

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 repetitive 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

up with jubilation and mirth. Believers from far off regions come

rials. 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 '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 everyday, according to the director and producer of the film Razia Quadir.

The Sunderbans is unique in a

nized as an important resource base and actual scientific management of the forest was initiated over

time, voices a fervent call to conserve this World Heritage Site.

It is regrettable that concerned



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

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

and gather at the 'Dublar Chaar' with offerings for the god Krishna and people are and how enterprising they are in undertaking the challenges posed the nature. They perform with due solemnity, '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 are stretches out about 2500 square miles. This forest provides many industries with raw mate-



Launching a voyage to extract sea treasure.

one hundred and twenty fears back. This is very significant in the sense that even today mangroves are not considered as a viable resource base in Asia, Africa and Tropical Latin America. The forest is very rich in biotic 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

state run department could not have undertaken an effective measure so far in view of creating mass awareness regarding forest conservation. Instead, members of the civil society had to raise a voice against government 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 toil-some 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.

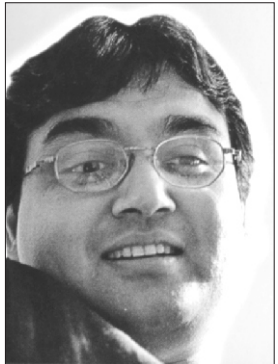


A serene magnificence of the Sunderbans.

number of different ways. About five centuries ago the forest was recog-

to the forest's fragile ecosystem. The documentary also, at the same

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 6:00p.m.

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.

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY

BTV

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



Pather Pachali (Last episode) at 8.30 pm

Cartoon: Casper 4:40
Shaymol Bangla 5:20
Prajnam 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
Nikkam 8:00 News In
Bangla 8:20 Drama
serial: Juddha Jayer
Galpa 9:00 Film show:
Young Hercules 9:30
Drama serial Baishakhi
Jhar 10:00 News at Ten
10:20 Talk show

Table 11:15 Khatthai
Khatthai 11:50 Akattorer
Dinguli 12:00 A Special
Programme on Jahir
Raihan 1:15 Jiboner

7:00 Bolte Chai 7:30
Ekushey News 8:00
Drama Serial: Bismriti
8:30 Pother Paychali
9:00 Khela 10:00 BTV
News 10:25 Chitrogeeti
11:00 Ekushey Late
Night News

BBC WORLD

6:00 BBC News 6:30
World Business Report
7:00 BBC News 7:30
Asia Today/Asia
Business Report 8:00
BBC News 8:30 Asia
Today/World Business
Report 9:00 BBC News
9:30 Asia Today/Asia
Business Report 10:00
BBC News 10:30
Hardtalk 11:00 BBC
News 11:30 Talking
Movies 12:00 BBC News
12:30 Hospital 1:00 BBC
News 1:30 Hardtalk 2:00
BBC News 2:30
Reporters 3:00 BBC
News 3:30 Hardtalk 4:00
BBC News 4:30 Italian
Feast 5:00 BBC News
5:30 Reporters 6:00 BBC
News 6:30 Hospital 7:00
BBC News 7:15 World
Business Report 7:30
Click Online 8:00 BBC
News 8:30 Hardtalk 9:00
BBC News 9:30 Asia
Today 10:00 BBC News
10:30 Face to Face
11:00 BBC News 11:15
World Business Report
11:30 Holiday 12:00 BBC
News 12:30 World
Business Report 12:45
World Sport 1:00 BBC
News 1:30 Hardtalk 2:00
BBC News 2:30 Top
Gear 3:00 BBC News
3:30 World Business
Report 4:00 BBC News
4:30 Asia Business
Report/World Business
Report 5:00 BBC News
5:30 Asia Business
Report/Asia Today

World News 9:30 World
Sport 10:00 World News
10:30 Showbiz Today

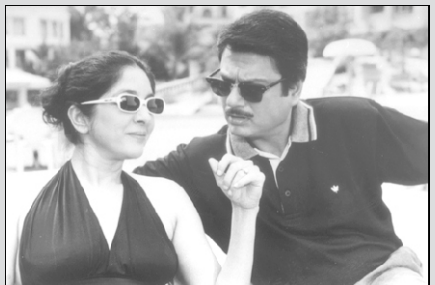
Biz Asia 11:00 World
News 11:30 Q&A South
Asia 12:00 World News



