



LAST CALL FOR VACATION!

APURBA JAHANGIR
PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Adventure and travelling has recently seeped into our society, be it among the upper or middle class. Weekend getaways have become a regular activity for us as we look forward to international destinations. What used to be once the pleasure for the richest is now affordable by the middle class. A number of travel packages promise a trip in Europe, and that too right within one's budget. This new trend makes the holiday season a little more interesting. As we come closer to the upcoming Eid holidays, this too can be added to the list of Eid entertainment, along with *shemais* (a traditional sweet dish) and *punjabis* (traditional men's wear).



Destinations such as India, Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal and Sri Lanka – not too far from Bangladesh – are considered to be popular choices among tourists. "People start to book their travels way before the month of Ramadan," says Azhar Ali, Manager at Path Finder, a popular travel agency. "We get so many travelers that it's hard to book flights at one point." Most of these packages start from 25,000 takas and goes up depending on the clients' needs. One can even find two to three star hotel deals, renting houses or booking 5 star hotels through these packages. Many hotels abroad also offer various

deals to ease the trip. Hotels like Ambassador in Bangkok, Thailand and Sheraton in Malaysia are giving away discounts up to 45 percent. Other than their own package deals, travel agencies also cater to the visitor's own choices. "There are some who want to travel cheap but maybe stay in a luxury hotel. We can manage that by making custom packages," says Masum Shahriar, executive at Dragon Travels. Social Media and travel websites also play a vital role when it comes to organising these trips. Not only do trips become affordable, but also memorable,

Social Media and travel websites also play a vital role when it comes to organising these trips. Not only do trips become affordable, but also memorable, only if you visit the proper websites. Travel Booking BD Limited (TBBD), a popular online travel agency, has given the lowest prices to travel this Eid. They are covering destinations from Spain, London, Portugal to Malaysia, India and so much more. "We do all our research and preparations before hand, so that we can find the best deals," says Kashaf Rahman, CEO of TBBD. "We also constantly keep contact with our representative there, so that our customers don't face any kind of hassle."

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with the simple procedures. "The aim is to plan ahead. That way, it's easier to score the best deals. My wife and I have booked rooms which cost USD 300 a night, USD 70 a night, only because we planned ahead," says Shafayetul Wadud, a service holder and a regular traveler. Websites such as Trip Advisor or Expedia also offer great deals for visitors who want to research, explore and plan themselves. So this Eid along with the festivities lets pack our suitcases and go far away for a little while – the perfect way to temporarily forget this jam packed city we love so dearly! ■

HERITAGE

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, a rich jewellery merchant from Punjab named Manna Lal Roy arrived in Bengal for a business trip. He was so enchanted by the beauty of this part of Bengal that he decided to settle here. By selling many of his properties in Punjab, he transferred his business to Mahiganj in Rangpur city. Gradually he prospered and

became one of the most influential persons of the city. Then, with the decree of the British government, he established his rule as the zamindar of Rangpur and all the surrounding districts. His fame as a rich jewellery merchant was so widespread that when he built a magnificent palace, it was named as Tajhat (The home of Crowns) by local people. The palace is famous for its excellent white marble architecture, and the huge



THE WHITE MARVEL OF RANGPUR

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTOS: NAHID FARHAN RIDOY

picturesque garden. However, the first palace built by the founder zamindar was destroyed during the earthquake of 1896. The then zamindar Gobinda Lal Roy who was adorned with the titles 'Raja' in 1885, 'Raja Bahadur' in 1892 and 'Maharaja' in 1896 for his contributions, died under the rubble of the palace. His son Gopal Lal Roy succeeded him and rebuilt the palace elaborately which is still standing tall at the heart of Rangpur city. The huge two storied palace is supported by magnificently curved Corinthian pillars. There is an octagonal dome mounted on a drum like structure at the centre of the palace which is popularly known as Hawakhana (the chamber of wind). The structure roofed by the dome is built in such a way that refreshing wind passes through its eight windows every moment.

In each corner of the palace the Corinthian pillars support two chambers with triangular roof which give those a tower like appearance. The huge external staircase of the palace reaches directly to the first floor where a museum has been established with the relics from this royal family. The U shaped palace has 22 rooms adjoined by a long corridor made of marble. The ground floor of the palace has magnificent hall rooms decorated with coloured tiles. One of the hall rooms was used as the dancing hall and other rooms were used as the living quarter of the king and his queen. Two wooden staircases have connected the first and ground floor of the palace and another secret staircase was also built (now sealed) as the emergency exit which was only for the royal family.

After the abolishment of zamindar rule in Bengal, the glory of Tajhat zamindars started to die out. During Indo-Pakistan partition, the last remaining members of the royal family fled to India in 1947 and most of their property including the palace was ransacked. From 1984 to 1991



the palace was used as the high court bench of Bangladesh Supreme Court and at that time several modifications were made on the original structure such as a police barrack was built on the rooftop. In 1995, Bangladesh's archaeological department took control of the palace.

"Very few people in our country know about what an archaeological object is. We have rescued some of the objects used by the royal family which were looted from the palace long ago. We have taken initiatives to sensitise people about the significance of these heritage objects so that they return those to us whenever they find", says Md Abu Said Inam Tanvirul, the custodian of this archaeological site.

Although the exterior of the palace is well maintained, at present, two galleries of the palace museum have been closed due to cracks on the roof. Besides that, there is no arrangement for refreshments of the visitors nearby. If proper maintenance and refreshment facilities can be ensured, this magnificent palace can be a great centre of recreation and learning for people all walks of life. ■