

Documentary

The Sunderbans: a bounteous treasure island

A premiere on the Sunderbans and life in and around it

TAWFIQUE ALI

World's largest mangrove forest, the Sunderbans is located in the estuary of the Ganges river in the southwest of Bangladesh and spanning to the southeastern portion of the state of West Bengal in India.

It encompasses southern parts of Satkhira, Khulna and Patuakhali districts holding a majestic look by the Bay of Bengal. A vibrant magnificence of this forest surpasses one's imagination. In recognition of its vastness of biotic and eco-diversity, it has of late been declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. A bounteous resourcefulness has given this forest a role of treasure island in the country's national economy.

Hundreds of species of birds and animals have found their natural abode here. The Royal Bengal Tigers, as their name suggests with their majestic look and enormous strength, assume a representative position in the Sunderbans. It is they who are considered the flag bearers of Bangladesh in the world's notable zoos.

The Sunderbans has earned fame as the natural habitat for the Royal Bengal Tigers. Diverse species of wildlife get sustenance in the thick forest and canopied waterways in the Sunderbans. It offers a large-scale employment opportunities

with its multifarious resources. This forest is the single largest source of the forest products in the country.

But the suicidal fact is that the country's lone mangrove forest suffers a lethal blow of deforestation and sheer negligence towards eco-friendly management. In absence of proper conservation management, its very existence and sustenance has already been threatened. Mindless damage done to ecosystem has meanwhile resulted in injurious aftermath causing repulsive environmental disaster. Members of the civil society, several bodies and non-governmental organisations are presently showing their concern over the deforestation and forest mismanagement.

A documentary film, titled "Sunderbaner Lokaloye Deen Raatri" has of late been made by Dharitri Production a communication and media consultants agency. Based on the bounteousness of the forest and the lives of people who live in and around Sunderbans and make a living extracting the forest resources, the documentary was premiered on January 27 in the late afternoon at the British Council Auditorium, Dhaka.

The film is precisely a documentation of tales of the people living in the areas surrounding the Sunderbans. It recounts with much compassion tale of their struggling

lives against the adverse nature. It portrays how marginalised these people are and how enterprising

with offerings for the god Krishna and long for spiritual wellbeing and purgation. They perform with due so-

'Sundari' commonly found in this forest.

The documentary mainly projects three kinds of professional people who live in and around the Sunderbans and make use of the forest resources. They are 'bawali' or wood cutter; fishermen who fish in the forest's interior waterways and nearby sea-shore; and third the 'mowal' or honey collectors who collect honey from the deep jungle at the risk of own life. The film is mostly an exposure of the fishing season, which coincides with the Dublar Char Mela the Hindu Krishna Lila Puja held and celebrated on one of the fishing islands in the Sunderbans; the other fishing which is unique in the world; the timber cutting and the famous Sunderbans honey collections. It covers a seasonal cycle beginning with October and ending in July, with the advent of the monsoon.

Nearly fifty thousand people extract resource from this forest every day, according to the director and producer of the film Razia Quadir.

The Sunderbans is unique in a number of different ways. About five centuries ago the forest was recognized as an important resource base and actual scientific management of the forest was initiated over one hundred and twenty years back. This is

considered as a viable resource base in Asia, Africa and Tropical Latin America. The forest is very rich in bi-

Instead, members of the civil society had to raise a voice against govern-



The fishermen with their boats in a casual mood at the shore.

they are in undertaking the challenges posed the nature. Their livelihood comes out of a tag of war with nature. These abjectly poor people depend on the forest, its waterways and offshore sea. This is where they toil in searching for their living and at the same time here they meet their tragic end of life being devoured by ferocious man-eaters like tiger. Alongside this dismal aspect of life they have a glimpse of joy on some occasion like Raash Purnima in this nearby locality of the Sunderbans. During this Hindu religious occasion the surrounding villages wear a festive look and the inhabitants wake up with jubilation and mirth. Believers from far off regions come and gather at the 'Dublar Chaar'

lemnity, 'Ganga Snan' or bathing in the holy water of the Ganges. "Raash Mela" a fair on the occasion, draw people to cheer and enjoy themselves forgetting at least momentarily the hardships of their lives.

It is learnt from the history that five hundred years back from now, Emperor Shah Suja first imposed tax on the Sunderbans. Since then revenue has been being collected from the Sunderbans for the public treasury. Its stretches out about 2500 square miles. This forest provides many industries with raw materials. Khulna Newspaper Mills, lone such mill in the country, is supplied with the kind of tree called 'Gaoa' as its raw materials. The Sunderbans has been named after a tree called



Launching a voyage to extract sea treasure.

otic diversity since it sustains numerous species of plants, fishes, birds, reptiles and mammals in addition to harbouring a threatened and endangered wildlife.

