



Rokia Afzal  
Rahman's 2nd  
death anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rokia Afzal Rahman, a visionary leader and inspiring mentor, left an indelible legacy in the fields of business, media, and social progress. Today marks the second death anniversary of the eminent entrepreneur, philanthropist, and trailblazer for women's empowerment.

Rokia Afzal Rahman passed away peacefully in her sleep on the morning of April 5, 2023, at the age of 82, at the Mt Elizabeth Novena Hospital in Singapore.

Her passing was mourned by her family -- including two daughters, a son, and five grandchildren -- and countless admirers, leaving behind a profound impact on all who knew her.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Two held over  
rape of woman  
in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Bagerhat

Police have arrested two men in Bagerhat Sadar upazila on charges of raping a woman and recording the incident.

The arrestees are Sajib Das, 19, and Likhan Das, 20. Both are residents of Karori village under Rakhalgach union in Bagerhat Sadar upazila, said police.

They were arrested on Thursday night in the C&B Bazar area, said Mahamudul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station, yesterday.

The victim filed a case against three accused with the Sadar police yesterday.

According to the case statement, the victim, who works as a sales representative for a mobile operator, received a call on Thursday evening from a person expressing interest in purchasing SIM card. The person asked her to go to the C&B Bazar area.

Around 8:00pm, the victim went to the location. Not finding the customer, she began walking back home. When she crossed a paved bridge on the Khulna-Bagerhat highway

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Woman dies  
after being hit  
by battery-run  
rickshaw

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman died after being hit by a speeding battery-run rickshaw while crossing the road in Dhaka's Maniknagar area on Thursday night.

The incident occurred at around 9:30pm near Wasa Road, police and family members said.

The victim, Sumi Akter, 25, sustained critical injuries in the accident. She was first taken to Mudda General Hospital and later shifted to the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead around 1:30am yesterday.

Mezbabul Uddin, a neighbour, said Sumi was a homemaker and also gave private tuitions in the neighbourhood. She lived with her husband, Mahfuz Rahman, in a rented house on Wasa Road.

Inspector Md Farouk, in charge of DMCH police outpost, said the body has been kept at the hospital morgue for an autopsy.

DIPAN NANDY

The Dhaka South City Corporation has undertaken a nearly Tk 900 crore project to restore, renovate, and beautify four canals -- Shyampur, Jirani, Manda, and Kalunagar -- to mitigate waterlogging in Dhaka.

However, an analysis of the Development Project Proposal (DPP) has revealed unusually high expenditures. Following allegations of inflated costs, the approved DPP is now set to be revised, and the project director has been replaced.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecen) approved the Tk 898.73 crore project on October 21, 2022. Under this initiative, four canals will be restored across 19.78km to alleviate waterlogging in Dhaka.

A breakdown of the DPP shows that the proposed food court for Kalunagar



With piled up garbage and illegally built structures, it's really hard to believe this is actually the Manda canal. The photo was taken in North Manda area.

FILE PHOTO

canal, spanning 906 square metres, has an estimated cost of Tk 10.34 crore, equating to Tk 1.14 lakh per square metre. Additionally, two public toilets in this area are budgeted at Tk 51.55 lakh each, with the 80-square-metre facilities costing Tk 32,218 per square metre.

In Jirani canal, two public toilets, covering 320 square metres, are set to cost Tk 2.06 crore, or Tk 32,187.50 per square metre. The project also includes four food courts and coffee shops at Jirani canal, budgeted at Tk 9.13 crore.

For Manda canal, five such establishments have been allocated Tk 11.42 crore, while four public toilets are estimated to cost Tk 2.06 crore.

Shyampur Canal's renovation includes the construction of two public toilets at Tk 51.55 lakh but



## Mobile court stops child marriage in Brahmanbaria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A 14-year-old student in Brahmanbaria was saved from being forced into child marriage, thanks to the intervention of Sadar upazila administration yesterday. The incident occurred in the Nayanpur village.

According to locals and Brahmanbaria Sadar UNO office sources, the girl was set to be married off to Md Niloy, 20, of Bhadughar village in the upazila.

The families had mutually agreed to conduct the marriage ceremony yesterday afternoon.

However, concerned locals informed the Sadar upazila administration in this regard.

In response, Sifat Md Ishtiaq Bhuiyan, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Brahmanbaria Sadar, directed a mobile court to investigate the matter.

Mukta Goswami, executive magistrate and assistant commissioner (land) in the upazila, led the drive and went to the bride's home around 2:00pm where preparations for the wedding were underway. The official halted the event and declared the marriage illegal under existing laws.

"The girl is only 14 years old, clearly below the legal age for marriage," said Mukta Goswami, adding that both the girl's grandfather Ansar Ali and the groom's father Barkat Ali signed written undertakings, pledging not to proceed with or attempt such marriages in the future.

