

Bangladeshi Immigrants in the United States

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 5-year data, the estimated immigrant population from Bangladesh to the United States is 287,664, which is 0.6% of all the immigrants residing in the United States (46,134,671). The top five states with the highest number of Bangladeshi immigrants live in New York (estimated Bangladeshi immigrant population: 121,662), Michigan (21,017), California (19,208), Texas (18,694), and New Jersey (14,850). Close to 42 percent of all Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States live in the New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, (estimated Bangladeshi immigrant population: 120,313), followed by Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI (19,554), Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV (15,056), Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (11,659), Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD (10,617).

If you want to learn more about the South Asian immigrants in the United States, please check this [fact sheet](#).

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Interview respondent: Virginia State Senator Saddam Azlam Salim

Interviewer: Pranav Shrivastava

About Senator Saddam Azlan Salim

Senator Saddam Azlan Salim has been a [State Senator for District 37](#) (covering Fairfax City, Falls Church City, and parts of Fairfax County) in the State of Virginia since January 2024. Sen. Salim is a Bangladeshi immigrant, born in 1990 in the Noakhali district of Bangladesh. As of April 2025, he was a member of several committees in the Virginia General Assembly, including Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, Courts of Justice, Privileges and Elections, and Rehabilitation and Social Services. Senator Salim's [2025 legislative agenda](#) includes policies aimed at reducing gun violence, improving housing supply and affordability, improving the environment, enhancing workplace safety, and raising transparency in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Migration to the United States and Perception of the United States Before Migrating

Senator Salim migrated from Bangladesh to the United States as a 10-year-old boy with his family in the year 2000. His family decided to migrate to the United States after a devastating [flood in 1998](#) that put more than half of Bangladesh under water. Sen. Salim recalls

“[in 1998] our town was underwater, but it wasn't significant enough to have full-on full damages, but people saw it as a way to say, if this is going to happen once, it's going to happen again, and it has happened multiple times. So, people started to leave town, and we went from a small town of maybe a couple hundred people to less than 30 people, and then the number kept decreasing from 1998 to the earlier days of 2000. And that's when my dad decided, hey, you know, I think we should also leave because now we have less than 20 people in the town, and there is no school system. There is no opportunity for you

all to get an education. And I think fundamentally, that was the reason we left is there was no opportunity to get an education in a village that was in a developing country where they were only into their independence less than 30 years. So, it's a lot of that navigation, and that was the opportunity my dad took to bring us here in the summer of 2000”.

In response to a question about his perception of the United States as a young child before his family’s immigration, Sen. Salim jokingly says,

“My impression when I was in Bangladesh was that America is a place where you go, you instantly become wealthy. My siblings and I used to joke about America, there's a tree that grows money in the backyard. That's what everyone said back home: ‘You go there, you become wealthy, you become someone, and people go back home.’ And I think originally when my dad was telling us, ‘Hey, we want you to go to America,’ my siblings and I were super excited, and we said, you know, we're going to go there and then we're going to get our education, we're going to come back to Bangladesh, and we're going to help rebuild this town. We're going to make sure there isn't another flood. We're going to make sure there are hospitals, there's all that in the villages, and the places that don't have it. And in my dad's mind, I think, it was the opposite was that he's going to get us out of this, and we're going to build a different life somewhere elsewhere. ‘[In] 50, 60 years, my kids don't have to worry about the idea of having natural disasters and zero help from the government.’”

Initial Experiences in the United States

Sen. Salim’s family arrived in New York in 2000 and then came to Washington, D.C. His family stayed in D.C. for some time and later moved to northern Virginia. His family found it very challenging to find housing and access to education, and healthcare because his family members did not speak English and did not know many rules and laws:

“I went to John Adams Elementary School in D.C., and during the following summer of 2001. We realized, as immigrants, that we did not understand the rules here. We didn't understand the renewal of leases. I don't share this in detail, but my dad inherited a lease from somebody else who lived there. So, they [previous tenants] have moved on; they went somewhere else. But there was no process for my dad to understand how to renew and what he had to do with it. And there was no renewal-- it was essentially the building was sold to a commercial developer who was going to turn it into a luxury apartment on S Street. And, as a result of that, it wasn't just my family; it was like ten other families from different backgrounds from different countries who were just not sure what to do. They showed up to court, and the court said, unfortunately, they're going to give you 30 to 60 days to evacuate, or else they're going to kick you out, but half the people didn't show up to court. They didn't understand that they needed to, and as immigrants, you have to work; you can't take a day off.

