

Bangladeshis in Britain — profile of a professional family

by Lindsay Mackie, contributor to "The Guardian", London

THE Bangladeshi community in Britain is not large in numbers, but it is significant in impact. Around 200,000 people have come from Bangladesh to settle in Britain over the past 30 years, and by and large it has been a successful migration.

Bangladeshis, for example, have found the truth of the proverb that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Most of the so-called "Indian" restaurants in Britain — from the windswept county of Caithness in the Scottish north, to the sunny meadows of Cornwall in southwest England — are actually owned and run by Bangladeshis. And much of what the British youth wear on their backs — leather bomber jackets and motorcycle gear — has been made by Bangladeshi firms working in the garment industry in London's East End.

Bangladeshi children do well educationally, and this is another area where Bangladeshis can feel justifi-

ably proud. Teachers talk of how bright their children are, and Bangladeshi girls in particular do well at school, being educationally keen and highly motivated.

Typical Professional

Some 8% of the Bangladeshi population in Britain are members of the professional classes. The flourishing Bangladesh Medical Association has 500 members all over Britain, and the Bangladesh Centre, in London, is a thriving social and cultural centre where Bangladeshis can meet and sustain their own culture and that of their homeland.

For a typical example of a successful professional person, one could not do better than Dr Mohammed Lutfur Rahman, who personifies the thriving British Bangladeshi. He came to Britain in 1973 and went to Glasgow to be a junior doctor. Ten years later he took his family to London,

joined a general practice and then in 1989 branched out on his own and started a new practice in the capital's North Kensington district.

Today, his surgery, in a lively and colourful neighbourhood, occupies what were two shops. He works hard and knows a great deal about the area. His patients include people of many nationalities, among them fellow Bangladeshis — "good, hard-working people," he says.

Does Dr Rahman ever look enviously at more prosperous localities with perhaps an easier workload for the general practitioner? "No," he says, "to tell you the truth it is an interesting practice. I see such things here. It is demanding but you feel better if you can help people, and I think I do help a lot of people, with the cooperation of the social workers of course, and I get a lot of job satisfaction."

Proud of tradition

Dr Rahman has had the joy

of seeing his three children — two sons and daughter — follow in his successful footsteps. His daughter has just graduated with honours in biochemistry and is working at a leading London hospital; his elder son has just won a scholarship from Oxford to go to America to study for a doctorate; and his younger son is a medical student. At school the children achieved excellent exam results and Dr Rahman is pleased with the quality of state education in Britain — particularly the Scottish system.

But he is proud of the Bangladeshi tradition and its emphasis on a close and loyal family structure. "People from our part of the world keep a close eye on their children — we motivate them and we believe that education does not just stop at 18."

Dr Rahman and his wife have found that the mix of their own family and religious customs and a more liberal British style of upbringing has worked well for their children. Dr Rahman praises his wife in particular for this and says she has skillfully combined the traditions of East and West so that their children have always had British friends and British-style hobbies, but have also always read the Koran and stayed within the family unit.

"When there are events like parties and weddings and funerals we all go together, as a family."

Philosophical outlook

There is still the pull of Bangladesh. Dr Rahman says his children, now 22, 21 and 19 went back to Bangladesh last summer and loved it. "They found the people there so caring."

This is something — though Dr Rahman says he believes most Bangladeshis have integrated well into British society — that people miss when they come to Britain. It particularly affects older people. Emigration is a young person's game; Dr Rahman's parents feel uneasy in Britain he says,

and long for their return to Bangladesh when they visit the United Kingdom.

However, Dr Rahman is philosophical. He remembers a neighbour of his from Glasgow, who retired to the seaside town of Brighton and returned to the Scottish city after six months out of homesickness — feelings of belonging can develop wherever you are.

Britain now has Bangladeshi doctors in large numbers, local councillors, businessmen, artists, civil and other public servants. It is a vibrant community, which has added to the strength of British life and culture.

