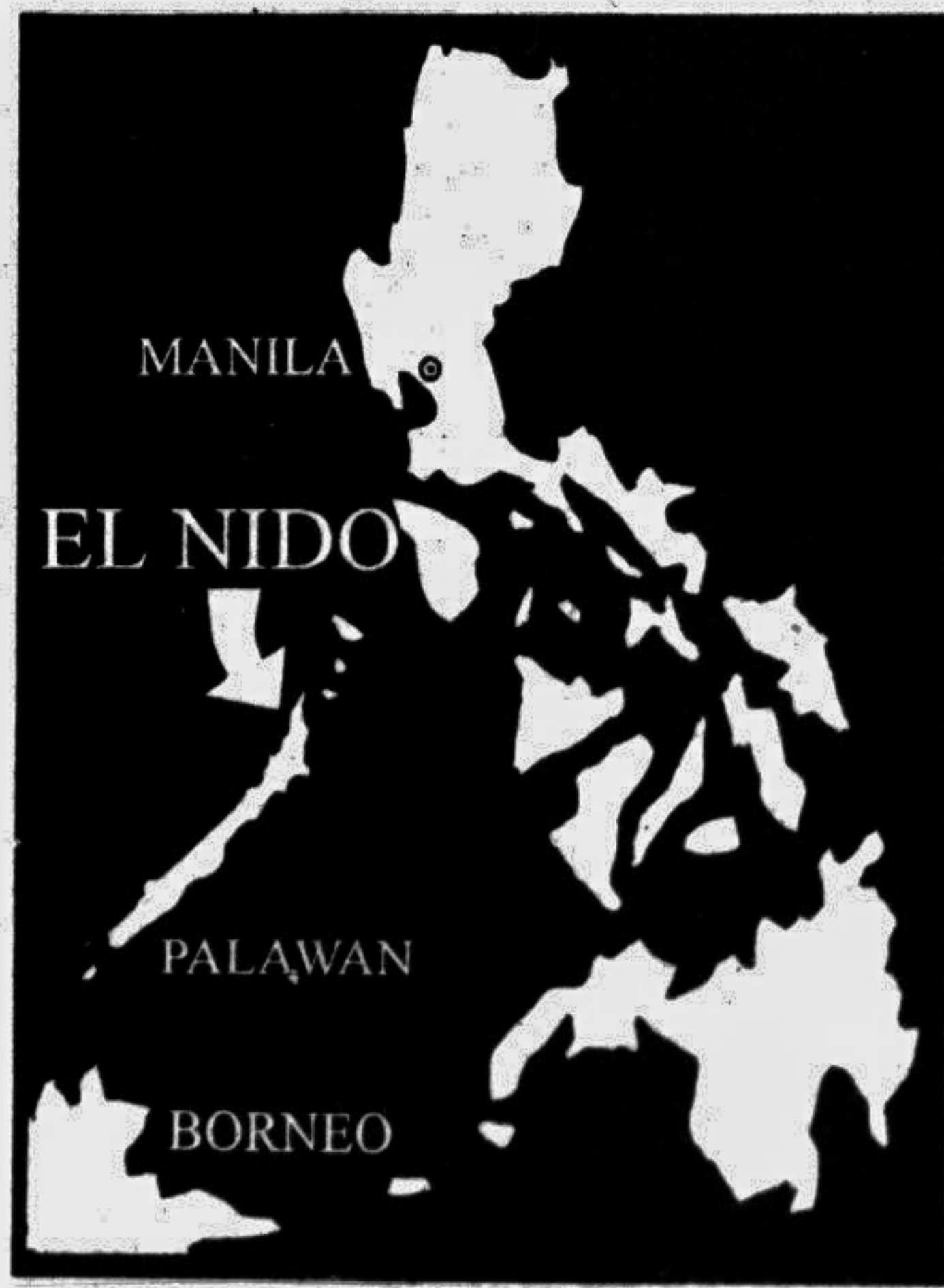
But there has been less enthusiasm for other ENMR-imposed restrictions that interfere with traditional livelihoods.

The reserve's boundaries cover the surrounding watershed on the main island of Palawan along with 19 islands in the Bay, but ENMR has been unable to stop shifting cultivation on the slopes above the waters.

Many are landless farmers who have migrated from denuded Philippine islands to the east. They are slashing and burning the last remaining rainforests on the mountain spine that runs down the narrow island of Palawan. Illegal loggers are also at work deep inside the forests.

The result: increased soil erosion that is sifting the bays, smothering the reefs and hurting the underwater seagrass meadows where the dugongs graze.

Says Baling, The peasants are so poor they cannot even pay the 200 peso (US\$7) fine if they are caught.



Threatened Nests

Travel Briefs

EAGA moves for air agreement: Members of the East Asian Growth Area (EAGA) are finalising an air agreement that would allow unhampered entry of flag carriers to destinations in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, a Philippine aviation official said.

