city for tourists along with another statue made out of silver, this time featuring a man with a old fashioned European hat inviting people to visit his restaurant. Under the gate of the *Michalska veza* (Saint Michael's) tower, I tried to see the icons painted on the ceiling and suddenly found myself lying on the ground exactly on the bronze circle where distances and directions to major European capitals were indicated. The zero point was covered in fact by a layer of ice, a frequent phenomenon for the country during the winter-time which is what made it extremely slippery.

I started to move more cautiously, and saw a medieval passage divided into two parts. I choose the small one, almost empty in comparison to the big one, overcrowded with people, through which I wanted to make my way to the other district of Bratislava. Suddenly, a strong hand stopped me: it was a nice but rather strict looking woman in a formal dress. "Don't take the small passage, Madame," she said, "Go through the large one". Seeing my hesitation, the lady who turned out to be a professor explained that in the middle of 18th century, after not passing his exams, a student of then the first Slovak University, hang himself in this tunnel. Since then, all students and teachers avoided the place, considering it to be bad luck.

The lady accompanied me and took my pictures in front of both the splendid and oldest town bridge and St Micael statue. She then offered to show me something interesting. We entered the secondary school which she was working for and she introduced me to the students of her class. Overwhelmed by a familiar smell, I suddenly felt like I was back in Bangladesh because these children were preparing waxed batiks for painting. I came closer to a girl who was finishing a painting showing a fragment of the undersea life with a round blue-yellow fish in the centre of her composition. I asked the girl why the fish did not smile. The student did not respond immediately but after some reflection said that it was her painting and the fish was not supposed to smile. I did not argue but proposed to buy her work provided that the fish smiled. I paid money and left this school situated in the wing of a historical monastery constructed in 13th century, serving now as the National library and Headquarters to several international organisations. The next morning, a messenger brought the picture in my room. The fish was as sad as I saw it the day before without a hint of a smile. I laughed and concluded that I was dealing with a real painter.

The next day, it was sunny and Bratislava proudly demonstrated the rainbow of its medieval roofs that finally got rid of the snow and ice as if showing their renewed hope for a peaceful life. The taxi took us to the airport where I wished all the best to this old-young nation who has enough potential to make life prosperous. ■

