

EXPERIENCE

There we were sitting inside this enormous hall room, after being escorted inside the Presidential House- the Rashtrapati Bhawan, in Delhi, India. It was then that the feeling of being a part of the 100 Member Bangladesh Youth Delegation began to sink in, how prestigious it is to be selected began to sink in. While being in a euphoric state, the announcement began- "The president of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, will now enter the building." And we all rose.

The ceremony began with one of the delegates, violinist Ishrat Jahan Mumu, presenting a memento on behalf of the delegation to the President- a golden Rickshaw. The speeches then commenced, beginning with dance director and founder of Turongomi, Srimonti Sengupta Pooja's English speech, where she spoke about this experience becoming a memory to cherish for a lifetime. Next, Miss Heritage Bangladesh, Ishrat Payel spoke, in Bengali speech, about the



A part of the delegation with the President of India, Mr Pranab Mukherjee.

PHOTO- RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME: 100 MEMBER YOUTH DELEGATION

(PART III)

NAZIBA BASHER

misconceptions about each other and how we play a vital role in building up this historic friendship between the two nations.

Then came the President -- Shri Pranab Mukherjee, a soft spoken man of a humble stature, warmly welcomed the youth delegation. He spoke about the common history and the deep friendship that India and Bangladesh share, their shared culture and struggle against British imperialism. He congratulated Indian Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian High Commission in Dhaka for this initiative. "Such an exchange helps people of both countries, and our youth especially, to know each other more intimately and share their thoughts, beliefs and faith," he said. He also said he was sure that the spirit of love, affection and understanding which will be the result of this exchange programme will create a unifying bridge between the two countries. "People of the two countries should move and work together," the president added.

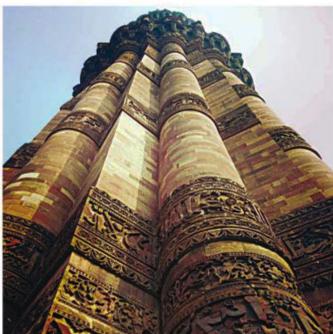
After the moving speeches, we took the official photograph of the delegation with the President, with assigned seats. 'What an experience, we were treated like royalty!' all the delegates shared a common thought.

The next two days were of historic enthrallment. We went from one landmark to another before we bid adieu to what to me was the best place in the trip- New Delhi. This was where the closest of friendships were set for the rest of the days to come. We witnessed the greatness of the Taj Mahal together, and the gorgeous Quranic inscriptions at the gate. Just to stand in front of it and take it all in was something you would want to

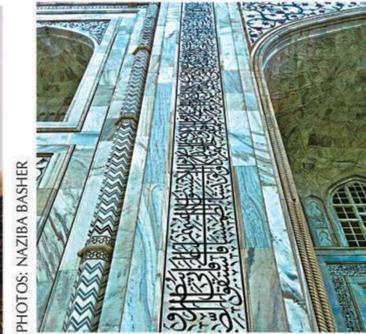


Agra Fort

PHOTO- BYDGI16



The tall and mighty Qutb Minar.



Quranic Verses on the gate of the Taj Mahal.

PHOTOS: NAZIBA BASHER

feel more than once. We were split in groups, and I walked with mine all around the place learning about how the Mahal glows under the moon, the history, how it was actually Mumtaz Mahal, and more. But at one point, I wandered off on my own, sat by the stairs alone and watched the grandeur of it all- that was the best part. This was also where our team leader, Mohiuddin Fayaz acquired a police

whistle, to keep us 'in line'. A whistle with the most annoying noise in the world, that would soon become one of the best, most cherished parts of the trip.

Before the thought of standing in front of history sunk in, we were taken to the Agra Fort. A collective gasp! "Is this...is this...could it be more beautiful than the Taj Mahal?" and there was silent agreement. The Agra Fort was the main

residence of the emperors of the Mughal Dynasty till 1638, when Mughal capital was shifted from Agra to Red Fort in Delhi. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site and is about 2.5 km northwest of its more famous sister monument, the Taj Mahal. The fort can be more accurately described as a walled city- it was large beyond imagination. People have been known to get lost inside it, and the tour has been cut to cover only 20 percent of the area- and even that we couldn't cover!

