

## T A N G E N T S

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

## Remembering Majeda

Majeda Haq, a star of Bangladesh birding and a development professional, left us on 6 June, 2019. Her untimely departure - in addition to the death of wildlife researcher Tania Khan in March - made 2019 a painful year for conservationists of our land.

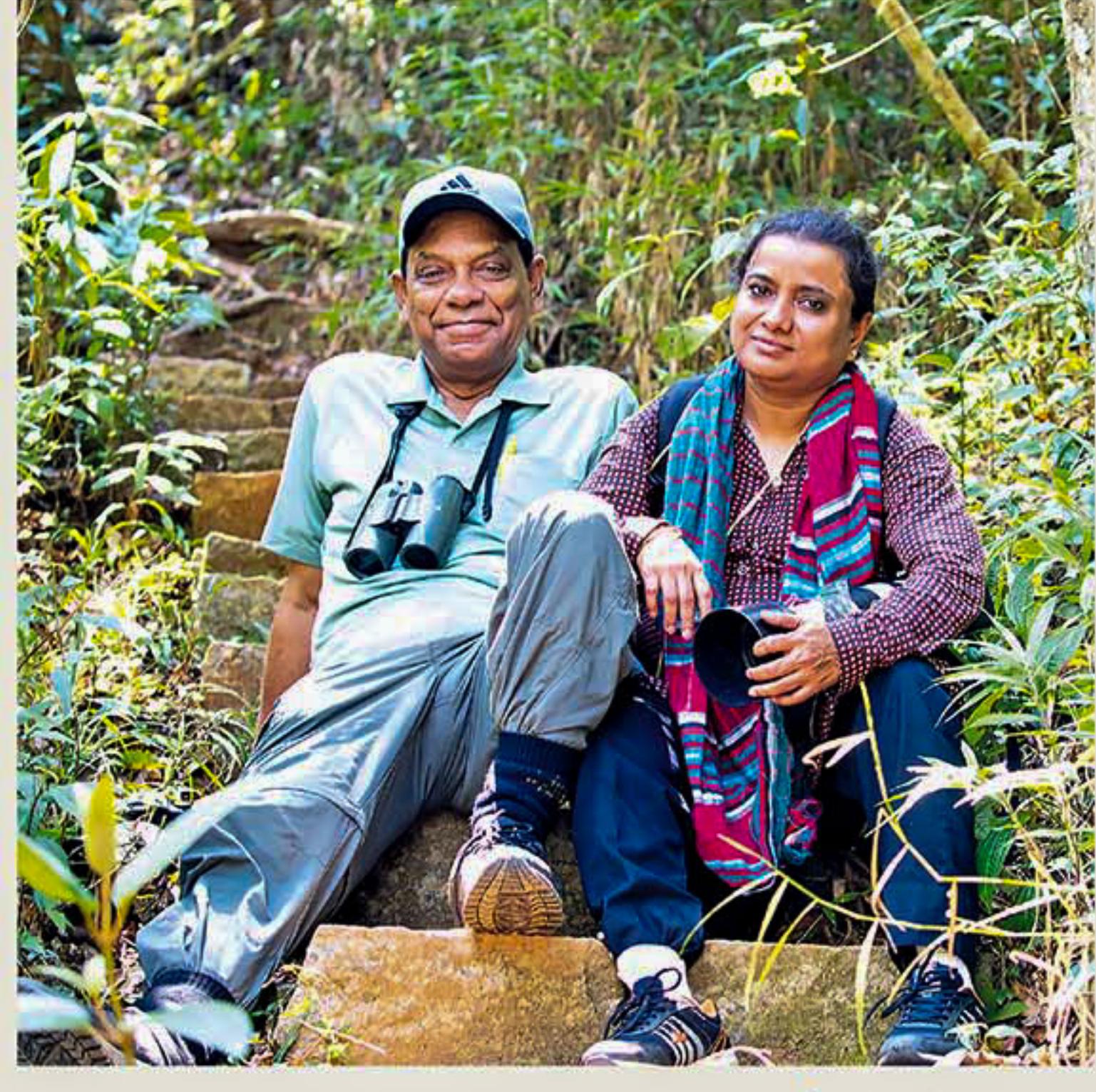
My fondest memory of Majeda is from 2017 during our group tour of Madagascar. One afternoon we were at an urban lake teeming with water birds. Unbeknownst to us (and our guides) some special birds were mixed with the more common birds. As I walked around the lake taking pictures, I noticed Majeda engaging another group of tourists in conversation. After finishing, she came away excitedly and gathered our group together. She had just learned that several rare and endangered Malagasy Pond Herons were roosting in the lake. With her usual alacrity and resourcefulness, she quickly found them. Without her we would have missed this once in a lifetime bird.

I first met Majeda in 1986 just before my marriage. She - along with Shibli, Shireen and Jabeen - were close friends of my fiancé. They were all studying together at Dhaka University. The four friends brought much merriment and laughter to the functions of the wedding.

