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Journalism Without Fear or Favour

WEDNESDAY, January 12, 2022

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## The Munda people of the Sundarbans



Tue Dec 1, 2015 12:00 AM Last update on: Tue Dec 1, 2015 12:00 AM



The Munda are an ethnic community of the Sundarbans mangrove ecological zone. Originating in India, the Munda people travelled to Bangladesh around 300 years ago and have been here ever since.

They are found in Khulna, Jessore and mainly near the Sundarbans in the Shyamnagar upazila, as well as Joypurhat. They live surrounding the Sundarbans mangrove forest and depend on the ecology for their subsistence and livelihoods.

Known for their great work in agriculture in the local fields, the unique Munda community has their own distinctive language, culture and customs. Their ethnic roots distinguish them from other groups. But, due to heavy integration with surrounding communities, they have almost lost the thread of their own heritage and are on the verge of becoming the forgotten people.



The culture of the Munda people is a blend of Sarnaism and Christian cultures. Whilst they still retain the pre-Christian Mundari culture, many Christian influences have been absorbed over the years. The Mundas practice indigenous religion. They



The way they call God is through Sing Bonga, which translated means Sun-spirit. The moon and the stars are considered living witnesses of their rituals and special devotion is given to the Karam tree that saved and hid their ancestors when they were fleeing from the enemy.

The community is divided into several clans with each clan following the footsteps of their respective ancestors. The Tuti clan believes that they originate from the Sundari tree whilst the Baghor clan believes that the Tiger is their ancestor.



The clan symbol (totem) is sacred to the clan members and is present in every house hold and used in festivals and special events. The Mundas also believe in ghosts (bhoot) and spirits – both good and bad – and call on them to either help someone who is sick or to do damage to another person.

The Munda people are excellent in basket work and weaving. They also catch fish, collect wood, honey and even catch shrimp from the Sundarbans.

Local businessmen sometimes use the Munda people as labour in collection of natural resources from the Sundarbans. During festivals, the Mundas serve rice wine or haria. They are known to consume snakes, frogs, snails and even rats which they barbeque.



The Mundas speak Naguri – a dialect of the Mundari language - which is a mixture of Bengali, Hindi and Persian. Their dance is famously called Nupur and both the men and women wear anklets to perform this rhythmic dance. A dance which is very rustic in movement also features songs with lyrics that relate to everyday rituals like farming, weddings or the birth of a child.



Because of their fading heritage and culture, Relief International's-UK (RI-UK) EU funded project called "Promotion of Local Culture in the Sundarbans Impact Zone in Bangladesh through Cultural Eco-tourism and Entrepreneurship" started working with the community that was living under the Kalinchithana of Shyamnagar. Through the project, cottages have been built and the local community members have been trained as eco-guides, in hospitality and services, in finance and in security while their performances have been streamlined to include diversity.



The sites - including the Karamura Mangrove village – pays homage to the uniqueness of the dying community and hopes to help them regain their identity through community eco-tourism initiatives, promoting the local culture and biodiversity of the Sundarbans.

Members of the Munda community have participated in the capacity building workshops – a training designed to enable them to promote ecotourism sites and to promote their cultural heritage. RI UK has also provided technical support to the Munda communities to help them revive and promote their culture. Under the project, several cultural groups from the Munda communities have received financial support to purchase musical instruments, costumes and materials required for cultural performance.



The Munda community has been a part of the Sundarbans for generations now. They are a community that lives on their own wonderful traditions and customs and it is up to us to join the fight and help revive their culture and safeguard it from extinction.

***By Naveed Naushad***

**Photo courtesy: Relief International UK/Khan Zahidul Islam**



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[Travel \(/life-living/travel/\)](/life-living/travel/)

# Install Rapid testing facilities at all int'l airports: JS body recommends



**Star Digital Report**

Tue Jan 11, 2022 07:34 PM Last update on: Tue Jan 11, 2022 07:39 PM



**A** parliamentary body today recommended installing rapid test facilities at the country's three international airports to carry out Covid-19 test of outgoing expatriate workers.

The parliamentary standing committee on expatriates' welfare and overseas welfare ministry came up with the recommendations at a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with Jatiya Party MP Anisul Islam Mahmud in the chair.

At present, RT-PCR test facilities are available at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram.

UAE-bound expatriate workers need to come to the airport eight to ten hours ahead of their scheduled flights to carry out the Covid-19 test as the middle eastern country made it mandatory to have a Covid-19 negative certificate within six hours of the flight.

Due to the long stay in Dhaka and for often taking unsafe food at the nearby hotels at the Dhaka airport, around 120 UAE and Qatar-bound expatriate workers recently fell sick.



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# Thailand opens 3 more beach destinations to tourists from today

## Star Digital Report

Tue Jan 11, 2022 11:27 AM Last update on: Tue Jan 11, 2022 11:36 AM

Long-tail boats with tourists are seen in a beach in Koh Poda island near Krabi, Thailand. Reuters file photo

**T**hailand added three popular beach destinations to a visa programme that allows foreign visitors to bypass a mandatory isolation, throwing a lifeline to its Covid-19-hit tourism industry seen as key to a nascent economic recovery, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand website.

Starting today (January 11), vaccinated foreign tourists can enter Krabi, Phang Nga and Surat Thani (only Ko Samui, Ko Pha-ngan, and Ko Tao) -- in addition to Phuket under the so-called sandbox programme that will not require them to go through quarantine, provided they spend at least a week in these destinations, according to the Royal Thai Government Gazette published on January 8.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) provided an update on the latest announcement by the Royal Thai Government that redesignated 69 provinces as Controlled Areas or 'Orange Zone', while maintaining eight remaining provinces plus districts in 18 provinces as 'Blue Zone' pilot tourist destinations, effective from

The announcement also confirmed that travellers who have applied/obtained their Thailand Pass QR code before December 22, 2021, with scheduled arrival dates in Thailand from December 24, 2021 onwards, can still enter Thailand until there are any changes.

Currently, there is no cut-off date, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand website.



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