Chitra Geeti on Ekushey TV at 10.25 pm

11:00 World News 11:30
Q&A (replay) 12:00
World News 12:30 World
Report 1:00 World News
1:30 World Sport 2:00
World News 2:30 Insight
3:00 Larry King Live (re-
play) 4:00 World News
4:30 Biz Asia 5:00 Asia
Tonight 5:30 World Sport
6:00 World News 6:15

STAR PLUS



Siski on Star Plus at 9 pm

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
9:30 Business Unusual
10:00 World News 10:30

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
Ya Fit 1:00 TSN 1:30



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

Small Wonder 2:00 Meri
Saheli 2:30 Saans 3:00
Shagun 3:30 Gharwali
Upnavali 4:00 Kyunki
Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi
4:30 Cine Jharokha 5:00
Hit Ya Fit 5:30 Sewatali
Mewawala 6:00 Small
Wonder 6:30 Fox Kids-
Daily 7:30 Kahaani Ghar
Ghar Ki 8:00 Tu Tu Main
Main 8:30 Hasna Mat
9:00 Siski 9:30 Kaun
Banega Crorepati 10:30
Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki
11:00 Kyunki Saas Bhi
Kabhi Bahu Thi 11:30 Aaj
Ki Baat 12:00 Shagun
12:30 Telebrands 1:00
Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii
1:30 Star Movie Show
4:30 Kyunki Saas Bhi
Kabhi Bahu Thi 5:00
Saans 5:30 Meri Saheli



Maggie Winters on star World at 6.30 pm

Malini 3:30 Bollywood
News 4:00 Hum
Farishte Nahin (Raj

Oprah Winfrey Show
12:00 Law & Order:
Special Victims Unit 1:00



Tu Tu Main Main on Star Plus at 8 pm

Babbar, Poonam, Smita
Patil 7:00 Geet Bahar
7:30 Rang Birangi Neel
Kamal (Raj Kapoor,
Begum Para) 10:30
Bollywood News 11:00
Pushpanjali (Sanjay
Khan, Nalini Sahu)
12:30 Pushpanjali
(cont...) 2:00 Geet
Bahar 2:30 Hum
Farishte Nahin (Raj
Babbar, Poonam,
Smita Patil) 5:30
Pushpanjali (Sanjay
Khan, Nalini Sahu)

Grace Under Fire 1:30
The Bold & The Beautiful
2:00 Mork & Mindy 2:30
Happy Days 3:00
Baywatch 4:00 The
Simpsons 4:30 Home
Improvement 5:00 Star
News Asia 5:30 Friends
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 MOVIES

7:00 Drama: Silent
Justice 9:00 Comedy: Life
With Milkey 10:45 Action:
Air America 12:30 Action:
Intent To Kill 3:00 Drama:
Simon Birch 5:00 Thriller:
Backroad 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/Samurai X 10:00

Charlie's Angels I/Angels
on Ice Pt1 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
Wins 6:00 I Dare You
7:00 VIP II/Quick and the
Dead 8:00 Movie:
Circuitry Man 10:00
Charlie's Angels II/Angels
on Ice Pt1 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

Lonely Planet I 6:30
Popular Mechanics for
Kids II 7:00 Pop Sci 7:30

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



Friends on Star World at 9 pm

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

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)
10:30 Dhamam Aur
Kanoon (Dharmendra,
Jaya Prada)

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)

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

CHANNEL -i

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

TV

12:00 Ekushey News
Headlines 12:05 Ajker
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
Circus 5:30 Drishti 5:50
Ajker Potrikay 6:00
Ekushey News Headlines
6:05 Classic Cartoons
6:30 Life on the Land

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 Asia Edition 6:45
Asia Business Morning
7:00 CNN This Morning
7:30 Moneyline 8:00
Larry King Live 9:00