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Lund University

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[SASNET Newsletter](#) | [SASNET](#) | [Research](#) | [Conferences](#) | [Education](#) | [Culture](#) | [Swedish Institutions](#) | [Travelling advise](#) | [Resources](#) | [Researchers database](#)

Jahangirnagar University

Last updated: 30 August 2011

Report from visit to Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Monday 5 December 2005

Web page: <http://www.juniv.edu/>

Founded just on the eve of Independence in 1970, this is the only residential university in Bangladesh. Like all other universities, it has all academic levels from undergraduate to PhD, but the number of students is small, only about 7 000, due to the limited capacity of the dormitory buildings. There are also foreign students right now from Nepal, Iran and Pakistan.

400 teachers/researchers do the teaching, of which 20 per cent are abroad to upgrade their academic level. There are four faculties (Arts, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Life Sciences) and 24 departments. Strangely enough Anthropology is a discipline here but not Sociology – in this land of relative ethnic homogeneity!

The periphery is starved of contacts and foreign collaborations, so when two Swedes arrived here to open some windows of opportunity, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. [Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman](#), took our visit seriously (compared to the mostly kind indifference to an almost unknown entity in the academic institutions in the capital). He had called the leaders of almost all the faculties for the meeting, and the meeting was also attended by the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor [Md. Enamul Huq Khan](#), and the University treasure, Professor [A.B.M. Enayet Hossain](#).

The first thing we learn is that Prof. Shaymol Kumar Roy, professor of Botany has received a grant from the [International Science Programme](#), ISP, Uppsala University, to equip a laboratory, which is much talked about. Are we following in the footsteps of Malin Åkerblom, whom many in the science circles in Bangladesh seem to know so well?

The SASNET window of opportunity was carefully listened to, but since it is a small offer from a small country, we sensed that most of the participants considered it quite an abstract possibility to form real alliances.

As regards research profile in the University there is a great diversity of individual research pursuits but some fields can be said to be more prominent, like for example:



Menu

- [News about SASNET](#)
- [Activities in Lund](#)
- [About SASNET](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [History of SASNET](#)
- [Board 2013-15, and Staff](#)
- [Minutes from Board meetings](#)
- [SASNET Work reports](#)
- [How to find our office](#)
- [Magazines/Library at SASNET's office](#)
- [Contact journey reports](#)
- [South Asian Reference Group](#)
- [SASNET Planning grants](#)
- [Evaluation Reports](#)
- [Directions for SASNET 2013 – 2015](#)

- Arsenic poisoning of well water, which is a research field for botanists, chemists and environmentalists
- The Botany department is working with developing a field gene bank for Bangladesh focusing on agricultural crops

We ended with a general discussion about various issues related to the terrorism. All are scared about the prospects of increasing terrorism in Bangladesh. It is both an international and a national issue.

One understanding goes like this, which most of those present agreed to: After partition and liberation from Pakistan, Bangladesh society has developed into a more and more divided land between rich and poor. It is the combination of traditional Madrasa education and poor and marginalised students that produces the fundamentalist cadre in this otherwise rather moderate Muslim country. Moreover, in modern education there is a lack of teaching of ethical issues, and the rift between modern and traditional education exacerbates the rift. Thus, there is need for a cemented unity in Bangladesh. The politicians lack the ability to fight poverty in a convincing way, and if both elected government and military governments fail, the space is opened for an Islamic government.



We were happy to meet Professor [Golam Hossain](#) (photo to the left), Dept of Government and Politics, who participated in the 18th European conference on Modern South Asian Studies, organised by SASNET in Lund in July 2004. Prof Hossain was then co-convenor of Panel No. 41 on "The Political Economy of Bangladesh" ([more information on the panel](#)). Later he showed us around the beautiful campus area of Jahangirnagar university, that even includes a lake full of migratory birds (see photo above).

After the main meeting in the Vice-Chancellor's office we were also invited for a brief visit to the Department of Government and Politics. Professor [Abul Kashem](#)

[Mozumder](#) and the other political scientists present at the above meeting took us there. Prof. Mozumder himself is interested in research on Public sector management.

We were welcomed by Assistant Professor Naim Sultan, chairman of the department, whose research interest is comparative politics of South and Southeast Asia. He is a specialist on Indonesia.

Other researchers at the department being present were Assistant Professor [S.M. Tariqul Islam](#), Lecturer [Tarana Begum](#), Lecturer, and Ms. Tamalika Sultana. Examples of studies carried out in the department are Corruption, Islam and political development, Rights of women, and the relation between Madrasa education and terrorism. The department has about 500 students with a total staff of 16. The Department publishes an annual journal called Asian Studies.

One of the assistant lecturers of the department, [Bashir Ahmed](#), is currently studying in the Masters Programme in Asian Studies at Lund University. Bashir had in fact been instrumental in inviting us to visit Jahangirnagar University, and even though he was not present (he was still in Sweden at the time), we were after the meeting invited for lunch by his wife Ms. [Shamima Sultana](#), Lecturer at the Dept. of Bangla Literature in their house.




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