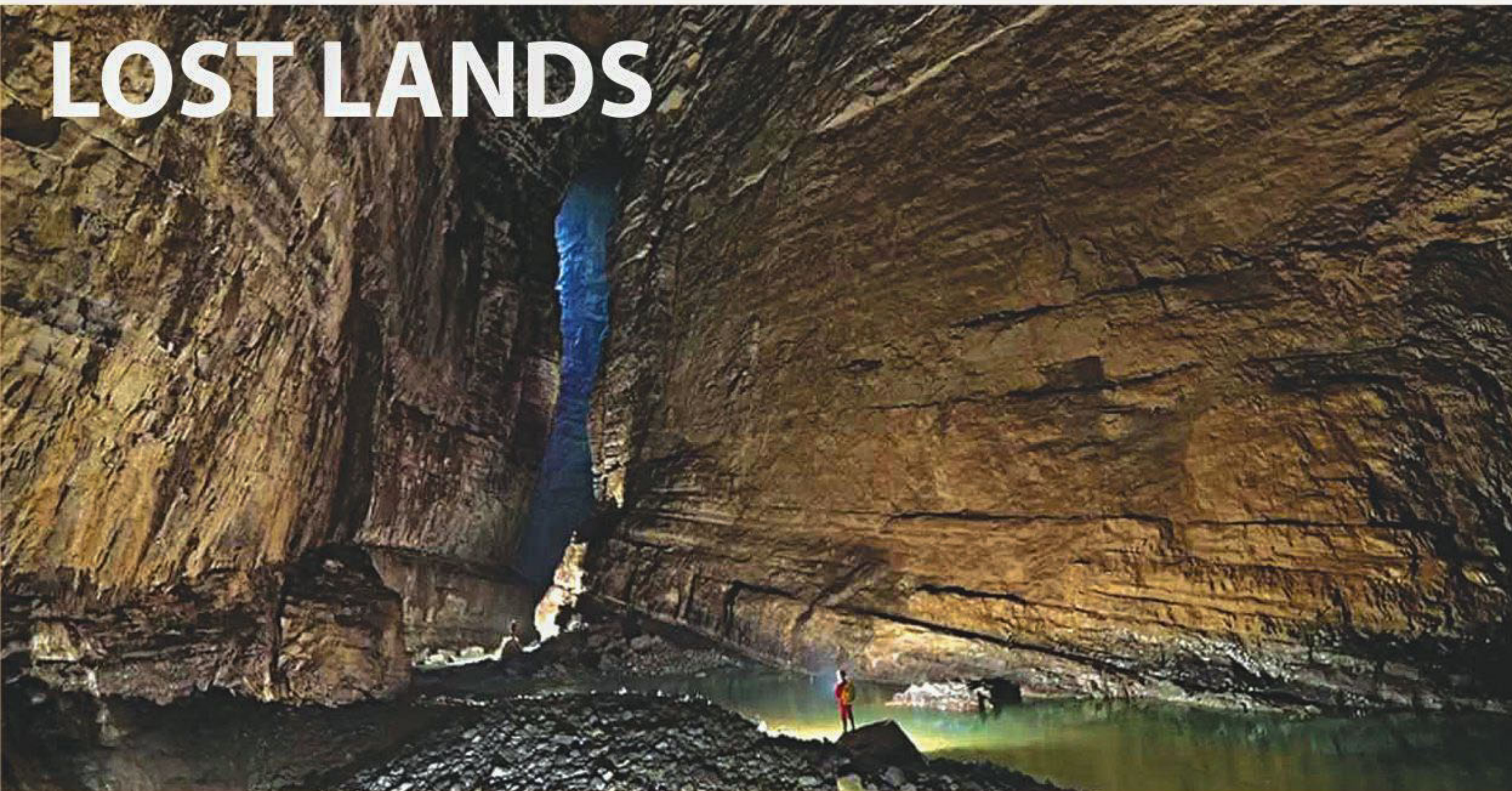


LOST LANDS



MASNOON KHAIR

We live in an almost magical era when we are able to explore other planets, comets and the bits and pieces of vast outer space. We take it for granted that our earth has been extensively mapped, and that there is nothing left to discover. On the contrary, in our own home turf, there are 'lost' places discovered almost every year – never previously set foot on. These lost edens harbour life that is almost alien. Here are such places that have excited scientists and explorers alike in the past few years.

Melville Range, Australia: This rainforest on top of a mountain range in a remote part of northeastern Australia was cut off from the rest of the world for millions of years. The miles of mammoth sized boulders made it almost impossible to reach the peak. It was only last year that a crew of explorers decided to mount the mysterious unknown with a helicopter. They found new species

which persisted for millions of years without going extinct. Perhaps most noteworthy is a relatively large sized gecko with protruding eyes, long legs and a signature tail that looks exactly like a leaf. They camouflage so well with the surrounding that it wouldn't be surprising if the entire rainforest was built out of these geckos.

