

# Star WOLIDAY

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 9, 2007

**PACKAGE TOURS**

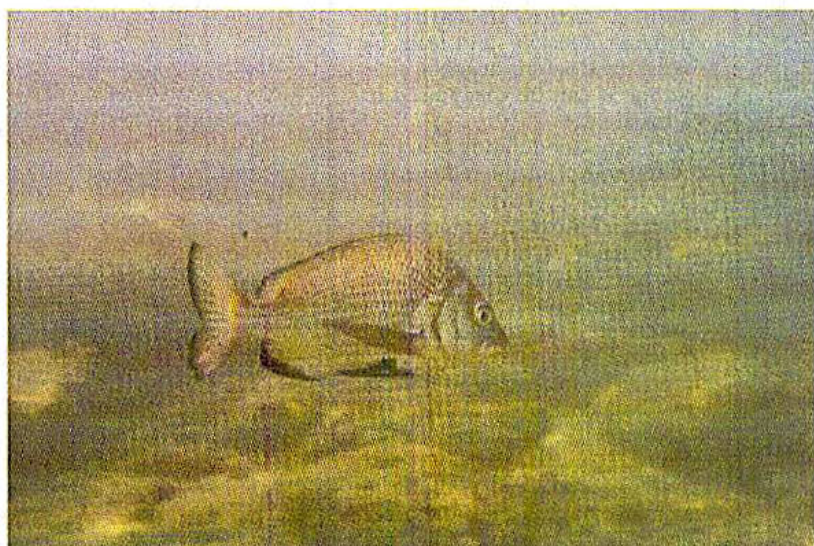
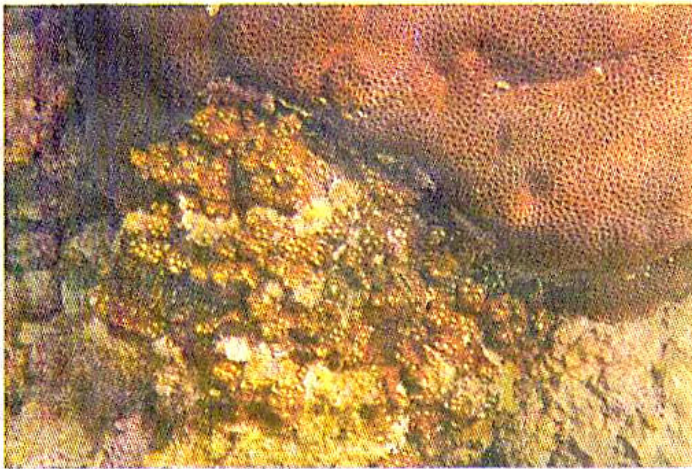


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**BANGLADESH**



## An underwater wonder

**I**T all started with a dream of discovering the underwater world.

Back in 2002, met Quazi Hamidul Haque, a veteran scuba diver living in Dhaka. That time I was dying to do an underwater expedition in The Bay of Bengal. I thought St. Martin's Island could be an alternative way to start with. We needed a lot of preparations as we did not have any experience.

We went through some diving trip logs and "The Sea Hunters" TV serial and came to know that it was not as easy to swim underwater. We formed a group and started training ourselves at the Dhaka University swimming pool.

Finally on September 2004, a dozen of adventure lovers reached the white sand after a six-month training. We had tents, cooking stuffs, dive tanks, fins, snorkels, BC (buoyancy compensator), raft and many more. We logged into the Oceanic Scuba Diving hut, a company operated by one of our friends who stated providing commercial diving for beach goers in a limited scale. We called it "the base camp".

We hired a boat for roaming around the shore for selecting a perfect location and established another camp site at the south tip of Bangladesh, "CheraDeep". Anyone would love to be there as it is the best part of the entire Saint Martin's Island. It is calm and clean. Tourists can easily

It was sunny day which was an added advantage as fishes were looking like glittering gems and colonies of corals were looking like blooming buds! We had seen many brain corals in nonbearing routes. These corals are called 'Sea Flowers' and are found in almost all the oceans



see the seabed from the boat -- shades of green, dark red, brown and other rioting colors.

We started rowing our raft in the morning, marked the spot with a dive flag and took a reconnaissance dive. It was a wonderful world down there! It was almost like a treasure island.

with warm water. In a favorable condition, they live for at least 200 years. These corals get their name from the grooves and channels on their surfaces that look like the folds of the human brain.

Another type of coral that caught our attention looked more like hives.

These are commonly known as 'Honey Comb' coral or 'Tabulate' coral. They almost always form colonies of individual hexagonal cells known as corallites defined by a skeleton of calcite, similar in appearance to a honeycomb. Adjacent cells are joined by small pores. Their distinguished feature is their well-developed horizontal internal partitions within each cell, but reduced or absent vertical internal partitions.

There were many fishes with bright colors and beautiful shapes in different lagoons of north eastern part of Saint Martin's Island. It was easy to get very close to them.

We saw many dead corals in the shallow water. The reason was anchorage system of local boats. And the habit of collecting corals of tourist is another danger that has been destroying the underwater beauty.

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