

BANGLADESH HAS ITS OWN TAJ MAHAL



Bangladesh has its own Taj Mahal located approximately 30km northeast of the capital Dhaka. It is a replica built by a rich film maker. It could boost Bangladeshi tourism but some people are not satisfied with the quality of the building.

Taj Mahal is certainly one of the world's best known mausoleums. It was built in 17th century by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favorite wife. It is definitely one of the **most popular Indian tourism attractions**. Taj Mahal has always attracted attention and people all around the world made copies of the structure. There were copies made of matchsticks, plastic blocks, or sand. In Dubai they built a three-quarter-sized replica for a shopping festival and in New Jersey they have a luxury hotel-casino called Taj Mahal.

A wealthy Bangladeshi film maker Ahsanullah Moni decided to go even further and so he built a life-sized replica of the original. It took over twenty years to build the original. Thanks to modern machinery, it took only 5 years to build the copy. Specialist architects were hired to measure the original and provide Bangladeshi builders with the needed information. Mr. Moni claimed he has imported marble and granite from Italy, diamonds from Belgium and that he used 160kg of bronze for the dome.

Ahsanullah Moni claims he started the project in 2003 to make it possible for poor Bangladeshis to visit the well known monument at home because they can not afford to travel to India to see the original. Apparently, it was not only his good heart that made him to invest nearly \$60 million in the project. Mr. Moni already owns a three-star hotel and he plans to expend the fake Taj Mahal to include a hotel, amusement park and multimedia production studio. Currently, **Bangladesh earns very little from international tourism**. The replica thus should boost tourism in the country. There are also negative aspects of the projects. For example, Indians complain copyright infringement. In addition, some visitors are rather disappointed with the replica. They complain it is made of local bricks and bathroom tiles and that the Bangladeshi Taj does not correspond to the majesty and opulence materialized in the Indian original.

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