



## 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.

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## Two die as car hits bike on Kalshi flyover

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons died last night as the motorcycle they were on collided with a private car on the Kalshi flyover in the capital's Mirpur-12 area, said police.

Identities of the deceased, who were aged around 18 and 19, could not be known immediately.

The rider died on the spot while the pillion fell off the flyover following the collision and was found in a wounded state under the flyover, Md Rocky, a passerby who helped take the victims to the hospital, told this newspaper.

Both the deceased were declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 11:00pm, said Md Masud Alam of the DMCH police outpost.

He said the bodies have been kept at the hospital morgue.

Meanwhile, a woman died after being hit by a battery-run rickshaw while she was crossing the road in Maniknagar area on Thursday night.

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

The victim, Sumi Akter, SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## 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 Rakhalgachi 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 a 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 near the market, a man grabbed her and dragged her under the bridge, it said.

There, the two men raped her and filmed the incident on a phone and threatened her not to disclose it to anyone. They left her and fled the scene,

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### REVIVING 4 DHAKA CANALS

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

DSCC revises Tk 900cr project amid cost controversy

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 (Ecne) 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



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

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 Safiullah 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.



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 32.18 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



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



Jirani canal covered by water hyacinth in Trimohoni Bazaar area.

FILE PHOTO

# NCP to push for reforms, ban on AL

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 bar 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

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An unauthorised 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

## Freedom fighter's house vandalised in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A group of alleged Jamaat-Shibir members attacked and vandalised the house of freedom fighter Abdul Hai Kanu in Cumilla's Chaudhagram upazila early yesterday.

Hilal Uddin, officer in charge of Chaudhagram Police Station, confirmed the incident to The Daily Star.

He said he was informed of the attack shortly after it occurred and visited the victim's residence in Ludhiara village with a police team, where they found evidence of vandalism.

"The attackers fled upon sensing our presence. However, no formal complaint or case has been filed regarding the incident," the OC added.

Freedom Fighter Kanu said, "Around 12:55am, a group of 20 to 25 Jamaat-Shibir cadres tried to storm my house. They attempted to break in using sharp weapons and detonated crude bombs. They damaged doors, windows, and the tin roof. They arrived on 10 to 12 motorcycles."

Contacted, Md Mahfuzur Rahman, chief of Jamaat's Chaudhagram upazila unit, said, "I heard about the incident, but we had no involvement. The allegations against us are untrue."

Earlier on December 22, a group of SEE PAGE 4 COL 4