So that essentially was the beginning of how I ended up coming to Virginia, and we struggled through finding affordable housing, getting into Fairfax County Public School systems, to even getting the vaccines from the local health department. When I look back, it was different stages of life that we had to work together as a family to realize that if we get to the next milestone, we can get to the next one. We found a way to get housing from the county, and now we can work on finding healthcare. After that, we can figure out how my siblings and I will go to college.

I think those are the steps that we took were one singular event at a time, because none of us spoke English, and none of us realized what was going on. And fast forward, I ended up at Northern Virginia Community College and then George Mason. I enjoyed George Mason to the point that I did my Master's there. And still, as I came out of the Masters, I had no clue what I wanted to do with life-- ended up working for a bank, then ended up working for a consulting firm, and then ended up working for a government agency, and then back in the private sector. The moral of all of that was really take the opportunity that's given to you, because of being an immigrant, because I came here when I was 10, grew up in America thinking I was American, thinking I was part of the culture here, but I also have a different culture that sort of guided me to where I am today.

Multiculturalism of the DMV Area and Getting to Know America

As Sen. Salim traveled around America, he realized that large metro areas like New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles are like a melting pot, where people from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other. But in many other parts of the United States, there is a much smaller cultural mix.

“In the Summer of 2009, a friend of mine and I got together, and we took his car, and we drove around the US. For about three and a half weeks, we went from D.C. to all the way through California, and then Arizona, and then back through the Midwest.

And the reason I share this is that I grew up in Northern Virginia, I saw no difference between my white friend who had red hair and me or my black friend or my Asian friend, as I celebrated all their cultures. I went to their house, they came to ours, they tasted my food and thought it was spicy, I tasted their food and thought there was no taste to it. And we all agreed on McDonald's and all that.

I think having seen that, having seen the multicultural area around here, there's always an event you can go to, there's always a celebration you can go to, like the [MGM](#) will always have, or the [Gallows Road](#) will have the Chinese New Year festival. So, they'll do one every year. Tyson's Corner will have it, Fair Oaks will have it, and they'll exchange cultural events with other cultures. Diwali is another one that people will have. I celebrated that with a couple of my friends in Reston this year. I think having been exposed to all that, we see all of this as this isn't just my culture, my events only, this is all of our culture and it's also my culture. So, whenever I see ‘hey, let's go to this event’,

but there may also be a threat of some sort. It doesn't just hurt that community. It hurts my community because we also celebrate that with them.

I think having seen all that multicultural part was an eye opener for me, because I always thought it was all the same, there was no difference between Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam. I never saw that until after college, and when I took that trip, and I really mean when I took that trip, my eyes to America opened up. There were a lot of nice people, and I kid you not, America, like no matter how we portray people, nine out of ten people are very nice, they're very helpful. It's the one that gets the louder voice. We went to towns where we were just shocked to see that there was nothing there. There was no idea of wait a minute, that's a brown person with a white person that's coming to our town, they couldn't understand that concept because to them it was so different.

I think all that multicultural aspect, fortunate to be in this area, and I think a lot of people who are here, and their kids who are going to be exposed to all this. You essentially get to see hundreds and hundreds of different countries and different cultures, and religions. But then, the moment you go out of this, you feel so lucky to be in this area.”

About Racism, Discrimination, and Why Immigrants Need Representation in Politics

Senator Salim mentioned that he did not experience any racism growing up. However, he realized there was racism and discrimination after his receiving his Master’s degree. He points out that no one stands up for a community unless someone from that community is part of a political process:

“I never saw the racism. I never saw the hate that other people in that. After I got my Master’s and all that, I looked back, and I was like, ‘wait a minute, there was a lot of discrimination.’ There was a lot of hate; as a 10-year-old boy, you don't think about that. I was just like, I have a white, a brown friend, a black friend, an Asian friend, we're all in this together, we're all from this area. That's what I grew up with. But looking back until after college, I realized the amount of racism and the amount of difficulties that my parents had to go through to get us through those milestones was significant, was difficult. The first time we got our first computer was when I was, I think, in high school, I want to say the 2005 time frame. For us to even figure out what the Internet is and how we get it was very difficult.