Mount Victoria, Palawand Highlands, Philippines: This almost unexplored mountain in the highlands of central Philippines came into spotlight in 2000 after two extremely bored Christian missionaries tried to scale the summit, but got lost and were found 13 days later. Following their failure, in 2007, a team of hikers travelled through the lowland forest and found large carnivorous pitcher plants – big enough to catch not only insects, but creatures as large as rats and small monkeys too. The pitcher plant in question then came to be recognised as the largest one discovered so far. If that isn't trippy enough, they also found never before seen pink ferns and

blue mushrooms. Perhaps that explains what those missionaries were up to for those 13 days.

Bosavi Crater, Papa New Guinea: This kilometre deep crater is what remains of a volcano that last erupted almost 200,000 years ago. It was only as recent as 2009 that a group of scientists climbed into the crater, to discover creatures you would expect out of any typical role-playing video game. They found a species of a giant rat – almost 32 inches long – that is surprisingly not afraid of humans. This rat is the same size of a full grown adult cat and would probably make an interesting pet. The group of scientists also found fanged frogs (let's nickname it 'frocula') and a fish that grunts out of its swim bladder, probably complaining about life.

Son Doong Cave, Vietnam: Deep inside the dense jungle of Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng National Park, lies a cave which was initially discovered by a man in 1991, trying to shelter himself from the rain. Even though people lived miles away from the cave, they avoided it because of the loud sounds and roars coming out of it (caves tend to get lonely too). In 2009, curious explorers – with the help of the man mentioned earlier – explored the cave for the first time. As a matter of fact, it soon became to be known as the largest cave ever found. It is so big that it has its own 150 individual caves, lakes, rivers, a jungle as well as its own weather system. Although initially manned by a few people, a company is recently providing tours for people who want to be like Bruce Wayne and has USD 3000 to spare.



Stop Not “Golpo Chalao, Film Banao” Film Festival

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

The journey of Stop Not “Golpo Chalao, Film Banao” Film Festival began in September 2014. Inspired by their tagline “Chalay Jao”, campaigns were launched at 10 universities. The gala event was held on November 29, 2014 at Blockbuster Cinemas in Dhaka.

Stories were developed by linking many small ideas together at the university sessions. Over a hundred storylines were formed, out of which the ten best were made into digital short films and featured at the final event. An integral part of the entire process was prominent writer and journalist Asaduzzaman Noor.

“I would like to thank each and every person involved with this wonderful initiative. The films show a lot of promise. I urge you all, young people, to not stop and carry on with such endeavours,” he said in his commencement speech.

The venue filled out thanks to the presence of all the participants. The finalist ten films were put on show, each around 8 to 10 minutes. They were distinctive in their own way but each linked to the next film. The themes ranged from love and heart-break to everyday issues such as the traffic jam situation in Dhaka city.

Stop Not, the snack brand, managed to promote itself in all of the films through effective product placement. However, the cameo roles played by popular TV artists Sumon Patwary, Mishu Sabbir and others



PHOTO: DARSHAN CHAKMA

raised the interest and were a treat to watch.

Among the guests present were the members of the jury – Amitabh Reza Chowdhury, producer and director at Half Stop Down; Gousul Alam Shaon, Managing Director at GREY Advertising Bangladesh Limited; Sania Mahmood, Head of Marketing at Perfetti Van Melle Bangladesh. Notable media personalities Faridur Reza Sagar, Tauquir Ahmed and Adil Hossain Noble were present as special guests. The chief guest of the event was renowned actor and Minister for Cultural Affairs, Asaduzzaman Noor.

Faridur Reza Sagar expressed his amazement at the talent that was evident through this platform. He requested the participants to jointly make a tele-film for the next Independence Day (on March 26), which he promised would be taken care of by Impress Telefilm Ltd.

The chief guest stated that the films were the highlight of his day. “To see these young minds develop such brilliant ideas in under 10 minutes is amazing. All the short films were made in the most professional of manners. Had I known earlier, I might've acted in a few myself,” said an exuberant Asaduzzaman Noor.

In his “thank you” speech, Rajesh Ramakrishnan, Managing Director of Perfetti Van Melle Bangladesh, mentioned the core reasons behind such a campaign. He said, “We wanted the youth of Bangladesh to connect with our tagline ‘Chalay Jao’ which means to carry on, and they have carried on with the wonderful stories that were on show today. This was a challenge as well as a platform for them and they have proved themselves, so I congratulate them all.”

The Critics' Choice Award for Best Actress and Best Actor went to Simran Dhar of BRAC University and Amit Jahidi Himel of University of Dhaka respectively. “Prottaborton” from Stamford University won the Best Story award while Jahangirnagar University's “Bunophool” clinched the title of the Best Film. Based on social media votes, the Popular Choice Award for Best Film went to “Firey Esho Faria” from Daffodil International University.

The night was still young as D-RockStar Shuvo took to the stage and played a few popular numbers for the crowd. And with the hope that the youth of this country will come forward with many more unique ideas, the event took its curtain call.

Stop Not “Golpo Chalao, Film Banao” Film festival 2014 was a concern of Perfetti Vann Melle Bangladesh. Channel i was the TV partner and ABC Radio FM 89.2 was the radio partner of the event.