This film is a documentary narrative on the life in the Sunderbans focusing precisely upon the fact that an over-extraction is posing threats to the forest's fragile ecosystem. The documentary also, at the same time, voices a fervent call to conserve this World Heritage Site.

It is regrettable that concerned state run department could not have undertaken an effective measure so

ment drive to spoil existing forestation in the capital city.

The documentary is an outcome of an apt initiative in wake of reckless deforestation jeopardising the ecological balance and destroying animal's natural habitat a process that in the long run causes irreparable hazard to human environment.

To talk about other aspects of the film, it is highly rich in artistic value in depicting day-to-day life of the fishermen and other working class people purely in its natural state. A recount of their being trapped in a toilsome struggle for existence of life eloquently appeal to the viewers. Some technical flaws, that the film suffers from, require further editing, Razia Quadir admits.

Plenty of reasons are there to convince the viewers that the documentary would make a significant point to raise mass awareness aimed at wildlife conservation with its diversity.



A usual scene of collecting Gol Pata (Palm leaves) from the Sunderbans. It's a profession that thousands of people engaged in from the adjacent areas of the forest.



A serene magnificence of the Sunderbans. Every significant in the sense that even today mangroves are not con-

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY

BTV

3:20 Open University
4:00 Khabar 4:05 Facts on Health Care 4:20

Dinguli 12:00 A Special Programme on Jahir Raihan 1:15 Jiboner Game 2:00 Anuvobe Anukhane 2:50 I Focus

8:30 Pother Paychali 9:00 Khela 10:00 BTV News 10:25 Chitrogeeti 11:00 Ekushey Late Night News

World News 12:30 World Report 1:00 World News 1:30 World Sport 2:00

2:00 World News 2:30 Q&A News 3:00 World News Europe 3:30 CNN

Para) 10:30 Bollywood News 11:00 Pushpanjali (Sanjay Khan, Nalini)

Simpsons 4:30 Home Improvement 5:00 Star News Asia 5:30 Friends

Wins 6:00 I Dare You 7:00 VIP II/Quick and the Dead 8:00 Movie: Circuitry Man 10:00 Charlie's Angels III/ Angels on Ice Pt 11 11:00 VIP II/Quick and the Dead 12:00 Movie: Circuitry Man 2:00 Dark Skies/Both Sides Now 3:00 Silk Stalkings VI/Partners in Crime

Adventures 2:00 Oceans of Mystery 2:30 Discover Magazine 3:00 The Quest

10:30 Dharam Aur Kancon (Dharmendra, Jaya Prada)



Pather Pachali (Last episode) at 8.30 pm

Cartoon: Casper 4:40 Shaymol Bangla 5:20 Prajanam Sangram 5:45 Facts on Nutrition 6:00 Khabar 6:10 Bidhi-Bidhan 6:35 Programmes of Chittagong Centre 7:00 Geet Bitan 7:25 Nupur Nikkan 8:00 News in Bangla 8:20 Drama serial: Juddha Jayar Galpa 9:00 Film show: Young Hercules 9:30 Drama serial Baishakhi Jhar 10:00 News at Ten 10:20 Talk show

3:00 Bangla Cinema: Beder Meya 6:00 Reciting from Holy Quran 6:10 I Music 6:40 Addar Table 7:15 Samoyer Muke 7:50 Akattorer Dinguli 8:00 Nilajona 9:15 Abng Syd. Haque 10:00 Megazine : Sayya 10:50 I Focus 11:00 Bangla Cinema: Basona

Ekushey TV 12:00 Ekushey News



Drama Khela on Ekushey TV at 9 pm

Mithaskria 11:30 Khabar/ The News 11:45 Closing

CHANNEL-i

6:15 Khathai Khathai 6:50 Akattorer Dinguli 7:00 A Special Programme on Jahir Raihan 8:00 Din Protidin 8:25 Jiboner Game 9:00 Anuvobe Anukhane 10:00 Reciting from Holy Quran 10:10 Special Programme 10:40 Addar Table 11:15 Khathai Khathai 11:50 Akattorer

Headlines 12:05 Aker Potrikay 12:15 Bangla Movie: Sakkyat 2:40 Drishti 3:00 Ekushey News Headlines 3:05 Drama Series: Choto Choto Dheu 3:30 Shampa Rezar Boithok 4:00 Bauliana 4:30 Expedition to the Animal Kingdom 5:00 Circus 5:30 Drishti 5:50 Aker Potrikay 6:00 Ekushey News Headlines 6:05 Classic Cartoons 6:30 Life on the Land 7:00 Bolte Chai 7:30 Ekushey News 8:00 Drama Serial: Bismriti

