

Star HOLIDAY

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 22, 2007

PACKAGE TOURS

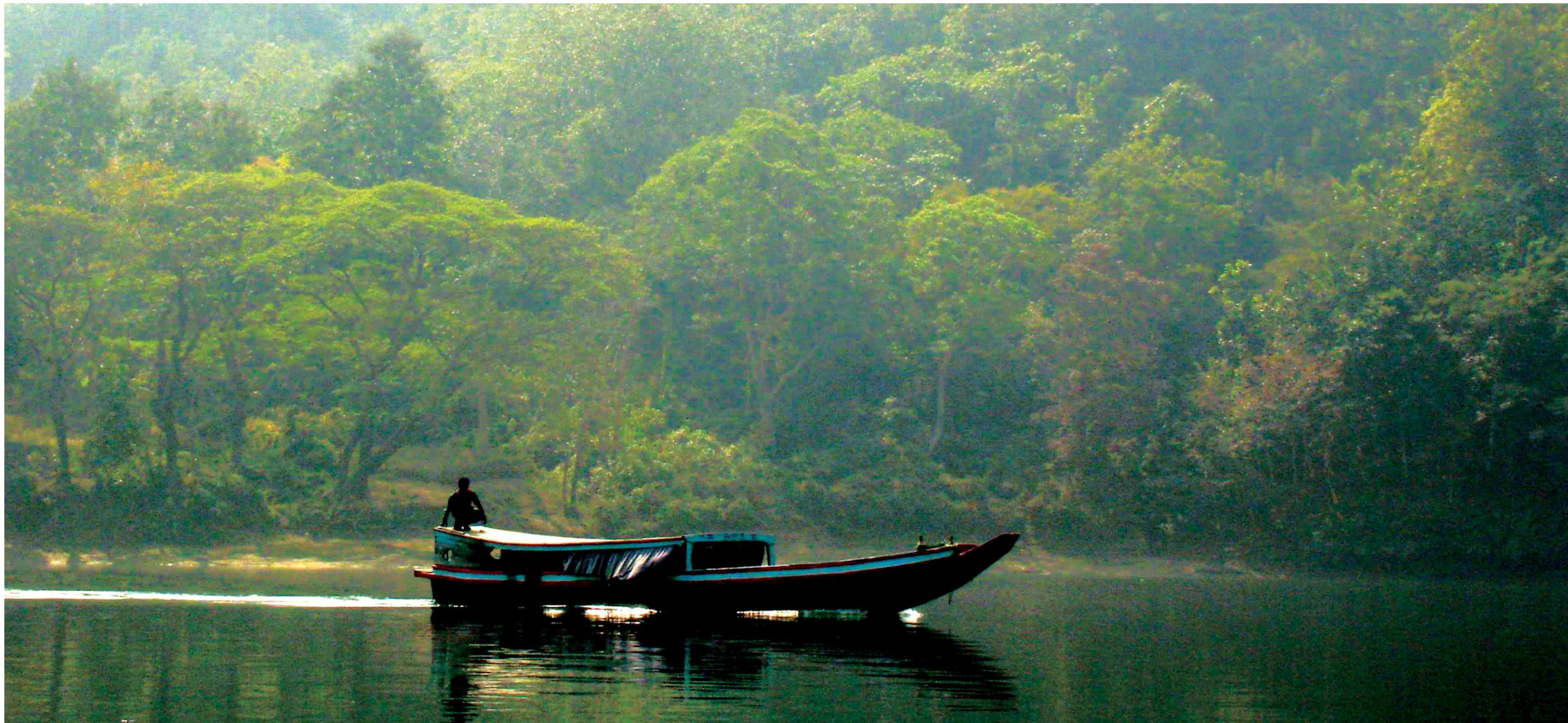


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BANGLADESH



Cruising by the 'Congo forest'

KAPTAI - 4

Hornbill's way

KHORSU broke the silence. "Ok. There's no point in going any further."

We headed back to the river and found an engine boat waiting for us. We set off down the Karnaphuli again. The sun had traveled to the west side of the sky, but it was still quite warm. The forests along the river passed by like the trolley shot of a movie. We sat quietly and enjoyed the cruise on the jade green water.

It's a lonely journey, we hardly met any boats on the way. The jungles on our left were so thick that we could as well imagine them as the Congo rainforest. The trees, tall and thick with foliage, looked like draped in spider webs as tree crawlers had entangled them all over. I imagined them as a scene through a microscope at some microorganisms like bacteria. You know how they look with lots of hairs sprouting all over their

bodies. Then the microscopic view suddenly stopped and we had huge trees canopied wide areas, not the usual teak and shals but some other kinds. Haven't we seen them in pictures from the African forests?

A landing place came into view and we anchored our boat. A narrow dirt road led all the way through a bazaar to a Buddhist temple. It was quite big with a two-storey rest house built by an international oil company for travelers. Inside the temple, candles burned in vain to fight darkness. In front of Buddha's statue, we found two men kneeling down, praying with closed eyes and hands put together. The monks in flowing yellow dresses sat cross-legged and prayed. A cat in yellow and white stripes lazily watched the worshippers with no interest.

