

# New LES, New Perspectives

By Iftikhar Arman Rashid

I have always had a keen interest in local and international current affairs. Growing up in Dhaka, Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne, I found myself trying to understand what was happening through the prism of political and economic developments: the fall of autocracy in Bangladesh, rapid economic growth in Malaysia, the rising consciousness of climate change in Australia.

My primary interest has always been in observing and understanding events in Bangladesh. As a citizen, I have always felt that the country's well-being is directly related to my own. After living for 10 years in Kuala Lumpur and five years in Australia, where I got Bachelor of Business and Commerce, and Master of International Development and Environmental Analysis degrees, I decided to settle in Bangladesh. The country has made great strides in social and economic development; I yearned to be part of that change and progress. I have since found a role to play in a series of positions in international organizations and academia.

I have always believed that the most fortunate people are those who work in areas they are passionate about. When I responded to an advertisement last spring for an LES (locally engaged staff) political and economic adviser with the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh, I thought the position matched my qualifications, aptitudes and interests. Moreover, I found myself in harmony with the values driving Canada's international cooperation policy, such as respect for the environment, human rights, free markets and the rule of law. Canada has been a steadfast development partner of Bangladesh; the position offered me an opportunity to contribute to its priorities and benefit my country.

In many ways, this is my dream job. It allows me to learn, analyze and expand my knowledge. I support the work of the high commissioner, the first secretary (political) and other colleagues, and strive to keep on top of political and economic developments through the media and contacts. Given the complex political and economic environment in Bangladesh, it is important to have a good understanding of the country, including the differing views and interpretations found within its culture. My experience in studying, working and living in three countries enables me to look at global issues from local perspectives and local issues from global perspectives.

The working environment at the High Commission is friendly, positive and stimulating. There are 18 Canada-based staff and 36 locally engaged staff; at the adjacent Canadian Recreation Club we interact over coffee and lunch on a daily basis. It's a meeting of cultures and ideas, a place where thoughts are shared and views are valued. I imagine it's much like Canada itself, which I have not visited but hope to someday soon.

*Iftikhar Arman Rashid has been the LES political and economic adviser at Canada's High Commission to Bangladesh since August 2009.*



Iftikhar Arman Rashid says his new LES position in Dhaka is in many ways his dream job.