The groom's father was fined Tk 4,000 under of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017.

"With the help of vigilant citizens and our mobile court, we were able to prevent a child marriage. We remain committed to ensuring the rights and safety of every girl," said UNO Sifat Bhuiyan.

## REVIVING 4 DHAKA CANALS

# Tk 10cr for a food court; Tk 1cr for toilet!

DSCC revises Tk 900cr project amid cost controversy



Due to a thick layer of waste, water cannot flow through Kalunagar canal in Hazaribagh Sluice Gate area.

FILE PHOTO

excludes food courts or coffee shops.

DSCC sources revealed that suspicions of unusually high expenditures arose after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year.

A DSCC engineer, requesting anonymity, said project costs were often inflated during the previous regime to benefit party leaders and activists. "The canal restoration project was not planned realistically. A single public toilet should never cost Tk 1 crore," the official said.

Following public scrutiny, project director Khairul Baker has been removed. He was responsible for preparing the DPP for the four-canal development project.

Regarding the high construction costs, Baker said the DPP allocated approximately Tk 5 crore for 10 toilets across the project, estimating expenses based on land



In many places, structures have been erected encroaching upon the Shyampur canal, further blocking its flow. The photo was taken in Zia Sarani area.

FILE PHOTO

development requirements. He said canal development costs were assessed based on necessity and that 60 feet of government land -- 30 feet on each side of the canal -- had been reclaimed under the Water Act for integrated development.

"The cost estimations were determined after surveys involving consultants and local citizens," he said.

New project director and DSCC superintendent engineer Mohammad Saifullah Siddique Bhuiyan said reports of unusually high costs prompted the revision of the DPP.

"We have a functional plan in place and expect to complete revisions within a month. Field-level work will commence immediately afterward," he said, adding that the revised plan might limit public toilets and food courts, with priority given to retaining walls, walkways, and waste removal.

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said budget inflation had been a common practice in the previous regime.

"Why should there be a food court or unnecessary bridge in a canal development project? Budgets were inflated for corruption. I hope the new government will discard these unnecessary elements. Those involved in this crime, including bureaucrats, should be brought under the law," he said.

## NCP to push for reforms, AL ban

Plans protests, stakeholder  
meetings this month

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

The National Citizen Party (NCP) is set to launch a series of programmes this month, centring on three key demands -- the trial of the Awami League for the July killings, governance reforms, and an election to the constituent assembly, according to party insiders.

The newly formed youth-led party will also focus on establishing district and upazila-level organisational units and setting up a central office to meet the Election Commission's (EC) registration criteria ahead of the upcoming polls.

**MEMBERSHIP DRIVE AND POLITICAL STANCE**  
The NCP is expected to begin a membership collection drive in the second week of this month to form its district and upazila-level units.

The party leadership has expressed concern over the BNP's reluctance towards key reform proposals.

To address this, the NCP plans to hold discussions with various stakeholders this month.

The party is firmly opposed to allowing Awami League to engage in politics.

However, it insists on banning the party through judicial proceedings rather than executive orders.

Until a judicial verdict is reached, the NCP demands the immediate cancellation of the AL's registration and a ban on its political activities.

Several party leaders have indicated that this demand will be at the forefront of their agenda.

The NCP also plans to engage the families of the July uprising's martyrs, the injured, party leaders, and the general public in their programmes.

## OTHER AGENDAS

- Expand grassroots organisation
- Fulfil EC registration criteria
- Launch nationwide membership drive
- Engage victims of July uprising

## REFORM DISCUSSIONS

Both the BNP and NCP submitted their written opinions to the National Consensus Commission on March 23 regarding recommendations from five commissions, including the Constitution Reform Commission.

However, fundamental differences emerged between the two parties.

While BNP supports retaining the constitution's basic principles, NCP seeks amendments.

BNP favours a five-year parliamentary term, whereas the NCP supports reducing it to four years, in line with the Reform Commission's recommendations.

Additionally, while BNP opposes separating the leadership of political parties from parliamentary leadership, NCP supports this measure.

At a Chattogram event on March 28, BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury remarked, "Sorry, this [carrying out reforms] is not your responsibility. It will be the responsibility of those whom the people of Bangladesh elect."

NCP leaders fear that BNP's opposition could stall the reform process, preventing fundamental changes and weakening the July uprising's momentum.

However, the NCP does not want a direct confrontation with BNP and will instead prioritise dialogue.

Two top leaders of the party confirmed that discussions on reforms with stakeholders would commence by mid-April.

"We will try to reach a consensus through dialogue. The party's reform coordination

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



An unauthorized makeshift amusement park, set up along the roadside for Eid celebrations, remains in place even after the festivities, causing traffic disruptions. The structures, including a large boat-shaped ride, continue to obstruct a busy thoroughfare, posing risks to both pedestrians and vehicles. The photo was taken in the Naya Bazar area of Old Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN