

Message in NY sky says 'Free Shahidul'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A banner message from an airplane flew over Manhattan in New York City on Sunday, demanding release of jailed Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam. Mountaineer and activist Wasfia Nazreen, the first Bangladeshi to conquer the Seven Summits and former National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, carried the message from a plane that had an image of Shahidul reading "#FreeShahidulAlam", as well as a text banner saying "Free Our Teachers #Bangladesh #UNGA".

The message was visible in the sky for one and half hours in the afternoon, Wasfia said in a statement, adding that a packed crowd curiously cheered from below as it circled the Statue of Liberty.

This creative form of protest follows a weekend of demonstrations and talks held at the city calling for greater press freedom in Bangladesh, particularly addressing the case of Shahidul, who was picked up by plainclothes men in Dhaka in August, and sent to jail in a case filed under the ICT Act in which is undergoing trial.

HEARING ON BAIL PETITION TODAY

Meanwhile, the High Court is set for hearing the bail petition of Shahidul Alam today, in the case.

The bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice SM Mozibur

Rahman yesterday fixed 2:00pm today for hearing the bail petition, after

Shahidul's lawyers prayed to it for hearing the matter.

Advocate Dr Shahdeen Malik, Barrister Sara Hossain and Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua appeared for Shahidul.

Shahidul submitted the petition to the HC on September 18 seeking bail in the case filed for "spreading propaganda against the government".



A woman is perched atop a narrow divider, with a bag in hand and presumably waiting to cross the ever-busy Airport Road in Mohakhali. A child by her side performs a balancing act, holding an apple.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Promising botanical scientist fighting for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rafiqul Islam has always been passionate about species, their origins and features. To pursue that passion, he chose to study botany and later joined academia and began researching the ways of conserving biodiversity.

After graduating in botanical science from Jahangirnagar University, he joined Kolaroa Government College in Satkhira as a lecturer in 2010.

Rafiqul, 38, along with other botanical scientists from various countries, visited remote parts of the world, including the dark caves and forests in Queensland of Australia, Malaysia Peninsula, Indonesia and tropical rain forest in Papua New Guinea to study the mysteries of original microbes and species.

Anna Elenor, his co-researcher, in a Facebook post, said a number of his researches have been accepted for publi-



Rafiqul Islam

cation that may open up new avenues for saving the decaying biodiversity.

But the promising botanical scientist is now fighting for his life. In early 2016, he was diagnosed with life-threatening cancer.

Before leaving for Singapore on March 20, 2016, he wrote on his Facebook:

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DISTORTION OF HISTORY HC orders probe on BB publication

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the finance secretary to immediately form a probe committee to find out the people responsible for distorting history in a book titled "Bangladesh Bank-er Itihas (History of Bangladesh Bank)".

The finance secretary has been ordered to submit the inquiry report before the HC in a month.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali delivered the order after hearing a writ petition filed by Dr Kazi Ertaza Hasan, chairperson of Bangladesh Human Rights

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Govt commission needed to ensure senior citizens' rights

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government commission for the elderly should be formed to ensure their rights as well as overall welfare, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

As the number of senior citizens will sharply increase in near future, special measures coupled with social awareness, government policies and sufficient budgetary allocation are crucial to ensure their welfare, they said.

Rights activists, government officials and eminent personalities came up with the suggestions at the seminar, titled "Right of the senior citizen, sustainable development and role of the media", jointly organised by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and Probin Bondhu Foundation at PIB's conference room on the occasion of International Day of Older Persons (October 1).

The theme for the day this year is "Celebrating older human rights champions".

Speakers also said elderly should not feel isolated or discriminated against and they should receive the support and services they need.

"By 2050, the number of children and elderly people will be same," said National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque.

Children can be looked after by the parents but voices of the elderly are often not heard, said Reazul.

A commission can monitor the services that senior citizens will avail, he said.

The NHRC chairman, along with other distinguished personalities, was honoured at the programme.

The awardees are: veteran journalist and Ekushey Padak recipient Kamal Lohani, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Secretary General of Probin Hitoishi Sangha Dr ASM Atiqur Rahman, Founder Chairman of

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Want reformation, not abolishment of quota

Activists say at human chain

DU CORRESPONDENT

Quota reformists yesterday demanded that the government dismiss the review committee's recommendation of entirely scrapping the existing quota system, and reform it in light of their five-point demand.

