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Subrata Bain's aide held with cache of arms, ammunition Court places him on 5-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A Dhaka court yesterday placed Mehedi Hasan alias Dipu, a close associate of top criminal Subrata Bain, on a five-day remand after a team of joint forces arrested him and recovered a large cache of firearms and ammunition in the capital's Middle Badda area on Friday.
Acting on a tip-off, a team from the Gulshan Army Camp and Badda Police raided a five-storey building at Post Office Goli in the capital's Beparipara area around 8:30am on Friday.
Police said Dipu, 40, owned the building and lived with his family in a flat on the third floor.
A case was filed against him under the Arms Act with Badda Police Station
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Braving the morning fog and cold, farmers set up a floating vegetable market on the banks of the Surma River near Purba Bazar ferry ghat in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila yesterday. This market serves as a major source of winter vegetables for the region until the monsoon, when trading shifts to the Kanaighat Bazar.
PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Polls results unlikely before next morning EC cites two ballots, possible high turnout

AHMED DEPTO
Ballot counting for the 13th parliamentary election may take longer than usual, with the unofficial results expected not before the following morning.
In the last three elections, the unofficial poll results were announced between 3:00am and 4:00am. In the 2008 election, it came at 6:00am the following day.
The delay this time stems from the need to count two sets of ballot papers (the regular white paper and a pink one for the referendum), a higher number of candidates and voters, and the inclusion of postal ballots, The Daily Star has learned from Election Commission officials involved with the proceedings.
In the previous elections, one polling booth was set up for every 500 men and 400 women, said Ruhul Amin Mollik, EC director for public relations. This time, one booth has been designated for every 600 men and 500 women.
"It saves money but reduces the number of booths. Since the same person will have to count two ballots, it will take more time," he said.
Asked how much longer it might take, Mollik said the process could take one and a half times longer than usual.
SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

LPG supply crunch lingers ahead of Ramadan BERC hopeful Feb shipments will stabilise market

ASIFUR RAHMAN
Despite repeated assurances and initiatives by the government and operators ahead of Ramadan, the shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), widely used as cooking fuel, is unlikely to ease anytime soon.
Importers, meanwhile, have also failed to meet the January target, indicating a worsening of the crisis.
Amid the supply shortage since November, the government aimed to have around 167,600 tonnes of LPG



in January from at least 12 private importers. But data from the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) shows imports stood at 105,000 tonnes – lower than the previous month's 126,000 tonnes, when the crisis spiked and a 12-kg LPG cylinder was selling for more than Tk 2,200 at retail shops in parts of Dhaka city.
However, LPG operators and BERC still expect to meet the import target of 184,100 tonnes for February.
Contacted by The Daily Star, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said, "Although imports dropped in January, we found that within the first two days of February, a total of
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Nipah virus claims first life this year Patient developed symptoms on January 21, died a week later

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Bangladesh recorded its first Nipah virus (NiV) death this year when a woman from Naogaon died on January 28 with symptoms of the virus, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.
Contacted yesterday, Shamin Sultana, senior scientific officer of the IEDCR, said, "Tests were conducted after the woman was admitted to hospital with Nipah virus symptoms, confirming she died of the virus."
She said this was the first Nipah-related death in the country this year, following four deaths reported until August last year.
According to the World Health Organisation's Disease Outbreak News released on Friday, the patient was a woman aged between 40 and 50, and a resident of Naogaon.
On January 21, the patient developed symptoms consistent with NiV infection, including fever, headache, muscle cramps, loss of appetite,
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

DEATHS IN PRISON CUSTODY Lives hang in balance when inmates fall ill

Of 270 deaths last year, 111 occurred on way to hospitals
TOUSIF KAIUM
Riazul Islam Rizul, president of the Purbabirgaon Union Awami League in Sunamganj, was arrested at his home on March 30 last year during Operation Devil Hunt, a joint forces drive launched to maintain law and order across the country.
Eleven days later, on April 9, he died while receiving treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital under prison custody.
Riazul had pre-existing health conditions, but the post-mortem report mentioned marks of injury on his head, according to his nephew Abu Bakkar Siddik.
"There had been no incident that could have caused such head injuries. He must have been beaten," Siddik said, adding that the family had prepared all necessary documents and would file a case when the situation became "favourable".
Sunamganj Jail Superintendent Md Main Uddin Bhuiyan said he would need to check the documents as he could not recall Riazul's case. With many inmates arriving each month, it was not possible to remember every incident, he added.
While the circumstances surrounding Riazul's death remain contested, rights defenders say deaths in custody remain a persistent human rights concern even after the 2024 political changeover, with allegations of ill-treatment and denial of care continuing to surface.
According to the Prisons Directorate, 270 inmates died last year. Of them, 155 died while undergoing treatment at hospitals, 111 died on the way to hospital, and four died by suicide.
Analysing newspaper reports, The Daily Star found that 21 of the deceased were leaders and activists of the Awami League, the party whose activities are now banned.
At least 16 inmates who died in custody were accused in narcotics cases, two in war crimes cases, and four in murder cases. For the rest, media reports could not provide details. Even the jail authorities do not maintain a separate database of inmates' identities.
"Questions have arisen over how much justice is being delivered and how much is being driven by vengeance, which is reflected in the deaths in custody."
IFTEKHARUZZAMAN, executive director of TIB
In 2024, 261 inmates died, including 140 who died while receiving treatment at hospitals, 120 on the way to hospital, and one by suicide, official data show.
This newspaper also found that at least six individuals linked to the Awami League and its associate organisations died in jail custody in the last four months of 2024. Four
SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Ex-minister Ramesh dies in jail custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon
Ramesh Chandra Sen, former Awami League MP from Thakurgaon-1 and water resources minister, died yesterday morning after falling ill at Dinajpur District Jail.
Ramesh, 84, became unwell at the jail in the morning and was taken to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead on arrival around 9:30am.
Forhad Sorkar, acting jailer of Dinajpur District Jail, said Ramesh was sent to the facility on August 17, 2024, a day after he was arrested from his ancestral home in Ruhia Ramnath following the July uprising.
Ramesh was accused in three cases, including murder.
He was a division-prisoner inmate at the jail and had been suffering from illness, Forhad said.
"His condition suddenly worsened around 9:00am. He was then taken to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, from where we later received news of his death," he added.
Ramesh was an adviser to the central Awami League and served as water resources minister from 2009 to 2014.
He was first elected as a lawmaker from Thakurgaon-1 in a by-election on February 18, 1997, and was later elected in the 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2024 general elections.
Ramesh is survived by his wife, Anjali Sen. They had no children but adopted a
SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Crypto firm sends \$40b in bitcoin to users, mistakenly

AFP, Seoul
A South Korean cryptocurrency exchange apologised yesterday after mistakenly transferring more than \$40 billion worth of bitcoin to users, which briefly prompted a selloff on the platform.
Bithumb said it accidentally sent 620,000 bitcoins, currently worth more than \$40 billion, and blocked trading and withdrawals for the 695 affected users within 35 minutes after the error occurred on Friday.
According to local reports, Bithumb was meant to send about 2,000 won (\$1.37) to each customer as part of a promotion, but mistakenly transferred roughly 2,000 bitcoins per user.
"We sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused to our customers due to the confusion that occurred during the distribution process of this (promotional) event," Bithumb said in a statement.



Traffic police seized these battery-run rickshaws for operating on Mirpur Road in Dhaka's Shyamoli area yesterday. They were later transported to a temporary impound site in Bosila. The photo was taken near Asad Gate.
PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Trump refuses to apologise for racist clip of Obamas

AFP, Washington
President Donald Trump refused to apologise Friday for a video posted on his social media account depicting Barack and Michelle Obama as monkeys, though he said he condemned the post as the White House shifted the blame to staff.
The video shared on Trump's Truth Social account late Thursday night sparked censure across the US political spectrum, with the White House initially rejecting "fake outrage" only to then blame the post on an error by a staff member.
"I didn't make a mistake," Trump said on Air Force One late Friday when asked if he would apologise for the post.
Asked if he condemns the racist imagery in the video, Trump replied: "Of course I do."
Democrats slammed Trump as "vile" over the clip of the Obamas – the first Black president and first lady in US history – while a senior Republican senator said the video was blatantly racist.
Near the end of the one-minute-long
SEE PAGE 8 COL 4