CNN

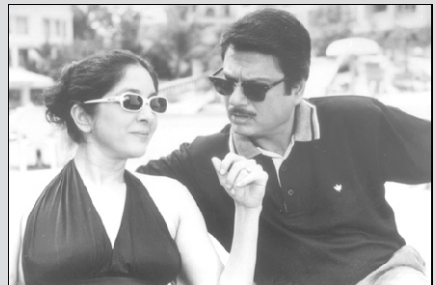
4:00 CNN This Morning 4:30 Asia Business Morning 5:00 CNN This Morning 5:30 Asia Business Morning 6:00 CNN This Morning 6:15 Asia Business Morning 6:30 Asian Edition 6:45 Asia Business Morning 7:00 CNN This Morning 7:30 Moneyline 8:00 Larry King Live 9:00 World News 9:30 World Sport 10:00 World News 10:30 Showbiz Today 11:00 World News 11:30 Q&A (replay) 12:00



Chitra Geeti on Ekushey TV at 10.25 pm

World News 2:30 Insight 3:00 Larry King Live (replay) 4:00 World News 4:30 Biz Asia 5:00 Asia Tonight 5:30 World Sport 6:00 World News 6:15 Asian Edition 6:30 Biz Asia 7:00 World News 7:30 The Artclub 8:00 Asia Tonight 8:30 World Sport 9:00 World News

Newsroom 6:00 Tu Tu Main Main 6:30 STAR Geetmala 7:30 Hit Ya Fit 8:00 Cine Jharokha 8:30 Good Morning India 9:30 Star Morning Show 12:30 Hit



Siski on Star Plus at 9 pm

9:30 Business Unusual 10:00 World News 10:30 Biz Asia 11:00 World News 11:30 Q&A South Asia 12:00 World News 1:00 CNN Hotspots 1:30 World Business Today

Ya Fit 1:00 TSN 1:30 Small Wonder 2:00 Meri Saheli 2:30 Saans 3:00 Shagun 3:30 Gharwali Uparwali 4:00 Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi 4:30 Cine Jharokha 5:00



Bolte Chai on Ekushey TV at 7 pm



Always Outnumbered on HBO at 10 pm Always Outnumbered is based on the bestselling book by Walter Mosley. The movie is a wonderful story of hope and overcoming despair. Laurence Fishburne puts in a towering and moving performance and also watch out for crooner Natalie Cole in a solid supporting role. Starring: Laurence Fishburne, Bill Cobbs, Natalie Cole



Maggie Winters on star World at 6.30 pm

STAR GOLD

8:30 Bollywood News 9:00 Mohabbat Zindagi Hai (Dharmendra, Rajashree) 10:00 Geet Bahar 12:30 Jugnu (Dharmendra, Hema Malini) 3:30 Bollywood News 4:00 Hum Farishte Nahin (Raj Babbar, Poonam, Smita Patil)



Tu Tu Main Main on Star Plus at 8 pm

Sahu) 12:30 Pushpanjali (contd...) 2:00 Geet Bahar 2:30 Hum Farishte Nahin (Raj Babbar, Poonam, Smita Patil) 5:30 Pushpanjali (Sanjay Khan, Nalini Sahu)

6:00 2 Guys A Girl, And A Pizza Place 6:30 Maggie Winters 6:55 Star News Asia (5 mins) 7:00 Ally McBeal 8:00 The Practice 9:00 Friends 9:30 Star News

STAR WORLD

6:00 Murder Call 7:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 8:00 Home Improvement 8:30 Happy Days 9:00 J.A.G. 10:00 The Pretender 11:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:00 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit 1:00 Grace Under Fire 1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 2:00 Mork & Mindy 2:30 Happy Days 3:00 Baywatch 4:00 The

7:00 Drama: Silent Justice 9:00 Comedy: Life With Mikey 10:45 Action: Air America 12:30 Action: Intent To Kill 3:00 Drama: Simon Birch 5:00 Thriller: Backdoor Justice 7:00 Action: Iron Eagle 2 9:00 Action: Running Red

HBO

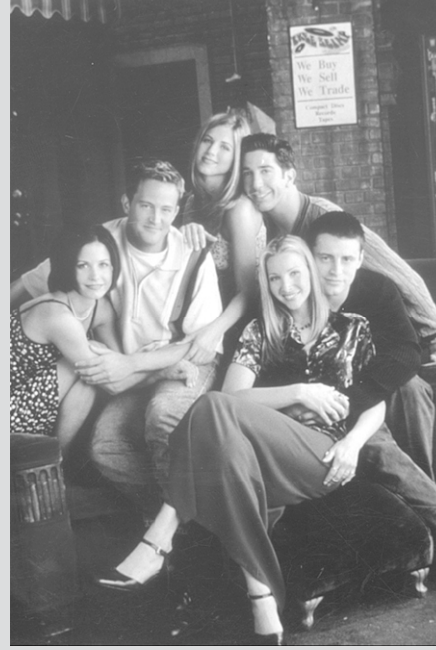
7:00 The Long Island Incident 9:00 Stormcatcher 11:00 Soccer Dog The Movie 1:00 Rush Hour 3:00 Meteorites! 4:45 The Lords Of Discipline 6:45 Strange Days 9:30 Cinema Secrets Ep 8 : Cinema Super Spies 10:00 Always Outnumbered 12:15 Twister 2:30 Meteorites! 4:15 Strange Days

