

| SHUTTERSTORIES |



# THE MAIDAN

PHOTOS: AMIR HAMJA

The Maidan, literally meaning open field, also referred as Brigade Parade Ground is the largest urban park in Kolkata, India. It is a vast stretch of field and home to numerous play grounds, including the famous cricketing venue- Eden Gardens, several football stadia, and the Kolkata Race Course. The Maidan is dotted with statues and pieces of architecture, most notable being the Victoria Memorial. Due to the freshness and greenery it provides to the metropolis, it has been referred to as the "lungs of Kolkata". The wide field stretches from the Hoogly River on the west to the Victoria Memorial on the east. It is a historical and cultural center of Kolkata as well as a centre of leisure and entertainment for Calcuttans.



| STRIKING A CHORD |

It's 5 am, and you wake up to cook breakfast, clean up, dress your children and send them to school. You go to work, and after an 8-10 hour grueling session with meetings and deadlines, you go back home, only to start cooking and cleaning and taking care of people – again. Clearly, balancing work with home is not an easy feat, and life would be easier if both men and women would try to share their household duties inside their homes, as they do outside of their homes.

Last week was a whirlpool of women's day events and programmes; speaking at seminars and moderating round tables. And like every year, we spoke about balancing work and home, spending quality time with children and of course, how many parents are still trying to make their young daughters choose between marriage or an everlasting exile.

However, this year the discussion just got all the more interesting because more men participated, as a result, talking about how the challenges faced by women in Bangladesh (or globally) is not a woman-only problem. These challenges were to be faced together by both men and women.

At a round table organised by The Daily Star and Jaago Foundation, men and women representing different fields of work, came together to talk about how one should have self-confidence and belief in one's own abilities and capabilities. And one should start the process of instilling confidence and strength by talking to children and teaching them from right to wrong. "We must instill the sense amongst children that men and women are equal and they deserve respect from each other," says Zara Jabeen Mahbub, head of communication and service quality at BRAC Bank.

What if there was a platform for women where they could share their problems and get a solution within a few hours? Despite the fact that it sounds too good to be true, this platform does exist in Bangladesh. Maya Apa app, is a technology, that can be easily downloaded on your smart phone and used to get help. Women use this app to place their questions and within hours someone on the other end writes back with an answer or a solution. In fact, some women were also provided with counseling and legal help, as per the

# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S DAY

ELITA KARIM

PHOTO COURTESY: JAAGO FOUNDATION



circumstances. "We also have a lot of men writing to us as well," says Ivy Huq Russell, the Founder of Maya Apa app, who was also present at the round table. "At least 40 percent of the users are male." These men pose their questions or, most of the time, ask on behalf of a sister, a friend or a wife.

Dr Saikh Imtiaz Shimul, Chairman of the Department of Women and Gender Studies at Dhaka University says that children take for granted whatever they see and learn while growing up. "I have

seen my mother work the whole day, and that's how I grew up thinking that household work is to be done by mothers and wives," he says. "Now, when I help my wife out at home, I hope my son will learn that it is his job to take care of a home as well." He speaks of an experiment that he had done, where he asked a group of young boys to follow their mothers around for a whole day, help them out in their household works, and then write what all they did. "After the activity, some boys did change their

opinions and perspective about the whole – "my father works but my mother doesn't."

There will be changes – the first change being of the way we think. Once we stop gender stereotyping and start doing our own work, at least half of the problems will be solved. You never know, maybe within a decade or so, there won't be a women's day to celebrate -- only a day to celebrate this unique yet natural partnership between people of all genders.

## ABOUT TOWN



3RD TAREQ MASUD FESTIVAL  
৩য় তারকে মাসুদ উৎসব  
March 12-13, 6 pm  
Bangladesh Shilpokola Academy  
Hosted by- Tareque Masud Memorial Trust (TMMT)  
For more information, visit:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/561061940718025/>



1ST NATIONAL MIME FEST- 2016  
March 13-15, 3pm - 10pm  
TSC, University of Dhaka  
Hosted by- Mir Lokman, Shaifullah Sadeq, Titas Saha Masti  
For more information, visit:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1683091565281293/>



3RD YOUTH MOCK PARLIAMENT ON "RIGHT TO WORK"  
March 16, 2pm - 5pm  
Senate Bhaban, University of Dhaka  
Hosted by- Youth against Hunger Bangladesh  
For Query, visit:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/479253662276559/>