The next day we went to the beautiful ruins of the tall and mighty Qutb minar. Qutb Minar, at 73 meters, is the tallest brick minaret in the world. It and the ancient and medieval monuments surrounding it, form the Qutb complex, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The tower is located in the Mehrauli area of Delhi, India and was built by the Ghori (Mamluk) Dynasty. Made of red sandstone and marble, Qutb Minar is a 73-metres (240 feet) tall tapering tower with a diameter measuring 14.3 meters (47 feet) at the base and 2.7 meters (9 feet) at the peak. Inside the tower, a circular staircase with 379 steps leads to the top.

While discovering architectural beauty in a whole new way, I had switched my bus to Sarzina's for some 'adda' and it remained like that from thereon. We got incredibly close to our travel agents- Ruchi Kaushal and Anuj Mukhopadhyay from Jahnvi Travels, the latter being the founder of the agency. Bonding with Anuj da was talking about politics, culture and music, while leaving Ruchi di behind in Delhi was, like I had mentioned to her, leaving behind the coolest part of the trip. Our bonds were those of sisters who just discovered sisterhood.

In the early hours of the 5th day, we were off to our next destination- Ahmadabad. New place, new adventures, new people, and some Garba! Stay tuned to next week's Star Weekend to find out what happened in the final days of the 100 Member Youth Delegation from Bangladesh to India, 2016.

To be continued...

MUSINGS

In his movie "Fury" Brad Pitt plays the role of a Sergeant of American Army advancing well inside Germany in the last phase of WWII. He observes - 'ideals are peaceful but war is violent'. This sums up the blood bath that WW II was.

Since the last part of the great war was taking place inside Germany with the Third Reich putting everything into it, the scourge fell on ordinary Germans. The world's perception of Nazi Germany is of a demonized war machine. Facts are not indivisible. There are always two sides of the story.

And obviously the atrocities committed by Red Army and Allied Forces took toll of ordinary Germans - German women and girls in particular. Since WW II was a massive military confrontation the modern world has ever seen; the brutality was also apocalyptic!

The movies and books presented the Germans as brutal in their pride. The loathing was in fact mutual. So when the Americans on the western front and the Russians on the eastern front were advancing in German mainland the fury was ruthless.

It is a chilling fact that Nazi forces brutally dealt with Warsaw Ghetto and 150,000 people were killed. Indeed Warsaw Ghetto carnage and other cold

is innocent. Break with force the racial arrogance of the German women. Take them as your legal loot. Kill, you brave Red Army soldiers, kill!"

The fall of Germany was a cataclysmic human disaster driving sixteen million ethnic Germans; women, children and elderly fled their ancestral homelands in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other parts of Eastern Europe to Germany before the advancing Red Army. Of the hapless two to six million perished.

Dresden was a cultural centre of Northern Germany - Zwinger Museum



and Palace and Frauenkirche Cathedral were the famous buildings. They remained unscathed up to the end of 1944. When the Nazi forces were falling back before Allied Forces and Red Army Germans were apprehensive of the havoc that would visit Berlin. They started flocking to Dresden. Eventually the population of Dresden swelled. Then the doomsday

descended! Between 13 and 14 February 1945 35,000 to 135,000 people were killed in Dresden by Allied bombing. The city was razed to the ground. War is violence of fiercest nature fed by vengeance and loathing. At the worst it is madness unbound changing sides with the fluctuating fortune. Whichever side is the victor there is another side of the story. ■

WHEN WW II CAME TO GERMANY

SYED MAQSUD JAMIL

PHOTOS: THE PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEW

blooded Nazi atrocities were of diabolical nature when the Germans were the conquerors. But when the American Forces and the Russian Red Army was in German territory the outrages that took place was the other side of the story.

The facts are phantasmagoric! Two million German women from the age of ten to eighty were violated! The records show they were repeatedly violated even up to sixty times - the number of violations totaled 20 million! In Berlin itself 100,000 German women were violated. They included minor girls, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, nuns and even pregnant women.

According to Canadian historian James Bacque, between 1941 to 1950, one and a half million to two million German prisoners of war died and about five million seven thousand German civilians died between 1946 and 1950, largely.

Josef Stalin is much to be blamed who, through his propagandist minister Ilya Ehrenburg, actually encouraged the rape and degradation of the German civilian population. Ironically, Ilya Ehrenburg the propagandist minister of Soviet Russia like Stalin himself was Jewish. He exhorted "Kill, kill, you brave Red Army soldiers, kill. There is nothing in the Germans that

