

Kolkata diary

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1. I was invited by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to give a [keynote address at the India International Science Festival \(IISF\)](#) which was held in Kolkata from 5th to 8th November 2019. Besides my talk I also participated in a panel discussion and took part in the valedictory function on 8th November.
2. IISF was a huge event with multiple themes and was spread over 4-5 venues across Kolkata. According to organizers there was a footfall of ~ 10,000 during the 4 day mela.
3. My event was in the National Social Organizations and Institutions Meet (NSOIM) segment and was held in Science City from 6th to 8th November. My keynote address was titled [“R&D Roadmap for rural India”](#) and was [nicely covered in mass media](#).
4. DST graciously hosted us (my wife Nandini also accompanied me) in a 5 star hotel Vivanta Taj and we were ferried from the hotel to the venue daily by taxi.
5. There were quite a number of very interesting themes of the festival but we could not attend the functions because of the time clash with our

events and also the distances between the venues. This was also the general complaint of most of the participants of IISF.

6. Talking with school going children who were attending IISF, I found that they enjoyed the exhibitions and working science models displayed in different exhibition halls. I guess that was possibly the whole purpose of such science festivals and so from that point of view it was a success.
7. The same could not be said about the speeches in the sessions which for most part were pedantic and boring.
8. I was visiting Kolkata after almost 10 years. The last time was in early 2011 when I had gone to give an [Institute lecture at IIT Kharagpur](#). This time Kolkata looked much cleaner with broad roads, flyovers, and less traffic jams. All along the route from airport to our hotel there were posters of Nobel Prize winner Abhijit Banerjee and Mamta Banerjee. The West Bengal government has conveniently adopted Abhijit Banerjee as the long lost son !
9. This visit to Kolkata provided us with an opportunity to see our dear friend Joshita Davar and her father G. S. Davar. Joshita now runs one of India's largest patent attorney firms L. S. Davar & Co. which was founded by her grandfather. She graciously took us out to sample authentic Bengali cuisine at a family run small restaurant Kewpie's.

10. This trip also gave us an opportunity to visit my former roommate Dr. Arun Majumdar. We were together in University of Florida, Gainesville in the 1970s. Arun retired as a Professor and Deputy Director of IIT Kharagpur. We spent a lovely evening with Arun and his wife Bandana at their residence.
11. During IISF, I also met Dr. K. Muraleedharan the Director of Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CGCRI) - a CSIR lab. CGCRI was started by my uncle Dr. Atma Ram in 1945 who later on in the 1960s became Director General of CSIR. Dr. Muraleedharan was kind and extremely gracious to give us the tour of the lab and facilities. CGCRI was the first lab set up under CSIR umbrella.
12. We left Kolkata on the 9th November morning with hurricane Bulbul chasing our aircraft. It had started raining nicely when we took off from Kolkata and the airport was closed by the evening.

PHOTOS



Panel discussion on Social Enterprises



Delivering keynote address



Shawl ceremony!



Valedictory and prize distribution function with Chief Guest DST Secretary Dr. Ashutosh Sharma



Joshita Davar, Nandini and Jaysheel Davar
(Joshita's son)

HOME

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