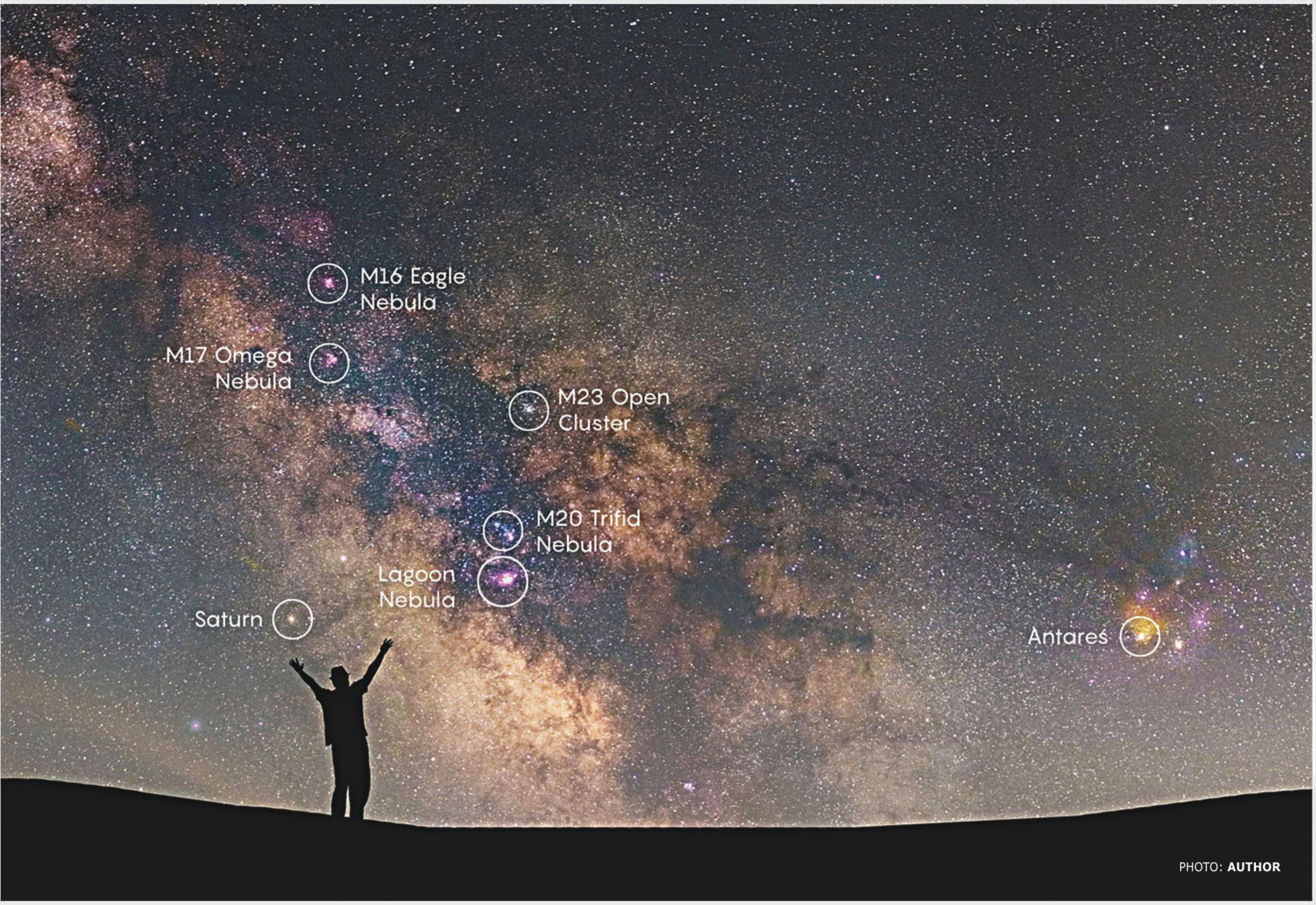

PHOTO: **AUTHOR**

How to photograph the night sky from Bangladesh

MIDHATH CHOWDHURY

As a passionate astrophotographer, I have been the shooting night sky for years now. Amazing as it is, this form of photography allows you to see beyond the sky. It shows you that sky isn't the limit.

To photograph images of our galaxy, the Milky Way, you'll primarily need 3 things:

LOCATION

You need to be in a dark location, where there are few artificial lights. Artificial lights, lamps and bulbs for example, cause a different kind of pollution called light pollution, which is measured in Bortle scale. In the Bortle scale, Dhaka city falls at level 7. The ideal area to be in is around level 1-4.

But getting to a location with level 1-3 dark sky in Bangladesh is actually pretty easy. As most of the infrastructure is based around the city all you have to do is drive away from the city towards the countryside.

TIME

Milky Way season falls in between the Earth's rotation; it is the little window of a few months when we can see the core of the galaxy.

There is more. You'll need to co-ordinate with the time of the Moon. Because the Moon is between the sight of the Milky Way and the Earth, at night, its brightness causes the same effect as light pollution, meaning you won't be able to see the Milky Way.

In Bangladesh, the Milky Way galaxy is visible from March to September. So, in order to witness the Milky Way, you'll need to be in a dark location during the new moon. This comes in about every 20 days when you'll get to shoot the galaxy for about 3-8 hours at night depending on the rise and setting time of the Moon and the Milky Way itself. Yes, as the Earth rotates, like the Sun and Moon, the Milky Way galaxy too rises and sets.

WEATHER

Weather in Bangladesh is really unpredictable. The Milky Way stays in a straight position between March and August. And these months coincide with the monsoon. Sadly enough, heavy clouds do not help at all while taking photographs.

So here's a recap: you'll need to find a dark location, be on perfect time, and hope for a clear weather.

CAMERA

I've been shooting the Milky Way with very a basic gear.

I use a Nikon D3300 camera. It's an APS-C DX format camera. Its light-weight, has great battery life and is inexpensive. As it has a 1.5x crop sensor that lets me use full-frame lenses to get deep sky images, without buying other expensive lenses.

LENSES

As for lenses, I use two.

1. Nikon 18-55 mm: The cheapest lens Nikon makes. It came with the body i.e. it's the kit lens. My goal is to shoot with what I have. Theoretically, it is enough for the Milky Way images. But I would recommend a wide and faster f1.4 or at least f2.8 lens.

2. Nikon 50 mm: I use this for shooting lots of images in one go and later stitch them into an ultra-high resolution panorama.

Each year only a few of my images come out good. One final thing to remember, it's not about just taking photos, it's about perfection and accuracy of colours and details as well. Always go for quality over quantity.

Stay tuned for Midhath's astrophotography on our next KALEIDOSCOPE.