

Bangladesh revisited

MEMBERS of Luton's Mitalee Youth Association paid a nostalgic visit to their homeland of Bangladesh.

For many of the youngsters the December trip to the village of Sylet was a poignant and emotional one.

Most of them were born there, and met family and relatives they had never seen before.

The travellers, led by Ashuk Ahmed, found Bangladesh a hot, yet exciting land, so different to the grey industrial sprawl of Luton.

Two of the visiting party, Abu Nasir and A. Rayhan, recounted their impressions of the visit.

Abu Nasir takes up the story from his landing in Bangladesh.

“AS I stepped off the plane at Dacca airport I got a sensational feeling of fulfilment.

My childhood desire was to go to Bangladesh and I now realised this desire was being truly satisfied.

I was going to see relatives and family I had never met before in my life.

As we made our way through the airport we were all very excited and I was a bit amused to see skinny men with huge rifles in their hands.

But we were to see a lot more of them during our stay.

Once inside the airport we saw thousands of people trying to get through customs, and when it was our turn, we realised why there were such long, slow queues.

The customs officers were keen for us not to get any electrical appliances through — they wouldn't even let us take a cassette player.

As we left the airport, beggars swarmed over us, holding their hands out asking for money.

At first it was a little frightening but then I got used to it.

Everywhere we went we found beggars and most of the time we gave them some Takkas — Bangladeshi money.

I met a lot of people and I also visited my family and relatives in Dacca whom I have never met before. In Dacca we visited many sites all of which were beautiful.

We also visited Dacca zoo, and I thought it was really amazing.

There was a wide range of animals including the exquisite Royal Bengal Tiger and several others which were quite new to me.

We also went to see The House of Parliament which was absolutely stunning. I haven't seen a better looking building than that anywhere.

Nostalgic trip to meet family for the first time

It had shapes cut into the richly coloured bricks, and around the building there was a path of water which made it all look very attractive.

The weather there was terrific and the people were too.

Although they were poor they were not miserable. In fact, they seemed quite cheerful and were very helpful and pleasant towards us.

Everywhere we went everybody would stare and watch us go by and if we stopped they would come and swarm around us.

It was as if we had a fan club and we quite enjoyed it because we felt like stars.

Wherever we went the hospitality we received was great and unforgettable.

I think this was a very successful youth exchange as we learned many things. We experienced the lifestyle of the people of Bangladesh by staying with the families.

I enjoyed the youth exchange very much and I know the rest of the group did too, and if we were given the opportunity to visit the country again, I would definitely go.”

But fellow traveller A. Rayhan had a different reaction when the plane touched down at Dacca.

“BANGLADESH seemed like hell when I first stepped on to the tarmac at Dacca airport.

It was quite an experience to visit a country which I haven't seen for 13 years.

But after a couple of days I started to like the place. Bangladesh is a very poor country. The rich enjoy a brilliant life, but the poor there have nothing going for them.

If you have a lot of money you are respected and liked by everyone.



We visited a lot of places, such as the Cox Bazaar, which was one of the highlights of the trip.

We played a few football matches which were watched by huge numbers of people.

Bangladeshi football is not of a high standard, but I really enjoyed the atmosphere and the support of the hundreds of spectators.

We were also given the chance to experience the village life of Bangladesh.

Although the village people are poorer than others, they live a happy life.

Bangladesh has some nice holiday resorts. We brought a lot of souvenirs and we had our meals in expensive restaurants.

We were well respected and liked by all the

Bangladesh people.

It was very hot in Bangladesh, which was peculiar as it was winter back in England.

I would love to go back to Bangladesh now that I know so much more about the country.”

● Some of the sights the visitors saw in Bangladesh are pictured: far left above, meeting youngsters; far left, enjoying some local football; above, discovering the country.