After our wedding my wife and I returned to California where we began life as newlyweds and were absorbed in the rush of daily life.

Two decades later, we returned to live in Bangladesh. My wife connected with her old friends and I met Majeda again. Learning about her interest and activities in conservation, I told her about my new found interest in the world of birds. I mentioned to her that though I preferred to work alone, I was having difficulties learning about our birds without expert help.

She must have remembered



Majeda and Enam Bhai in Madagascar, 2017.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

this because one day she called and invited me to join a group of birders on a trip to Tangar Haor. At that time, I was putting together a photo book on Sylhet and wanted to photograph the beautiful haor, so I immediately agreed. On board the boat that was our home for three days, I met several birders, including Majeda's husband, collaborator, and founder of the Bangladesh Bird Club, Enam Ul Haque.

In retrospect that trip was a critical one in my birding life. I gained confidence in identifying species and made new friends in the birding community.

I also started attending the monthly Bird Club meetings at Enam Bhai and Majeda's home - meetings that had been going on for twenty years. She welcomed all members, old and new, graciously to her home, serving snacks and making sure the

gatherings were productive and interesting.

Several months after our Madagascar trip, I ran into Majeda at Lavender Superstore. She and Enam Bhai had just returned from a birding trip to Sri Lanka. She spoke with delight about her birding experience there, saying it had been like no other trip.

That was the last time I saw her. She fell ill soon afterward. With her departure, the

Bangladesh Bird Club, birders and conservationists, and the wildlife of Bangladesh have suffered an irreparable loss. I will miss her friendship and remember her razor-sharp intelligence, commitment to wildlife and vivacious personality.

To join the Bangladesh Bird Club please sms 'wish to be Bbc member' to +8801767291639.

## Monsoon rain destroys 273 Rohingya shelters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 11 Rohingyas were injured and 273 shelters were destroyed during three days of continuous rain in Cox's Bazar settlements, according to UN Refugee Agency.

More than 900,000 Rohingya refugees, who escaped persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine state since August 2017, are living in the settlements.

An estimated 350mm of rain fell in 72 hours from Monday and more downpours are expected throughout the next week, with four months of the monsoon to go.

According to preliminary reports, there have been 26 landslides, UNHCR said.

Refugee volunteers trained by UNHCR and partners worked throughout the night on Wednesday in heavy rain to help families in urgent need, UNHCR spokesperson Charlie Yaxley said at a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva yesterday.

"In some cases, this involved rescuing refugees from shelters destroyed by landslides. We have temporarily relocated 2,137 people, either because their shelters suffered substantial damage or as a precaution."

"Our network of emergency response teams has been mobilised to identify the needs of the most vulnerable and prioritise them for assistance. As an immediate response, pre-positioned emergency supplies are being distributed to help rebuild, repair and strengthen damaged shelters," Charlie Yaxley said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL. 2

## 'Influential quarters in remote areas often shelter culprits'

Activists demand punishment for rapists, murderers

being forced to work due to acute poverty.

"The government should introduce specific policies to ensure a healthy and humane environment for them [children]," she added.

Khelaghlar Ashor's presidium member Dr Lenin Chowdhury said that influential quarters in remote parts of the country often give shelter to culprits. He urged law enforcers to arrest those masterminds to permanently resolve this issue.

Khelaghlar's acting general secretary Runu Ali, advisor Prof Abu Sayed and Udich's general secretary Jamshed Anwar Tapan were also present there.

In the last six months, at least 630 women were raped and 37 of them killed after rape. There were also rape attempts on 105 others, according to a report of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, published on July 1.



A young student drawing a picture to protest the abuse of women and children in front of Khelaghlar Ashor's human chain yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Gas price hike only to facilitate LNG importers: Fakhrul

BNP extends support to Left Democratic Alliance's hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has extended moral support to Left Democratic Alliance's hartal, protesting the gas price hike.

"We think the hartal called by left-leaning parties is logical. That's why we are extending our moral support to their hartal called for July 7," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told journalists.

The decision came after the party's standing committee members held a meeting yesterday at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

Fakhrul said, "We think the gas price hike is completely illogical. It will have an adverse impact on the overall economy. Prices of daily essentials will increase and production cost will rise."

Criticising the government for increasing gas price, Fakhrul said the government has raised the gas tariff unfairly only to facilitate those ruling party leaders and businessmen who import liquefied natural gas (LNG).

"The only aim behind the gas price hike is to create a scope for people who import LNG to make quick money," he said.

When asked whether they will wage protests, Fakhrul said, "We have already observed a programme on July 1. Now, we are extending our support to the programme of left-leaning parties. We will consider our programmes later."

Left Democratic Alliance (LDA) has called a half-day hartal across the country for tomorrow to protest the gas tariff hike.