They made the demands from a human chain formed under the banner of 'Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad' in front of the Bangladesh National Museum in the capital.

The human chain also demanded unconditional release of Chattogram University Assistant Prof Maidul Islam, renowned photographer Shahidul Alam and those who were arrested surrounding the quota reform and safe road demonstrations.

Speaking at the human chain, Prof Rushad Faridi of Dhaka University's Economics department said students did not demonstrate for abolishment of the quota system; rather, they wanted its reformation.

"But now the government is holding the protes-

tors responsible [for the recommendation]. It should be clarified to the mass media," he said.

"Teachers who stood by the students were also detained. We did not see anything like this during the reign of the autocratic government, but we are now witnessing this during the tenure of a government that believes in the spirit of the Liberation War," he added.

Joint convener of the platform, Faruk Hossen, said they did not only demonstrate against the quota system existing in class-I and class-II jobs [in civil service], but protested the entire system.

He also demanded reformation of the quota system in light of their five-point demand at the next cabinet meeting, scheduled to be held today.

"When we saw students being attacked, we stood by them. Teachers including Maidul Islam were arrested as they were vocal against the attacks on students," said Samina Luthfa, an assistant professor of DU's Sociology department.

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Demanding release of all the activists of quota reform and safe road demos, students form a human chain in front of Bangladesh National Museum yesterday. Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad organised the event.

PHOTO: STAR

Immigration police official held with gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials held an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of immigration police with three gold bars at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Monday evening.

Kamrul Islam Milon, 40, was later handed over to immigration police, said an official at the Customs House at the airport.

The ASI was intercepted at gate no. 6 as he was heading out of the airport, in plainclothes, carrying a school bag. As on-duty officials insisted on searching him, Kamrul tried to escape. He was later held with the help of other agency

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Locked in by a toddler!

Firefighters rescue family in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fire Service members yesterday brought out three members of a family, who were locked inside a room in their flat in Uttara -- by its youngest member.

Zafar Iqbal, 51, along with his wife and two daughters were all in a room in their house when Kaiyenath, his two-year old, went out and inadvertently locked the door from outside at around 11:30am, leaving the other three stuck inside in panic, Zafar told The Daily Star.

He said he started seeking help from their neighbours over phone, and other residents of the building tried to break the main door of the flat, in vain.

"At last, they sought help of fire fighters, who opened the door and rescued us at 1:30 pm," said Zafar.

Shafiqul Islam, senior station officer of fire service in Uttara, said they reached the spot in 10 minutes of getting the distress call.

He said they found the baby crying near the gas burner in the kitchen. "An accident could have happened as a gas burner was open, and there were appliances and kitchen knives in the room," Shafique said.

Editors' concerns to be placed at next cabinet meeting or subsequent one

Law minister on Digital Security Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the concerns of Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) about the Digital Security Act will be placed before the next cabinet meeting, or at the one after that.

The law minister said this while talking to reporters after attending the inauguration of legal aid office management software, and smartphone app "Bd Legal Aid" as chief guest. The programme was organised by the law ministry at Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI) in Dhaka.

The cabinet will sit in a special meeting today, with the next two weekly meetings likely on the next two Mondays, as is usually held, on October 8 and October 15.

Earlier on September 30, the minister, in a meeting with Sampadak Parishad -- a platform of editors of national dailies -- had committed to

placing the serious concerns of editors, journalists and media practitioners before the cabinet meeting to work out amendments to the recently-passed Digital Security Act, to make it acceptable to all.

"The next cabinet meeting, scheduled for October 3, may not discuss the issue as it already has many other agendas for discussions. But the concerns of the Editors' Council will be placed before the cabinet meeting after this one," he had told reporters after the meeting.

On September 22, the Parishad expressed grave concerns over the House passing the Digital Security Bill 2018, which the platform considers to be against media freedom and freedom of speech guaranteed by the constitution.

On a different subject, the law minister told reporters that the Anti-Corruption Commission will look into a corruption case filed by former

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BANGLADESH SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL LTD.

21 Shyamoli, Mirpur Road, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh. bshl.dhaka@gmail.com, www.bdspecializedhospital.com, Phone: 09666700100