AXN

6:00 Dark Skies/Both Sides Now 7:00 Heart of Courage 8:00 Cyberteam in Akhabara/Flame of Recca 9:00 Slam Dunk/Samura X 10:00 Charlie's Angels II/Angels on Ice Pt 11 11:00 Heart of Courage 12:00 Pensacola III/Officers and Gentleman 1:00 Movie: Hong Kong '97 3:00 Who Dares Wins/Cyberteam in Akhabara 4:00 Flame of Recca/Slam Dunk 5:00 Samurai X/Who Dares

DISCOVERY CHANNEL

6:30 Animal Survivors 7:00 ESPU 7:30 Outer Bounds I & II 8:00 Without Warning I 8:30 Lonely Planet VI 9:30 Beyond 2000 10:00 The Quest 10:30 Go For It! 11:30 Intimate Escapes 12:30 Wild Discovery 1:30 Medical Detectives II 2:00 Medical Detectives III 2:30 Medical Mysteries 3:30 Animal Survivors 4:00 ESPU 4:30 Outer Bounds I & II 5:00 Without Warning I 5:30 Lonely Planet I 6:30 Popular Mechanics for Kids II 7:00 Pop Sci 7:30 Wild Discovery 8:30 Blue Reef Adventures 9:00 Oceans of Mystery 9:30 Discover Magazine 10:00 The Quest 10:30 Lands of Legends 11:00 Sea Legends 11:30 Discovery Profile Series 12:30 Wild Discovery 1:30 Blue Reef



Friends on Star World at 9 pm

3:30 Lands of Legends 4:00 Sea Legends 4:30 Discovery Profile Series 5:30 Medical Mysteries

Z MGM

6:30 Benji The Hunted 9:00 Catch Me If You Can 11:30 Behind The Mask 2:00 Hard Choices 4:30 Not Since Casanova 7:00 Mad House (John Larroquette, Dennis Miller, Kirstie Alley) 9:30 Throw Momma From The Train (Danny DeVito, Billy Crystal) 11:30 Moon Struck (Cher, Nicolas Cage, Vincent Gardenia)

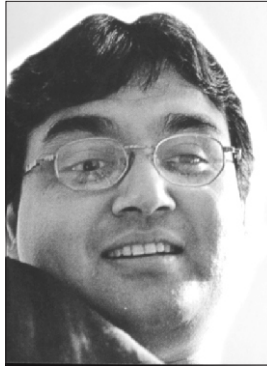
Zee Cinema

6:30 Wardaat (Mithun, Kajal) 10:30 Woh Phir Aayegi (Rajesh Khanna, Farah) 2:00 Farz (Jeetendra, Bobita) 6:30 Pukar (Amitabh, Zeenat)

X Halmark

7:00 He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe/To Save Skeletor 7:30 Wishbone/Frankenbone 8:00 Run The Wild Fields 10:00 Grand Larceny (HEN) 12:00 My Brother's Keeper 2:00 Mopatop's Shop 1:20 Pappyland/Fish Face 3:00 Open Sesame 3:30 Open Sesame 4:00 The Ice Age Cometh 4:30 Wishbone/Hot Diggety Dawg 5:00 Danger Bay 5:30 Kidnapped 9:30 The Legend Of Sleepy Hollow

RECOMMENDATIONS



Poetry Reading

A poetry reading session by Sudeep Sen and the country's emerging poets will be held at the British Council Auditorium today at 6:00pm.

Sudeep Sen's Postmarked India: New & Selected Poems (Harper Collins) was awarded the Hawthorned Fellowship (UK) and nominated for a Pushcart Prize (US).

Art Exhibition

Alka mather and Naresh Kapuria's joint show is being held at Bengal Gallery. Alka Mather is a familiar name in the Dhaka art circle. The other is being introduced to the gallery-goers through this exhibition. The show is open till February 2.

Water Colour Show

A special water colour show featuring country's seven celebrated water colour artists now being held at Shilpangan art gallery from 10 am-8pm everyday until February 4.

The participating artists are Professor Abdur Razzaque, Mostafa Manwar, Professor Qayyum Chowdhury, Professor Hashem Khan, Professor Rafiqun Nabi, Monirul Islam (Spain) and Professor Hamiduzzaman Khan.

Exhibition

Nurul Amin's 1st solo exhibition of studio pottery and glaze painting is going on at the Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Art, University of Dhaka.

The exhibition will remain open everyday from 10am to 8pm till February 3.