I think that's how I end up here. Outside of all that story got my Master’s, worked at different agencies, got myself to where I wanted to be. I run a lot, I do a lot of outdoor activities because that's what you have to do, you have to keep your mind sane at times. I ended up turning in for different political campaigns to just get involved, and that is when I realized there is no one else that's going to stand up for you.

There's no one else that's going to stand up for a community that necessarily doesn't know anything unless somebody from that community runs and becomes part of that system. People will say, ‘If they're not going to give you a seat at the table, you have to

bring a chair, get a seat at the table, or bring your own chair.' That's still not enough for immigrants, and that's still not enough for people of color because you may bring a chair, you may get a seat at the table, but are you effective in communicating what you need? Are you enabling yourself to be the loud voice there? That is what I'm learning right now; I'm in the job as a state Senator for eight months-- it's still difficult. I may have a seat at the table, but they're not going to listen to me, they're not going to hear us. And that's the battle that we have to continue to fight for."

Why Did He Become Interested in Public Service?

Sen. Salim explained that during the initial years when his family moved to the United States, his family got lots of support from public benefit programs. Growing up he wanted to build a career in the financial sector. Later, he realized he needed to give back to society, and that made him think about going into public service. In Sen. Salim's words:

"[Public service] has been an interest for a long time. I think when I was in high school, I realized my dad got a lot of help from social services-- from healthcare to public education to free and reduced lunches. And I learned in high school where all that came from. It was an elected [person] who sat in a random room and said, 'We're going to fund this program for thirty million dollars.' [Sharon Bulova](#), who used to be the chair [of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Virginia], then [Linda Smyth](#), who was supervisor [member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Virginia] for the Providence district, were the folks and [Gerry Connolly](#) [a former member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Virginia and later a U.S. Senator from Virginia District 11] back in the days. Those were the folks who funded programs that would benefit people for years to come.

And I've benefited, my family personally benefited from that--from my sister and my brother and myself to my parents. If you are to put a value on that, it's priceless. [These public benefit programs] help families get out of the street into a home, into getting health care into being in public schools, and then going to college where we had grants and funding that we only had to pay a third of the cost.

I think once I realized all that when I was in high school, I realized that no matter what happens in the end, I wanted to be the person who makes those decisions-- whether it's an administrative position in public administration or an elected official. I always wanted to do something because I felt the value was there, because I could be the [next] Sharon Bulova, I could be the [next] Linda Smyth, or I could be the [next] Gerry Connolly, who funds things that help thousands of other families.

So that was my mentality back in the day. When I was like 18 or 19, I realized that my idea of going to Wall Street, getting a job in the stock market, and getting a job in the finance industry had completely changed. It was that I think my calling was in public service, my calling was, how do I make other people's lives better than the day before?

Now that is I'm here in 2024, knowing that the policies you implement impact thousands of people.”

Introduction to Politics

Sen. Salim was involved with the local Democratic Committee for some time, but he did not consider running for the Senate election until recently. He explains:

“I’ve been in the office for about eight months since January 2024 and have never held any type of office. I had no ambitions to run for public office until December of 2022, when all of the redistricting had settled in and people were looking for new representation and issues from gun violence prevention, from individual rights, from all of that, from public education as well. It was something my opponent couldn't give a straight answer at times, and I think that led to other people seeking somebody to run for office. And I've always been involved with the community, from being in precinct operations to finance chair for the local Democratic Committee, and to chairing the local Democratic Committee as well. And once we were looking for candidates, I was also looking to find a candidate to challenge him. And I realized halfway through, ‘Wait a minute, I could be that candidate.’ I wasn't sure how to cultivate or curate my own story until I looked back at the journey of how my family got here.”