Civil Aviation Board executive director Sylvestre Pascual said the CAB approved a draft memorandum of understanding allowing unlimited access of the countries carriers to four Philippine destinations. — *BD Shipping Times*

Plan to launch joint service: American President Lines Ltd (APL), Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd (MOL), Noddloyd Lines B.V. (NLL) and Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL) said they plan to launch a shared all-water service between Asia and the US East Coast, via Panama, in late March of this year. The four carrier alliance also signed an agreement to jointly use an ocean container terminal located in Colon, on the Atlantic coast of Panama, as a port of call in the all-water service and as a relay point for carriers. — *BD Shipping Times*

Evergreen upgrades service: Evergreen is upgrading its presence in the Pacific with a new direct service between Singapore/Hong Kong and the North American west coast. It offers weekly departures between Singapore, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Keelung and Singapore.

Evergreen will be operating four strings in this trade once the new service is started. — *BD Shipping Times*

Emirates expands range of desert expedition: Arabian Adventures, Destination Management Company of the Emirates, has expanded its range of desert expeditions with the introduction of two new programmes this season.

These are in the desert and the UAE Grand Canyons expedition, which will offer tourists more variety to soft adventure holidays in Dubai. — *Tourism International*

APC in INFO tech lists: American President Companies (NYSE: APS) has been named as the only ocean and intermodal transportation firm in Computer World Magazine's 1994 "Premier 100" list which recognizes the 100 most effective corporate users of information technology.

The APC group provides container transportation and related services in North America. — *BD Shipping Times*

Air Canada in Profit Zone: A net profit of CAD 129 million has brought Air Canada back in the profit zone after four years of losses.

We're pleased with this profit, but also realistic, said Hollis L. Harris, Chairman, President and CEO. He listed some challenges ahead — the Canada/USA open sky pact, developing profitable new inter continental routes and facing increased competition, while continuing to operate at a profit to fund a billion dollar fleet renewal. — *BD Shipping Times*

Emirates expands leisure department: Emirates, the international airline of the UAE, has expanded its leisure department in 1993, which now comprises Emirates Holidays, the leisure management division and Arabian Adventures, the Destination Management Company.

Emirates Holidays, the only wholesale tour operator in the Gulf and Middle East, has introduced, the regions first range of comprehensive outbound vacation programmes complete with all ground and tour arrangements. — *Holiday Aviator*

SIA to buy 4 learjet planes: Singapore Airlines (SIA) which operates a fleet of four specially configured learjet 31 aircraft for pilot training has placed an order with the Learjet Corp. of Wichita for two learjet 31, and four learjet 45 aircrafts. The total value of the contract is US\$ 56 million, including cost of spares.

The two Learjet 31 Aircraft, scheduled for delivery in December this year, will replace two of the existing learjets, as the latter have been heavily utilized since the introduction in late 1991. The four learjet 45 aircraft will replace the learjet 31 fleet in the last quarter of 1997. — *BD Shipping Times*

PIA operates Special Air Safari: The 12th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, hosted by the Ministry of Education, was held in Islamabad. Ministers, secretaries and other VIPs from over 40 Commonwealth Nations participated in the conference.

PIA arranged a special charter flight of Air Safari for the 50 member group. — *Top Flight*

Air Macao to sue Eastern Express: A budding joint venture airlines, Air Macao, will sue Hongkong's Eastern Express newspaper over a report that the Macao government is investigating it on allegations of corruption, the Portuguese news agency, Lusa reported recently.

Deputy high commissioner against corruption, Julio Pereira denied corruption charges are being brought and said his comments to the paper had been "completely misrepresented." — *BD Shipping Times*

BA to overhaul onboard service: British Airways (BA) is planning to introduce improved onboard service within a year in response to its latest business travellers survey.

The survey, which pulled 200 of BA's most loyal and frequent travellers, showed that passengers valued most of all privacy and a work station to plug in laptop computers. — *Holiday Aviator*

Demand for Ctg-Colombo feeder service: Garment exporters in Chittagong recently called upon the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) to introduce feeder services between Chittagong and Colombo via Mongla to facilitate smooth export of garments to different countries.

The exporters hope that by operating feeder services between Chittagong and Colombo via Mongla, BSC will be able to earn a lot of foreign exchange which will also benefit the garment exporters. — *BD Shipping Times*

Air India's int'l flights drop: India's two staterun airlines will have priority over foreign airlines as the government takes up dozens of requests for permission to increase flights to India. Air India's share of flights to and from India dropped to 20 per cent from 33 per cent over the past year. — *BD Shipping Times*

Airlines plan global air freight pool: Twelve airlines, including four largest US carriers, are pushing ahead with an initiative to create a worldwide air freight container and pallet pool.

For the airlines, a pool offers potential financial and operational benefits, reducing equipment shortages throughout the industry. The pool as envisioned by the organisers is likely to have at least 12 depots worldwide. — *Tourism International*

TWA to serve South Africa: Trans World Airlines (TWA) has filed an application with US Department of Transportation for rights to South Africa. It plans to begin service three times a week with a B 747 between New York JFK and Johannesburg via Ilhao do Sal (Cape Verde Islands) on October 1.

TWA said its application is in response to the availability of six frequencies between the US and South Africa, which rose when USA Africa Airways ceased operations. — *BD Shipping Times*

Inter Press Service.