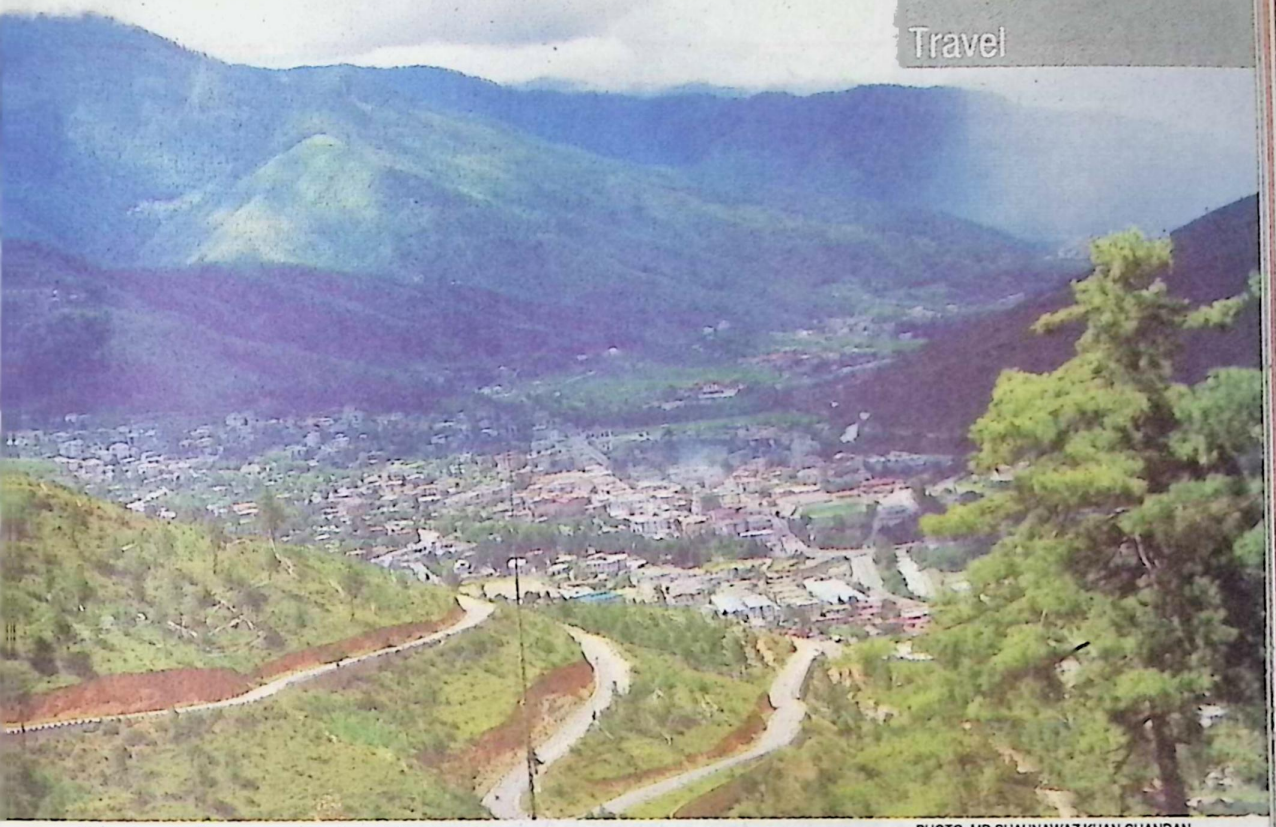


Thimphu city from a mountain peak.

PHOTO: MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The Last Shangri-La

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The essence of Himalaya and the charming Tibetan architecture have made Paro International airport more appealing than any other cosmopolitan airports of the world. While catching the scenic beauties, it took only a while to forget the tension of unusual manoeuvres that the pilot had to make to land on the challenging mountainous strip of the runway, sandwiched between two hills. The officials of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature received us with typical Bhutanese courtesy that has made this place a home of perfect gentleness. We, the two Bangladeshi participants started for Thimphu to attend the 8th Regional Meet of South Asia Youth Environment Network.

Traversing along the steep and curved highway through the Himalayan valley anyone would be stirred by its solemn and divine beauty. This ancient pathway is reminiscent of antique journeys taken by monks and Silk Route travellers. The whirling resonance of the fierce Wang Chu River and the chirpings of wild birds behind the pine and oak forests add a special serenity to any journey that you might take along this beautiful river. Dawa, our experienced Bhutanese-Tibetan driver covered this challenging route in only three hours. We reached our hotel but the word "hotel" is not pertinent to express the beauty of this quaint building situated in the lap of a cloud covered mountain and beside the Stream of the Wang Chu. The scenic beauty of its terrace firming along the mountain floor, the humble cottages of farmers, an ancient gumpha and the lush greenery and the mountain inflorescences gave us a new life after day long seminars and workshops. The location of the hotel was at the outskirt of the Thimphu city.

During and after the conference (23rd-26th July) we managed to exploit the beauties of Bhutan. At first we didn't miss the opportunity to visit the majestic Tashichoo Dzong. Dzong is a very unique type of Bhutanese architecture used simultaneously as the fort, administrative building and monastery. As the traditional seat of the Bhutanese civil government, this huge complex has magnificent temples, monasteries and government buildings.