Political Activism

Sen. Salim points out that his political activism is motivated by his intentions to impact people's lives positively. In his words: *“I always hear somebody's story, I always carry these bills, every bill I carry there is a meaning to it. I don't just carry it because somebody asks me to do it. It's there is a list of things behind it why we need to carry it and how important it is, and that's how it's been.”*

As an example, Sen. Salim referred to [one bill](#) that he proposed to reduce the jail sentence from a maximum of 365 days to 364 days for Class 1 misdemeanors. He describes:

“If immigrants who are not citizens have a misdemeanor when they apply for their citizenship, they get deported.¹ And I fundamentally wanted to change the law to say misdemeanors are 364 [days] instead of 365. By doing that one day could save a dad or a mom's life. Where all they knew was that they happened to be in the wrong place, where they stole something and didn't know the law, and they took no jail time but got a misdemeanor on their record. But suddenly six years later, they're getting deported to a country they don't know. They're going to be apart from their family.

¹ Criminal convictions may affect an immigrant's ability to obtain Legal Permanent Residency and U.S. citizenship on the grounds of inadmissibility under [the Immigration and Nationality Act](#) if the crime is considered [“a crime involving moral turpitude”](#). Misdemeanors are generally considered less serious crimes compared to felonies, but can affect immigrant status or even lead to deportation proceedings depending on the seriousness of the offence. Immigrants who are convicted of misdemeanors with a crime that has a maximum possible sentence of one year or less may not be inadmissible on the basis of the “Petty Offense Exception”.

And if I could have got that bill pass got that through, then I did something, and those are the things that I wanted to be part of, and I think that's what I'm doing every single day.”

Immigrants in the United States and Senator Salim’s Aspirations

Sen. Salim plans to be in politics in the foreseeable future. He believes the United States needs major reforms in its immigration policies. Most of these reforms need to be done at the federal level, which will allow local employers to hire immigrant workers and, at the same time, allow foreign nationals a legal pathway to migrate to the United States and contribute to the economy. Despite limited scope, states can formulate policies that will help immigrants to be able to settle and integrate into American society. He emphasized: allowing immigrants to come to the United States is investing in the future:

“I do plan on staying in the Senate for a while. I think you have to do the job that the people hired you to do, and there was a list of things that I wanted to do, and I think we accomplished some of them, and there's a lot that there's still barriers that that's going to take years for us to accomplish from housing to gun violence prevention and all that. And I think when it comes to the broader immigration issue, at the state level, there's really not a lot we can do. But things that we can do, you know, from the 364- misdemeanor bill, to housing immigrants, to giving out social services. Those are the things we, as a state, can do.

At the national level, if I'm ever in Congress or in the Senate, or in any administrative position out there, there is a need for an overhaul of not only the immigration system but the way we help those who are in need. For every judge, there are 6,000 cases. Right now, if you're an immigrant and you're trying to seek asylum, it's going to take you four to six years to get in front of a judge to get your paperwork processed.

I think there is a need for an acceleration of that. And the way we really have to change our innovation system is not necessarily to let everyone in. It's more of, are they coming here for the work? Are they coming here to administer kids' education? What are they really coming here for? I think that's the question that's never asked. Because when you look at this is a prime example of is Maryland Crab industry, which brings immigrants from Mexico. At the beginning of every season, they come here, they get a place to stay, and they work crab seasons over, and they go back to Mexico. But they come here just for the jobs because they don't have those same jobs in Mexico.

So, it's like, how do we create one or more of those systems where if we have factories where we don't have workers, and this is the case in other parts of the world, Qatar and other places where they don't have people that they need for labor. When people talk about Hispanics coming over across the border and they're taking all the jobs, it's because no one else is willing to do those jobs. Why can't we make those things legal, where, sure, from South America, tens and thousands of people can come here, and there

are jobs that are available for them? Let's go and get them those jobs. They go back to their family. Now their families are fit.

That's hundreds of thousands of other people who are impacted by those minor decisions we made. So, I think it's making those connections. That's how we need to solve the problem. I think we're looking at it as if they're going to come here, they're going to take our job, they're going to take our social services, all this stuff. That's looking at it from the point of view that you don't want to help anyone.

That's been another issue is that way, you can truly see which cases are asylum, which cases are different, and which cases are personal. That is where it cuts off when it comes to different types of immigration. There's a need for a big overhaul and I think it's going to take an immigrant to understand the system. I think it's going to take, whether it's an appointed person or a congressional person, somebody who came as an asylum status, who went through the process, to be in a position like that to make that change to the system. To say, I've been through it, and I hate to always say, I have this issue, and I couldn't do it. But in this immigration system and overhaul, that is what it's going to take us. Thousands of immigrants have to be elected to change the system.

