

About **17,000** children under the age of 17 drown every year in Bangladesh

BY Amy Fallon

IN BANGLADESH, the children are surrounded by water.



They travel to and from village homes in boats and take their baths, wash their clothes, fish and play in lakes and rivers.

But most children don't know how to swim.

About 17,000 children in Bangladesh under the age of 17 drown every year. Drownings are the leading killer of people in this age range, says The Centre for Injury Prevention and Research in Bangladesh.



Helping kids swim for survival

About 80 per cent of drownings occur in ponds just 20 metres from homes.

Drowning is also a problem in other Asian countries such as Vietnam and Thailand which, like Bangladesh, experience extreme heatwaves and monsoons.

Through the SwimSafe program, which began in 2006, about half a million children under 18 have been taught to swim in man-made and natural ponds modified with

bamboo. In the country's capital, Dhaka, SwimSafe conducts lessons in portable pools.

Australians also help save lives in Bangladesh. The Royal Life Saving Society Australia has partnered with SwimSafe to provide swimming and water safety lessons.

"A child who learns swimming through SwimSafe has a 96 per cent less chance of drowning," says its director, Dr Aminur Rahman.

Children also learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR.

A few years back Rabiul Islam, 10, was travelling to his village house in Faridpur on a river in the country's centre when a boat capsized.

Lots of people, including children, drowned.

Rabiul knew he needed to learn how to swim and a year ago began lessons at his school in Dhaka through SwimSafe.

"It wasn't hard," says Rabiul, who learnt to swim in 14 days. "I feel proud that if something happens with my boat I can now save myself and others."

Above (from left), Rabiul Islam, Merajul Hossain, Fahima Akhter and Saudia Ferdouse, have all learned how to swim. PHOTO Amy Fallon

LONDON BRIDGES DIVIDES WITH NEW MAYOR

BY Robin Millard

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



LONDON'S new mayor, Sadiq Khan, slept in a bunk-bed until he was 24 years old!

The 45-year-old is the son of a bus driver who moved to the UK from Pakistan in the 1960s. He grew up with six brothers and one sister.

Mr Khan, a former human rights lawyer, was voted in as London's mayor this month, becoming the city's first Muslim to hold the position.

He has promised to be a "mayor for all Londoners" and said his late father would be "so proud". "I never dreamed that someone like me could be elected as mayor of London," he said.

He promised to work to provide more affordable housing and transport, to reduce pollution and encourage more and better-paid jobs.

"I want every single Londoner to get the opportunities that our city gave to me and to my family, the opportunity not just to survive but to thrive," he said.

BUNK BEDS AND STREET FIGHTING

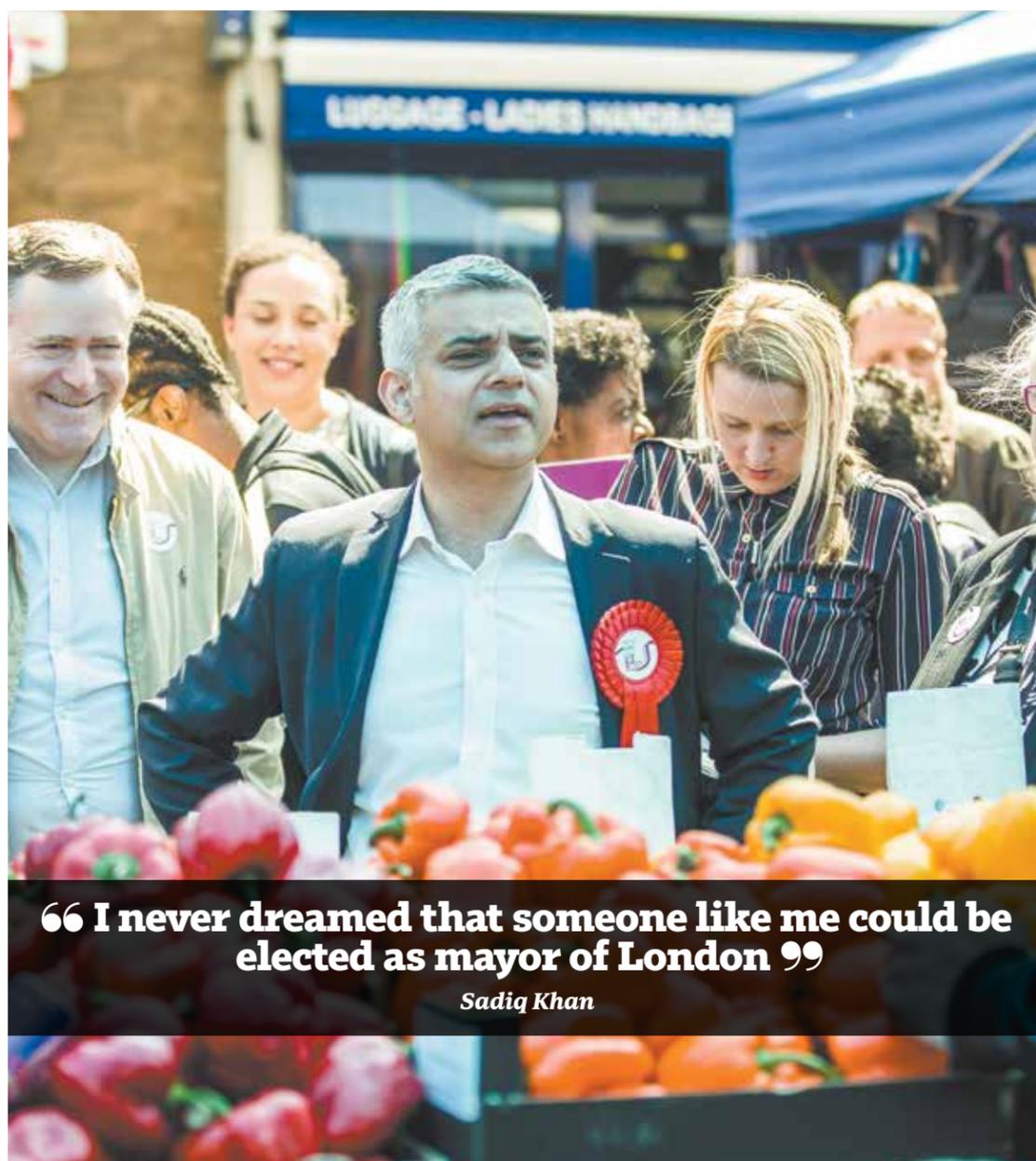
Mr Khan's journey to mayor is like a modern fairytale. He grew up in public housing in Tooting, a diverse area in south London. He slept in a bunk-bed until he was 24 years old.

His dad drove one of London's famous red buses and his mother was a seamstress. He is a handy boxer, having learnt the sport to defend himself in the streets against those who hurled racist abuse at him, and two of his brothers are boxing coaches.

At school, he wanted to study science and become a dentist. But a teacher spotted his gift for debating and directed him towards law.

He lives with his lawyer wife, Saadiya, and their two teenage daughters.

Right, London's new mayor, Sadiq Khan, during his election campaign. PHOTO Justin Tallis/AFP



"I never dreamed that someone like me could be elected as mayor of London"

Sadiq Khan