

**BUSINESS****Inflation jumps to 9.33pc**

Inflation jumped to a seven-month high of 9.33 percent in March as food prices rose and the adjustment of oil, gas and electricity prices took hold, highlighting the pains low-income households are going through. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 55 basis points from the 8.78 percent reported in February. This means the spike in the CPI was just behind the 10-year high of 9.52 percent seen in August last year.

STORY, INFOGRAPHIC ON B1

**GAZIPUR CITY POLLS**  
No bar for Zahangir to contest  
Rules HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ruled that Mohammad Zahangir Alam, suspended mayor of Gazipur City Corporation, can file nomination papers with the Election Commission in accordance with law for contesting the GCC mayoral election slated for May 25.

The bench of Justice Zafar Ahmed and Justice Md Bashir Ullah said Zahangir's writ challenging the legality of his suspension from the GCC mayoral office and the deferral of the verdict delivery will not bar him from submitting nomination papers.

The court passed the order following a prayer moved by Zahangir's lawyers.

Belayet Hossain, a lawyer for Zahangir, told The Daily Star that his client can contest the next GCC polls

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Former US President Donald Trump is accompanied by members of his legal team, Susan Necheles and Joe Tacopina, as he appears in court yesterday for an arraignment on charges stemming from his indictment by a Manhattan grand jury following a probe into hush money paid to porn star Stormy Daniels.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**Trump pleads not guilty to 34 felony counts****Becomes the first US president to face criminal charges**

REUTERS, New York

Donald Trump, the former president and front-runner for the 2024 Republican nomination, pleaded not guilty in a history-making moment for the United States yesterday to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records after an investigation into hush money paid to a porn star.

Wearing a dark blue suit and red tie, Trump, the first sitting or former US president to face criminal charges, sat with his hands folded at the defense table as he entered his plea flanked by his lawyers.

"Not guilty," Trump, 76, said when asked how he pleaded.

He said nothing as he entered the courtroom or when he left roughly an hour later. Trump previously called the charges politically motivated.

He was due to return to Florida and deliver remarks from his Mar-a-Lago resort at 8:15 p.m. on Tuesday (0015 GMT on Wednesday), his office said.

Taken together, the charges carry a maximum sentence of more than 100 years in prison under New York law but an actual prison sentence if he is convicted at a trial would almost certainly be far less than that.

While falsifying business records in New York on its own is a misdemeanor punishable by no more than one year in prison, it is elevated to a felony punishable by up to four years in prison when done to advance or conceal another crime.

The Manhattan grand jury convened by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg that indicted Trump heard evidence about a \$130,000 payment made to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

**DHAKA TO BHANGA**  
**Padma Bridge rail line to open by September**  
**Says minister after first trial train crosses the bridge**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka to Bhanga rail line via the Padma Bridge will be ready for train operation by August and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate it the following month.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan revealed this after Bangladesh Railway operated the first train on the newly constructed Bhanga-Mawa track through the bridge yesterday.

"This is a historic day for Bangladesh because we have reached the Mawa station after crossing Padma Bridge from Bhanga in a train," he told reporters at the station.

Sujan said he has inspected the work progress from Dhaka to Bhanga and was briefed by the project officials, who told him that the work in this section will be done by August.

The PM will then inaugurate the rail line at a convenient time in September, he added.

BR is implementing the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project to build a 169km rail line from Dhaka to Jashore via the Padma Bridge at the cost of Tk 39,247 crore.

When BR undertook the project in May 2016, the cost

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The special train standing ready to be operated for the first time on the newly constructed Bhanga-Mawa rail line through the Padma Bridge yesterday afternoon. It began its journey at 1:22pm and entered the lower deck of the bridge at 2:48pm.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**Repeal DSA, compensate the victims**  
**Eminent citizens urge govt**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding the immediate scrapping of the Digital Security Act, eminent citizens yesterday urged the government to compensate those who were victimised through its use.

They made the demands at a seminar held in the capital's National Press Club.

Khushi Kabir, chairperson of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and coordinator of Nijera Kori, moderated the seminar. She said the law was used mostly against the members of minority groups and journalists.

Shamsul Huda, executive director of ALRD, said the law should be repealed immediately.

"Those who filed cases against minorities by using this law in the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

**The champions deserve better**

ANISUR RAHMAN

The Bangladesh women's football team have been injecting fresh air for years amidst all the doldrums.

Last year in September, the women in red and green lived up to their reputation of being one of the powerhouses in the sub-continent as they clinched their maiden SAFF Championship title after beating hosts Nepal.

The whole country was on cloud nine with immense joy and pride following such a success, which the men's national team achieved as far back as 2003.

In the backdrop of such a glowing story, it came as a big surprise when the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin revealed just six days before the 2024 AFC Women's Olympic Football Qualifying

Tournament that it would pull out of the competition in Myanmar, citing financial constraints.

Undoubtedly, the BFF has played a big part to give women's football shape in the country but the question has been raised, in this regard, whether the game's governing body was sincere enough to give the golden girls a fitting treatment as well whether they have any mission or vision to take country's women's football to another level.

Salahuddin had said last week that the national team players had boycotted a training session due to their wages being unpaid. It is undoubtedly a sorry situation for a president to accept as it underlines how he, as a leader, has failed miserably to cash in on the glory that the women have brought to the country.

Former national footballer-turned-

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

**'Flattest' explosion ever seen in space surprises scientists**

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

An explosion the size of our solar system has baffled scientists, as its shape -- similar to that of an extremely flat disc -- challenges everything they know about explosions in space.

Astronomers observed the explosion 180 million light years away, and they say it is much flatter than ever thought possible.

Explosions are usually expected to be spherical just like the stars themselves, but this one is the flattest ever seen.

The study reports that the explosion was an extremely rare Fast Blue Optical Transient (FBOT) – known colloquially amongst astronomers as "the cow".

Only four others have ever been seen, and while scientists do not know how they occur, researchers suggest the new discovery has helped solve part of the puzzle.

According to the study, a potential explanation for how this explosion occurred is that the star itself may have been surrounded by a dense disk, or it may have been a failed supernova (the massive explosion at the end of the life of some stars).

How FBOT explosions occur is still a mystery, but it is hoped the observations, published in Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society will help answer some of the questions.