Achievement in Science

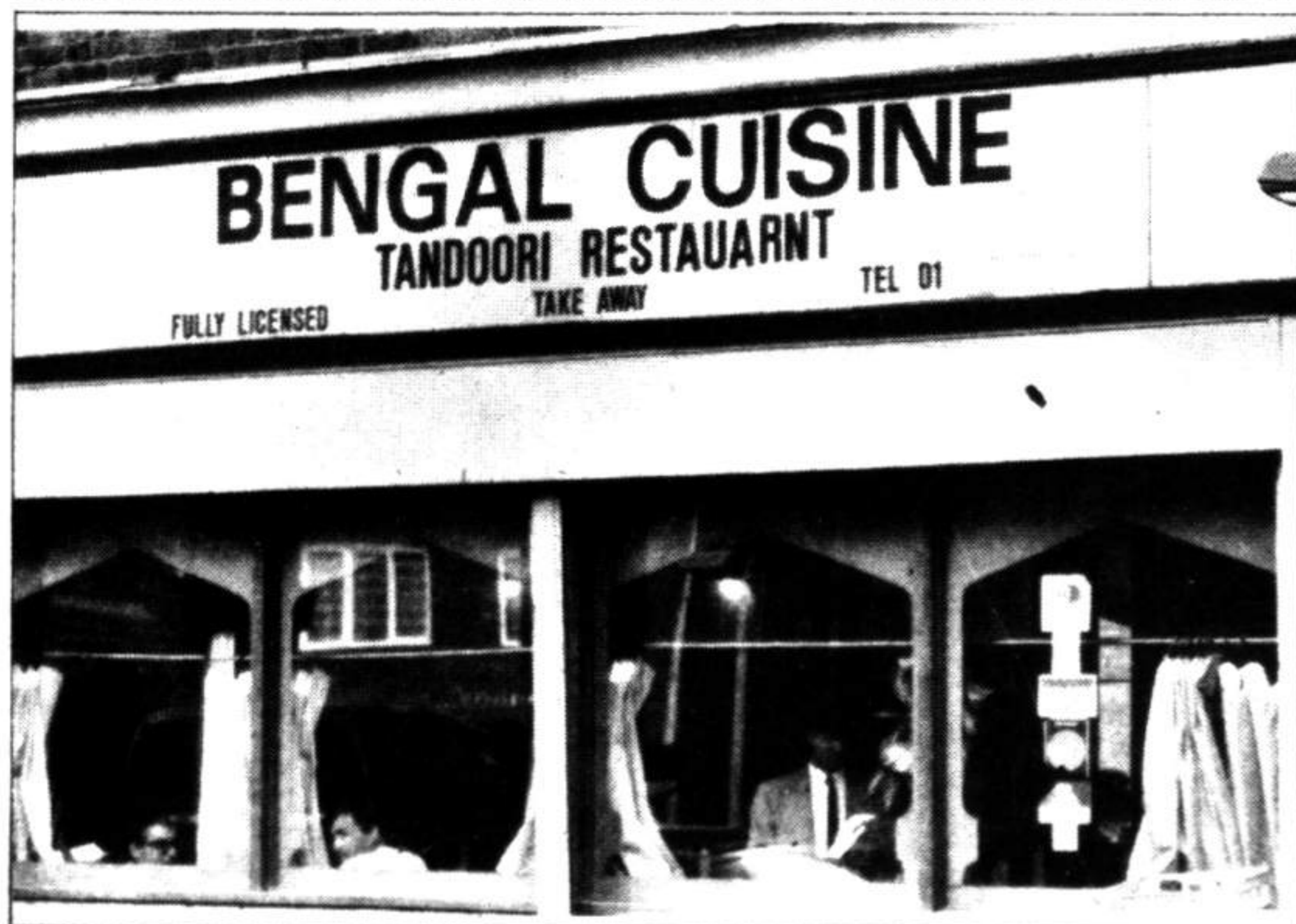
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facilities increasing with each move. Observers are now looking for clearer skies with clearer views, and Britain is a principal participant in the international observatory at La Palma in the Canary Islands, with its four great optical telescopes, and the infrared and radio telescopes at Mauna Kea, in Hawaii.

British astronomers continue to make a major contribution, not least to modern developments in radio sources and black-hole theory — the latter an area associated with cosmologist Stephen Hawking.

Throughout the last 40 years Britain has maintained its scientific effort both in variety and depth. Any collection of highlights necessarily has to omit important achievements — one could cite many more such as laser holography, artificial intelligence, particle physics, space satellites and, significantly in view of environmental concerns, the discovery of depletion in the ozone layer by the British Antarctic Survey.

British scientific drive has been a force in the modern world throughout the second Elizabethan era. In cooperation with international colleagues it will remain so in the years to come.



Shops in the predominantly Bangladeshi Brick Lane in London's East End.

বাংলাদেশী চা এখন স্বাদ, গন্ধ, রং ও মানের দিক থেকে বিশ্বব্যাপী প্রশংসা অর্জন করতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। আর এই কারণেই এখন এই চা রপ্তানি হচ্ছে পাকিস্তান, যুক্তরাজ্য, রাশিয়া, মিশর, পোল্যান্ড, এফআরজি, ফ্রান্স, চীন, আফগানিস্তান, চেকোস্লোভাকিয়া, রুম্যানিয়া, যুগোস্লাভিয়া, জাপান, মালয়েশিয়া, সিঙ্গাপুর, সউদী আরব, সংযুক্ত আরব আমীরাত, কেনিয়া, সুদান, ইরাক, ইরান, ওমান, কানাডা, যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, অস্ট্রেলিয়া, নিউজিল্যান্ড, আয়ারল্যান্ড, হল্যান্ড ইত্যাদি দেশসমূহে।



বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড

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(জাতির সেবায় নিয়োজিত)

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Queen Elizabeth II
a very happy birthday

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