So not only does it benefit folks around them, but it also clears up the backlog. It also helps the American economy because, at the end of it, a lot of the immigrants that come here still pay their taxes; they pay everything that's legally required of them, from Social Security to taxes to school fees to even paying their car taxes. They put that in there because they know they came here; they have to follow the rules. So, I think immigrants understand America differently than Americans or people who've been here for a while think: 'immigrants are just coming here to take the jobs, they're not paying taxes, they're committing crimes.'

They're actually coming here so their family can have a better life than outside of America, and when they are here, their kids are the ones who are at the Spelling Bees-- at the top of the tickets, because they never got that opportunity for those things [in their home country]."

I was an athlete in high school, and not in a million years would I think I would be running track and field or being a pole vaulter. Never in my life would I have thought about that. Because we were given that opportunity, it's sort of like an investment in someone else's future. You put 10 bucks in me when I was a kid, I will come back and make that a million dollars. And that is what immigrants provide.

Bangladeshi Diaspora in the DMV Metropolitan Area and Beyond

Sen. Salim notes that a big portion of Bangladeshi immigrants live in New York metropolitan areas, and others are spread out throughout the country, with California, Texas, and Michigan, and the greater DMV area being popular destinations. He recalled that there were a few Bangladeshi families in DC when his family arrived there. Sen. Salim pointed out that sometimes newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants move from other places to New York because in New York, they have more social and family ties that help them find jobs and get settled down. As he says: “[Bangladeshi immigrants] get the sense ‘if I go to New York, I can feel the sense of being home. If I’m in DC, I have to work 24/7, I barely get to see anyone.’”

Sen. Salim believes the Bangladeshi community in the DMV area has gotten larger over time and has been getting integrated into U.S. society. In his opinion, Bangladeshi immigrants generally bring lots of cultural elements to the United States:

“There’s a family in Alexandria that does an Independence Day celebration for Bangladeshis in their backyard. And this is the guy who came the same year as my dad in the 1997 time frame, and he has built a whole restaurant industry for himself. He hosts a lot of parties. If you get there, the Bangladeshi culture is really that you just eat. You eat until you can’t eat anymore and then you celebrate to burn all that off. So that’s been really the thing, and I think they bring a lot of cultures not only to America, but when you look at Fort Hunt Park in the Mount Vernon area or any of the county parks, the bigger the parks, the better. I’ve been to a lot of their events where they will host different cultural events, and they want a showcase that it’s not only open to the public but it’s also that we’re part of the American culture, and we want to integrate into it.

There’s a lot of history in Bangladesh. They bring the culture of making [chai](#), they bring the culture of making [Biryani](#); they bring the culture of making bread, they bring the culture of using only six different ingredients to make 20 different meals out of this, so that you’re not going hungry. A lot of Bangladeshis will dress in a very colorful way. And that’s part of the culture. I always hear that when I came here, to be a doctor or a lawyer, they will never tell you to be an artist. And in Bangladesh, a large number of folks end up being artists, whether it’s music or street art or just art in general, and they bring all that wherever they go. It’s a lot of color.

I think the heritage over the last 20 years that I have seen went from minimal to now a little bit more, and they feel more accepted. And I think the reason why they don’t get involved in the political world is that when they get involved in that world, they sense a lot of chaos and they go back to the cultural events, they go back to culture itself, and say, ‘if I bring this here, people are more likely to come to taste my food, come enjoy tea with me, do all these things with me so that I don’t have to get involved in the political world.’”

In Senator Salim's view, natural disasters² and political turmoil are two big reasons why many Bangladeshi people migrate overseas³. As a child, he has seen two extreme ends of natural disasters—a drought in 1997 and a flood in 1998.

About Celebrations in the United States and the Meaning of the Fourth of July for Immigrants

Senator Salim said that he learned to celebrate many different types of holidays and occasions as he grew up:

"My family grew up just celebrating Eid and nothing else. But over the years, as I had white friends, black friends, and Asian friends, we celebrate AAPI Heritage Month. We celebrate with some of my friends, who celebrate Christmas. I'm a practicing Muslim, but it shouldn't prevent me from celebrating with other people on their holidays. So, when it comes to Christmas, I give gifts to my friends. We never celebrated birthdays [in my family]. That's something that I have learned-- I integrated the birthdays since I was like 20. You've got to celebrate your birthday with your friends, and that is something brand new to me. In those days, my parents would not celebrate birthdays. Let's say I do a party, they won't show up because we don't celebrate birthdays. So, I think I have put a lot of the holidays ... like the Fourth of July is a big one now. Fourth of July and barbecue, those are culturally integrated. In Bangladesh, I always heard Americans wear cowboy hats, and they had barbecues and big steaks. Those are the impressions that when you go to Bangladesh, they think of every American person as a cowboy. I don't know where they got that from.

