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Yet another
close shave
for Biman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight from Muscat made an emergency landing in Dhaka yesterday after a tyre of its left landing gear burst.

Authorities of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) had to keep its lone runway shut for over two hours for which three international and three domestic flights had to be diverted to Kolkata, Mandalay in Myanmar, Chittagong and Jessore.

"As the aircraft landed on a single tyre of the landing gear, the tyre suffered a blow-out moments before the aircraft fully stopped on the runway, possibly for failing to bear the strain," said Managing Director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines AM Mosaddique Ahmed.

The Boeing 737 has three landing gears with two tyres in each.

He said the flight was supposed to land in Chittagong but was diverted to HSIA.

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3 'gang-raped'
in Pabna

Mother, daughter
among them
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three women, including a mother and her daughter, were reportedly gang raped on Wednesday night in Chatmohar upazila.

Two of the victims are workers at a garment factory in Ashulia in Dhaka and they all are residents of Rashid Colony in the same area.

The incident took place about a week after the two women, aged between 25 and 30, along with one of their teenage daughter, came to visit a former mutual female co-worker in Rampur village under Haripur union of the upazila, said Ekramul Haque, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station.

"We have initial information that the victims were gang raped. We'll have confirmation [of the crime] after we get medical report," he added.

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PM'S PLANE GLITCH

7 arrested, 2 sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven of the nine suspended Bangladesh Biman employees were arrested on Wednesday night hours after they were made accused in a case filed in connection with a glitch in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's special flight on November 27.

Two other accused officials surrendered before a Dhaka court yesterday and were sent to jail.

The seven arrestees were placed on seven-day police remand each when they were produced before a court.

Wing Commander (retd) MM Asaduzzaman, director of engineering and material management of Biman, filed the case against the nine employees under the Special Powers Act with Airport Police Station early Wednesday.

A Biman flight carrying the prime minister had to make an emergency landing at the Ashgabat International Airport Turkmenistan on her way to Budapest on November 27 as engine-1 of the plane was losing oil pressure.

After the emergency landing, engineers found that a nut was loose causing the oil pressure loss.

Biman authorities formed a technical probe committee the following day to find the reason behind the incident.

Based on the findings of the probe committee, Biman first suspended six employees and later three others and filed the case against them.

The Counter Terrorism unit of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police made the arrests, Monirul Islam, chief of the unit, told reporters at the DMP media centre in the capital yesterday.

After the charge of investigation was handed over to the unit, it made sure the accused could not flee the country. At the same time, the unit launched drives in places in the city

SEE PAGE 12 COL 3

Aleppo retaken after evacuation

Syria army says as over 4,000 fighters
leave rebel-held areas

AFP, Aleppo

The army said yesterday it has retaken full control of Syria's devastated second city Aleppo, scoring its biggest victory against opposition forces since the civil war erupted in 2011.

The announcement came after a landmark evacuation deal that put an end to a ferocious month-long offensive waged on east Aleppo by government forces and allied militia.

Earlier, the Red Cross said more than 4,000 fighters had left rebel-held areas of the city in the final stages of an evacuation.

The loss of east Aleppo is the biggest blow to Syria's rebel movement in the nearly six-year conflict, which has killed more than 310,000 people.

It puts the government in control of the country's five main cities: Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Damascus, and Latakia.

President Bashar al-Assad's victory in Aleppo is a boon for his allies in Moscow and Tehran and a defeat for the opposition's backers, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and some Western states.

Because of the intensity of these global rivalries -- particularly between Russia and the United States -- the international community struggled for years to respond to the bloodshed in Syria.

"The liberation of Aleppo is not only a victory for Syria but also for those who really contribute to the fight against terrorism, notably Russia and Iran," state news agency SANA quoted Assad as saying before the army announcement on Thursday.

The evacuation effort had been hampered by heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures, leaving evacuees waiting in unheated buses for hours.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

US returns Okinawa land to Japan

CNN ONLINE

The US military handed over 9,909 acres (4,000 hectares) of Okinawan land to Japan yesterday in what's been lauded as the largest return of US-occupied land since 1972.

But there's a catch. As part of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the two countries, the United States is granted the right to certain defence facilities.

In exchange for the land, the Japanese government built several new helipads for the US military to use on its southernmost island of Okinawa.

Yet the handover has done little to assuage the ire of activists, who've campaigned for decades to remove US bases altogether from Okinawa.

"We feel betrayed by the (Japanese) government," Takashi Kishimoto, a spokesman from an anti-US base activist group Peace Okinawa, told CNN.

"From our point of view, the US military (is) giving back something (it doesn't) want while having new Osprey runways built. Okinawa alone is host to 74% of the US's military bases in Japan. The return of this land only reduces this presence to 71%," he said.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Artificial leaf to produce drugs



REUTERS, Amsterdam

Dutch scientists have developed an artificial leaf that can act as a mini-factory for producing drugs, an advance that could allow medicines to be produced anywhere there is sunlight.

The work taps into the ability of plants to use sunlight to feed themselves through photosynthesis, something industrial chemists have struggled to replicate because sunshine usually generates too little energy to fuel chemical reactions.

The leaf-inspired micro factory mimics nature's efficiency at harvesting solar radiation by using new materials called luminescent solar concentrators with very thin channels through which liquid is pumped, exposing molecules to sunlight.

