

My Visit to Bangladesh

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In the first week of June 2011, I was part of a group of twenty journalists from nine countries travelling Bangladesh as part of a foreign journalist program to improve the international image of the country. It is a good idea. The program largely involved meeting officials such as Ministers and bureaucrats. I know my colleagues were particularly impressed by the Foreign Minister- Dipu Moni- and the Foreign Secretary- Mohamed mijarul quayes.

We also visited museums such as the Liberation War Museum and later spent two days being shown a tourist sight. The original plan was to visit the Sundarbans, but this was cancelled at the very last minute on the advice of the Information Secretary because he believed the weather would be a problem. Instead we went to the tea gardens in Sylhet.

Overall, the journalists enjoyed the trip. They were a broad mix varying from hard hitting political journalists and analysts to food and travel writers. There was one Sri Lankan woman who continually complained that her country was far better than what she felt was being offered in Bangladesh. Several of us were getting rather annoyed with her. The program could be better organised but this is likely to improve for future such events. I have made certain suggestions to the Foreign Ministry, such as avoiding the Dhaka traffic as much as possible and limiting contact with sterile officials. My personal feeling was that many things in Bangladesh are beginning to improve, but considerable obstacles obviously remain. I was also very interested in discussing how expatriates might be better mobilised in making a contribution, as were they. I hope to be involved in the future too., especially as I was the only one on the trip with a Bangladeshi background. I often became something of a go between among the journalists and the officials.

bangla-sydney will publish some articles that arose from some of the journalists on the trip in the coming weeks.

Dr Tanveer Ahmed is a psychiatrist.