I'm a practicing Muslim, but it shouldn't prevent me from celebrating with other people on their holidays.

But when it comes to the mixing of the holidays, I think Eid has been one big one where I invite my other friends who don't celebrate it to come to have a meal. I think it's the idea of sharing a meal that adds to a lot of the holidays. I even went to Easter service with a friend of mine a couple of years ago and sat through it, and that wasn't something I anticipated celebrating or doing. But it was for me to get to know another culture and for them to get to know me, perhaps an exchange had to have happened.

I picked up on, especially birthdays. I don't think it's a holiday, but the Fourth of July is celebrated not just because it's America's Independence Day. It's also for the people who come here for freedom of speech, for the idea of doing better than you did yesterday, to

² According to the [WorldRiskIndex](#) 2024 report, Bangladesh is one of the top 10 countries in terms of the highest risk of natural disaster. The [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative](#) identifies Bangladesh as one of the most vulnerable countries for the negative impact of climate change.

³ According to the [United Nations](#), in 2020, 7.4 million (4.6% of the total population) Bangladeshis were international migrants, making it one of the top 10 countries in terms of origin of international migrants.

celebrate the Fourth of July. I think that has been the biggest one that we've been celebrating."

Advantages and Disadvantages of Immigrants in Politics

Sen. Salim believes there are certain advantages and disadvantages when immigrants want to become a part of the political system:

"I think there are a lot of advantages to being an immigrant. The main part is that you bring a different lens to the table... You bring the perspective that we had nothing. You bring the perspective, we struggle to get health care, so now you understand why that funding for \$20 million to get healthcare to five thousand people really matters... I think that's an advantage that a lot of people bring, including myself and some of my colleagues who are immigrants.

Then there is the other thing where there is this disadvantage of being immigrant is that because you're an immigrant, because you're from a different community. The mentality that I've seen is that not only elected officials, but organizations and groups will think, 'That community is an immigrant community, they deserve less.'

Then the community that's bringing us a lot of tax money, there are a lot of businesses, there are a lot of wealthy people. Their streets have to be cleaner, the other ones don't, because that's an immigrant community. The disadvantage of coming out of an immigrant community is that the perception is, 'you're not wealthy and you're also not educated.' You have all these barriers, you have all these blocks. The preconceived notion that 'you're going to fail' is already there, and that 'oh, you're an immigrant, as long as you tried, you're okay.' But the moment you make it out of it, it's like, 'Oh, I knew you were going to make it out of this.'

I think there is that disadvantage of you have to prove yourself ten times before they can say, 'oh, you got this', that is where the disadvantage comes out, but when we as immigrants prove ourselves ten times and they see us for the first time, they realize 'wait a minute, this person has done this 100 times. There is not a single burden or barrier that they're not going to be breaking.' So, I think that's where that disadvantage becomes an advantage."

About Socioeconomic and Political Differences Between Bangladesh and the United States

Sen. Salim explains there are some fundamental differences between politics in the United States and Bangladesh. He pointed out a couple of key contrasts. He believes that in Bangladesh, politicians lack accountability, and often, the general people lack freedom of speech. He pointed out that politics in Bangladesh is often controlled by a handful of families, and the electoral system is not transparent. Sen. Salim explained the contrasting freedom of speech:

“In America, you can own whatever, you have the freedom of speech to say whatever. There is accountability in the process, and the government is not going to come take away your property because you said something.

In Bangladesh, it's the opposite. You say something, you disrupt a system, then the system will come back and take your property, but if you don't, then you can have all the land in the world, and the government will never say a single word to you. I think there is a huge difference in the accountability portion.”

Sen. Salim also pointed out that the cost of living in Bangladesh is very low, and often people don't need to pay income taxes.