"Theoretically, you could use this device to make drug compounds with solar energy anywhere you want," said lead researcher Timothy Noel at Eindhoven University of Technology.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

RAID ON IS BASTION
Turkish air
strikes kill
29 people
in Syria

AFP, Beirut

At least 29 civilians including eight children were killed yesterday in Turkish air strikes on an Islamic State group bastion in northern Syria, a monitoring group said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 23

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-25 12-30 3-45 5-28 7-00

JAMAT 6-00 1-15 4-00 5-27 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

2 submarines,
bought from
China, arrive
at Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

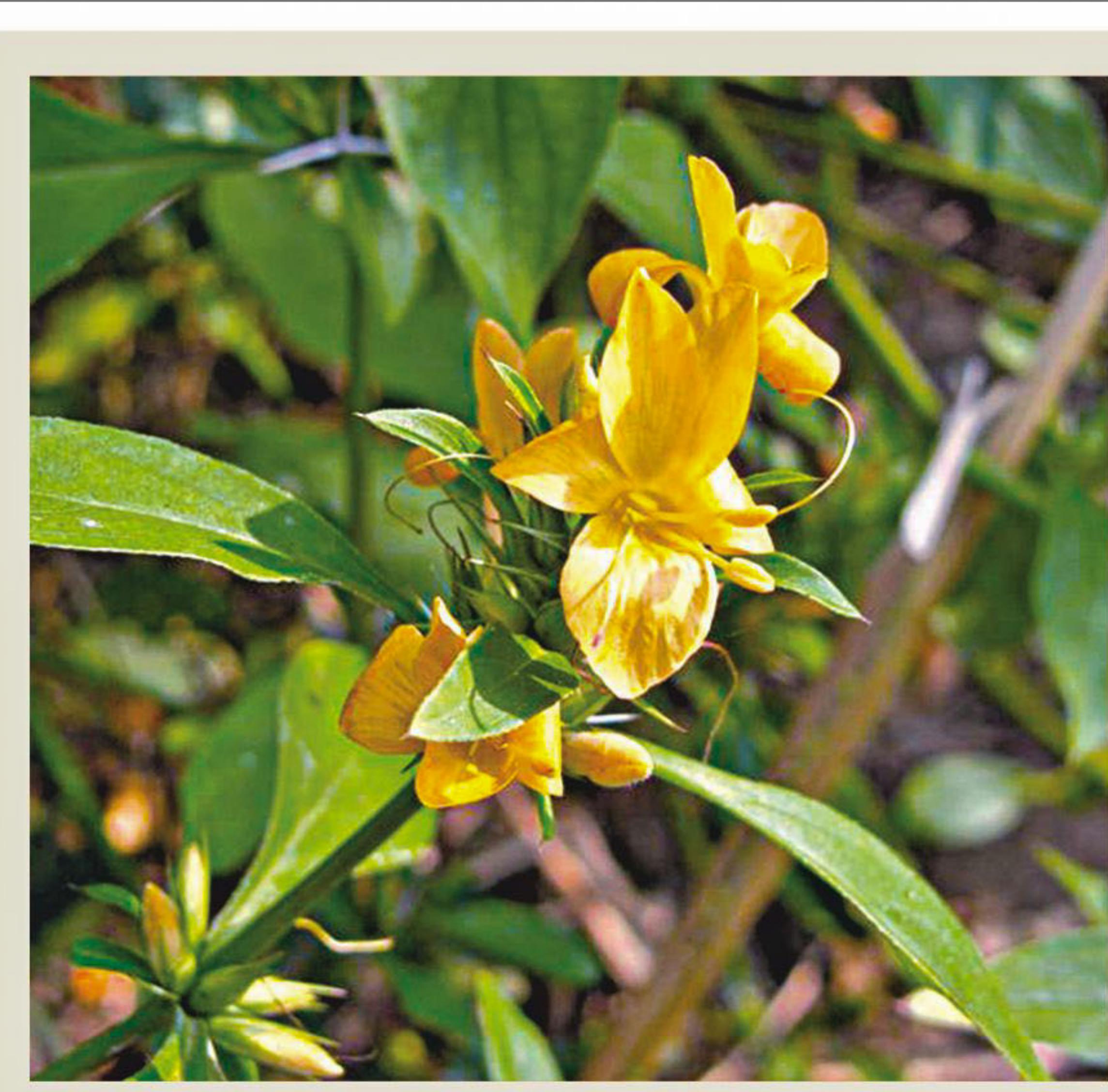
Two submarines bought for Bangladesh Navy from China reached Chittagong port yesterday evening.

Chinese heavy-lift vessel MV Kang Sheng Kou carrying the submarines berthed at Chittagong Container Terminal-1 around 5:20pm, Omar Faruk, secretary of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh Navy has added the two submarines to its fleet for the first time in its history to further intensify monitoring in the Bay and enhance the force's combat capability.

On November 14, Rear Admiral Liu Zizhu on behalf of the Chinese government handed over the submarines to Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed at a ceremony at Liaonan shipyard in China's Dalian state.

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Enchanting Swarnajhanti

MOKARAM HOSSAIN

While heading for Kakonhaat in the Barind region, we came across an eye-catching natural beauty just a few kilometres off Rajshahi city. After a little while, the fragrance of mustard flowers hit our nostrils. The fields on both sides of the road were full of vegetables like gourd, beans, chilly, potato, tomato, red amaranth, spinach and what not!

Our driver, Aktarul Alam, was driving very efficiently and smoothly. He was also briefing us on

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Dowry-hungry husband still not arrested

With cut-off tongue, slit-tendon
and blank look, wife lying
in hospital bed

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

As Suma Begum's husband and his unidentified accomplices are still at large, her family fears further attacks for filing a case over the December 15 brutal torture of the housewife in Sylhet.

The perpetrators this time might attack her only brother Hafizur Rahman, an auto-rickshaw driver who filed the case, said Suma's mother Aimuna.

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Suma Begum in her bed at MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

PHOTO: STAR