We cooled ourselves off in the shade of the temple and watched the two Buddhist beggars sitting across the yard and reading scriptures in high speed. Their empty aluminum pots showed alms are not easy to come this way.

We set off again as the sun traveled further to the west. A cool effect was now spreading across the Karnaphuli. The lonely fishermen were pulling up fishing lines for the last time of the day.

We noticed a strange mound here. A big outcrop in slices like a bread cut into pieces. We moored our boat and got on the hard and rough rock. The formation was quite interesting -- the rock was created in several layers. Beyond it was a deep creek looking like a placid swimming pool. We noticed big fishes jumping out of water. We wanted to take a dip there, but postponed it on second

thought -- the water must be really cold. Next time, we thought.

The sun was now gone over the hills, only a crimson reflection of the sky played on the water. The trees on the banks looked mysterious in the gathering dusk. Suddenly, two huge greater cormorants came flying our way, their bellies almost touching the water. They flew past us, we could feel a whoosh of air from their flapping wings on our face.

We watched those wonderful creatures until they vanished in the bend in the distant darkness.

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Story : INAM AHMED
Photo : INAM, KHASRU, TOWFIK, MINTU
Courtesy : Forest Department

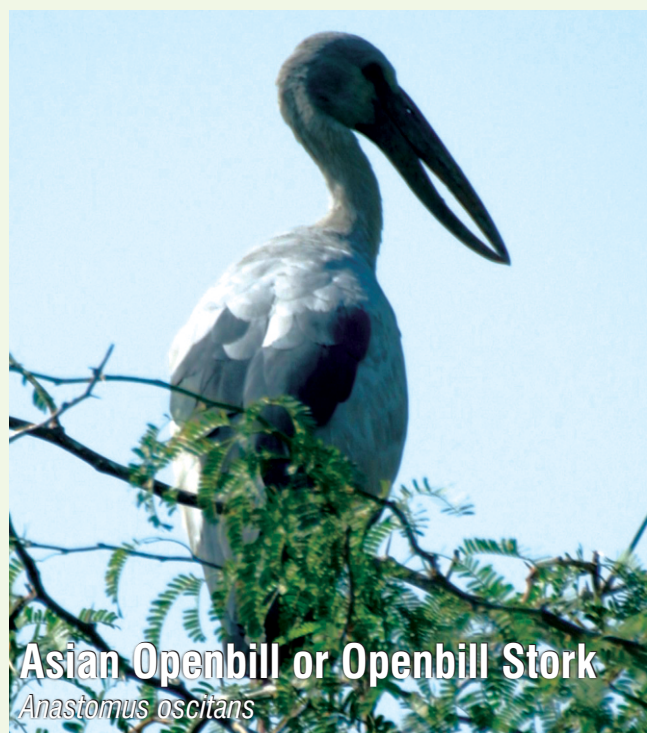


The monk



Enjoying the rock

BIRD WATCHING WITH DR REZA HAN

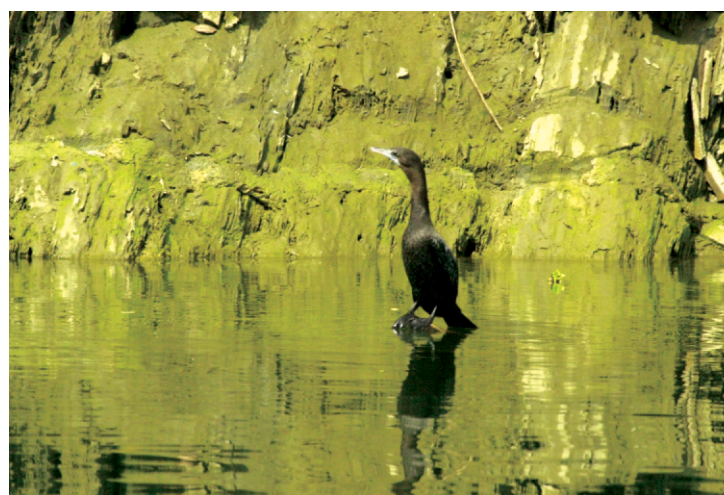


Asian Openbill or Openbill Stork
Anastomus oscitans

ONE of the smaller storks with white or grey-white body, black flight feathers and tail, and pinkish legs. Heavy bill is dull coloured with an open central or double concave gap from the centre to the tip of the bill. It is still not uncommon in larger wetlands, in the Kaptai Lake and the Soondarban. Smaller populations live the countryside also e.g., some living in a mixed species heronry near Kaliakoir, Dhaka, Pochamaria near Puthia, under Rajshahi District, etc. Some populations are resident when most others are migratory. Becoming rare. The Bengali name indicates that the bird eats snails by breaking open their shells.
Actual size ± 68 cm with ± 20 cm long bill



Sedimentary rock along the bank of the Karnaphuli



A watchful Little cormorant



Quite flowing the Karnaphuli



Inside view of Chitmurong monastery