LDA, a coalition of eight left-leaning political parties, includes Communist Party of Bangladesh, Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh, Ganashamhati Andolan and Ganatantrik Biplobi Party.

According to the new tariff, households using a single burner will pay Tk 925 instead of Tk 750 a month. Those using a double burner will pay Tk 975 instead of Tk 800.

Gonoforum and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal have already extended support to the hartal.

**'KHALEDA A SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY'** Describing Khaleda Zia as "a symbol of democracy", Fakhrul yesterday said democracy in the country will be restored when the BNP chairperson will be freed from jail.

"We are working to unite countrymen alongside a legal battle and will wage a strong movement to free Khaleda Zia," Fakhrul said while speaking at a token hunger strike programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Sammilita Peshajibi Parishad, a pro-BNP body of professionals, arranged the three-hour long token hunger strike from 9am, demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

Accusing the government of establishing "a reign of plundering", Fakhrul said "mega projects" are being undertaken for "mega corruption".

SEE PAGE 4 COL. 3

## FOOTBRIDGES AT THE COST OF FOOTPATHS

|| MATHEWS CHIRAN ||



Several city corporation officials said "the city wasn't planned properly" and thus pedestrian movement was not taken into consideration when building footbridges.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

student at the college.

Between Gulshan-1 and Link Road, there is a footbridge that blocks the way of pedestrians. The footbridge is rarely used by locals, but the footpath underneath is frequented by office-goers.

"The roads stay jam-packed and footpaths are occupied by large structures; where are we supposed to walk?" wondered Ashraf Khandaker, a private job holder.

Not only is the space under the stairs constricted, it is also dirty. A sudden stench of urine and trash assaults the pedestrians' senses when crossing these parts of the footpath.

Moreover, the flower pots that

were set up on the footbridges have dried up, defeating their initial purpose of beautification.

There are 30 and 51 footbridges in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) respectively, according to officials.

Regarding the issue of taking up footpath space, executive engineer (civil) of DNCC, Md Farhad, said, "It is true that the footbridges have obstructed walking space in some areas. But the next time we have to construct one, we will hire consultants who can suggest ways to keep the walkways free."

Currently a footbridge is

SEE PAGE 4 COL. 5

## DHAKA TODAY

Venue: SME Foundation, Panthapath  
Time: 9am

**WORKSHOP**  
Basic photography training  
Venue: Dhaka University Photography Society  
Time: 4pm

**CAMPAIGN**  
Cleaning Central Shaheed Minar  
Organiser: BD Clean (DU unit)  
Time: 3pm

**WORKSHOP**  
On Patachitra  
Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani  
Time: 12pm

## HEALTH HACK

Heat exhaustion is a major concern at the moment.

1. Symptoms include heavy sweating, nausea, dizziness, headache and fatigue.

2. Move to a shaded place and rest a while. Drink plenty of fluids, preferably saline drinks. Splash yourself with cold water.

3. Stay hydrated throughout the day, wear light clothing and try to avoid being under the sun from 11am to 3pm.

## DHAKA VIBE

Footbridges are common in Dhaka, making the lives of pedestrians easier in a city with maddening traffic.

But on the flipside, some of these footbridges' columns take up the entire width of the footpath, leaving little room for pedestrians to walk freely. The footpaths also have metal fencing, further restricting movement.

People need to squeeze through the small gap between the fencing and columns - often forced to walk sideways.

One such footbridge is in Paribagh. It has a shade, and people from all walks of life use it every day. But it obstructs the footpath on both sides of the

road. During peak hours, a large number of people have to walk through the small and cramped space under the stairs.

"I use this footbridge often, but it's annoying as it hampers free movement of pedestrians instead of easing the commute," complained Dolon Sharkar, who uses this route to go to work in Farmgate.

Another footbridge in front of Government Titumir College in Mohakhali causes the same problem. "People often have to walk on the main road when crossing the base of the bridge, as the small space on the footpath is too crowded. Like others, I had to get used to this," said Druti Akhter, an honours

student at the college.

Between Gulshan-1 and Link Road, there is a footbridge that blocks the way of pedestrians. The footbridge is rarely used by locals, but the footpath underneath is frequented by office-goers.

"The roads stay jam-packed and footpaths are occupied by large structures; where are we supposed to walk?" wondered Ashraf Khandaker, a private job holder.

Not only is the space under the stairs constricted, it is also dirty.

A sudden stench of urine and trash assaults the pedestrians' senses when crossing these parts of the footpath.

Moreover, the flower pots that

**THEATRE**  
Mahajane Naw  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy  
Time: 7:15pm

**CULTURAL EVENT**  
Highlighting indigenous culture  
Venue: Jagannath Hall, DU  
Time: 9am

**PROTEST**  
Torch rally against gas price hike  
Organiser: Bangladesh Chatra Federation  
Venue: Shahbagh  
Time: 5pm

**WORKSHOP**  
Digital marketing for SME products