

History of Bangladesh-Portugal Relation

The Portuguese individuals reached Bangladesh far before the British and other Europeans. Dr. Joan de Silveira was the first Portuguese to commandeer an expedition to the then East Bengal, present Bangladesh in 1516, 18 years after Vasco da Gama reached India. One literature says that Joao Coelho, a Portuguese traveler reached Chittagong even before Silveira. However, the influx of Portuguese traders and settlers occurred in Bangladesh during the 16th century. They had many trade posts in Bengal and used to control the thriving seaport of Chittagong. After subsequent wars against the Arakans and the Mughals, the Portuguese lost their control over Chittagong in the 17th century. However, some Portuguese people settled in Chittagong. Their descendants are still living in the old parts of the city.

This historic contact, although not very long, resulted in a healthy exchange of knowledge, culture and even cuisine. Lifestyle of some people of Chittagong shows some trace left by Portuguese traders. Portuguese scholar Antonio Mascaranhas Asshumpsao compiled a Bengali-Portuguese thesaurus in the 18th century. The Portuguese missionaries were the forerunner in expanding Christianity in Bangladesh. Portuguese names are very much common with the Christian community residing mainly in Bangladesh.