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28 days to the
3rd Millennium

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Tofail tries to set LDC tone at Seattle talks

Ensuring duty-free market access to LDCs' products will be the only way to integrate their economies with multilateral trading system, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed said in Seattle on Wednesday, reports UNB.

He was speaking at a working group discussion on non-agriculture market access as hectic parleys went on the second day of the WTO Ministerial Meeting at its Convention Centre in Seattle, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh delegation attended all the group meetings that discussed various subjects to make decisions on different issues relating to agriculture, implementation of WTO agreements and rules and non-agricultural market access.

The Singapore agenda which includes investment competition, trade facilitation, transparency in government procurement was also discussed in different

working groups.

"Market access is a subject of critical interest to Bangladesh as well as all LDCs," Tofail said adding that currently LDC exports were being restricted through tariff and non-tariff measures by developed countries.

He said the average tariff rate remains at 12 per cent for textiles and clothing in those developed countries and for some products it is as high as 26 per cent.

"Even if access is given to all our products, it will not include more than 20 items," he said adding that it would have no impact on the developed countries. But the LDCs will get a scope to stand on their own feet for better integration with the global trading system.

The minister said opening up markets of developed countries are not enough for LDCs. "There should be capacity building measures to enable us to take advantage of such access."

(More stories on back page)

WRIP gets closer to govt clearance

Star Report

final stage.

As per the present schedule, upon finishing the WRIP scrutiny, Parsons would float a tender, seeking better or equivalent offers from oil companies other than Unocal.

If no better or equivalent offer is found, Unocal would be given the green signal to go ahead with the project. If a better or equivalent offer is found, Unocal would be given a chance to modify or re-configure its proposals first. If Unocal fails to modify its proposals, the pro-

ject will go to the firm making the better offer. However, the consultant would give the guideline in this regard.

Following the arrival of the representatives of the consultant firm in Dhaka on October 29, the government made a presentation of the project and gave its observations regarding it.

One of the observations made by some government officials was that Unocal must reduce its pipeline tariff as it

yesterday.

The programme was announced by the alliance components -- BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) -- at separate public meetings in the city yesterday.

The meetings were held as part of the alliance's countrywide Demonstration Day programme. BNP held its meeting at the Paltan Maidan, JP at Muktangan, Jamaat at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram and IOJ at Purana Paltan. The parties also brought out separate processions after the meetings.

Announcing the hartal programme BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged the AL government to resign immediately as people do not

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'Holiday' again

By Staff Correspondent

There had been another exodus of people from the city yesterday evening, availing another opportunity of a four-day 'holiday' due to weekend followed by hartals on Sunday and Monday.

Heavy rush of people was seen at the rail stations and bus and launch terminals.

Six hartals, one public holiday and eight weekly holidays had left only 15 working days in 30 days of November.

project's original design, changing areas near the Khawaja's residence. However, he said the consultant didn't know the changes were made until much later. He refused to comment on whether the consultant has contacted the authorities about the matter.

Sources in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) said a State Minister, a murid, made the request for the unofficial changes.

However, the State Minister categorically denied any involvement in the decision.

Sher-e-Khawja could not be reached for comment.

Four Daily Star phones go dead

By Staff Correspondent

Four out of the six telephones of The Daily Star went out of order yesterday evening.

First to go were the two numbers -- 8616771 and 8616773 at 6:30pm. Another phone, 8616774, went dead at 7:15pm and finally 86164670 at 10pm.

When contacted, one Majeed of the nearest telephone camp office of BTTB at Dhanmondi Road No. 4 said their emergency crew had gone on leave. After completing their jobs at 6 p.m., the duty personnel had left for their home, he said at 7 p.m.

But he could not say when the telephones would become active, nor could he give any reason for the breakdown. The Switch Room reported that the telephones were "okay" at their end, but there was trouble on the line, which only the personnel of the camp could fix.

28

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Getting back to roots Nabanna Utsab in town

City-dwellers will join the rural folks as the country for the first time celebrates Nabanna Utsab at a national level.

A 31-member Jatiya Nabanna Utsab Uddayan Parishad, comprising noted intellectuals, artists, literateurs, teachers and students, has been formed in this regard. This was disclosed at a press conference in the capital yesterday.

Rural people celebrate Nabanna to mark harvesting of paddy in the Bengali month of Hemanta (autumn). Villages across the country wear a festive look. This time around, the cities will join the band wagon, too.

Elaborate programmes, including folk songs, recitation of poems, staging of dramas and dance, have been chalked out to observe the festival in a befitting manner.

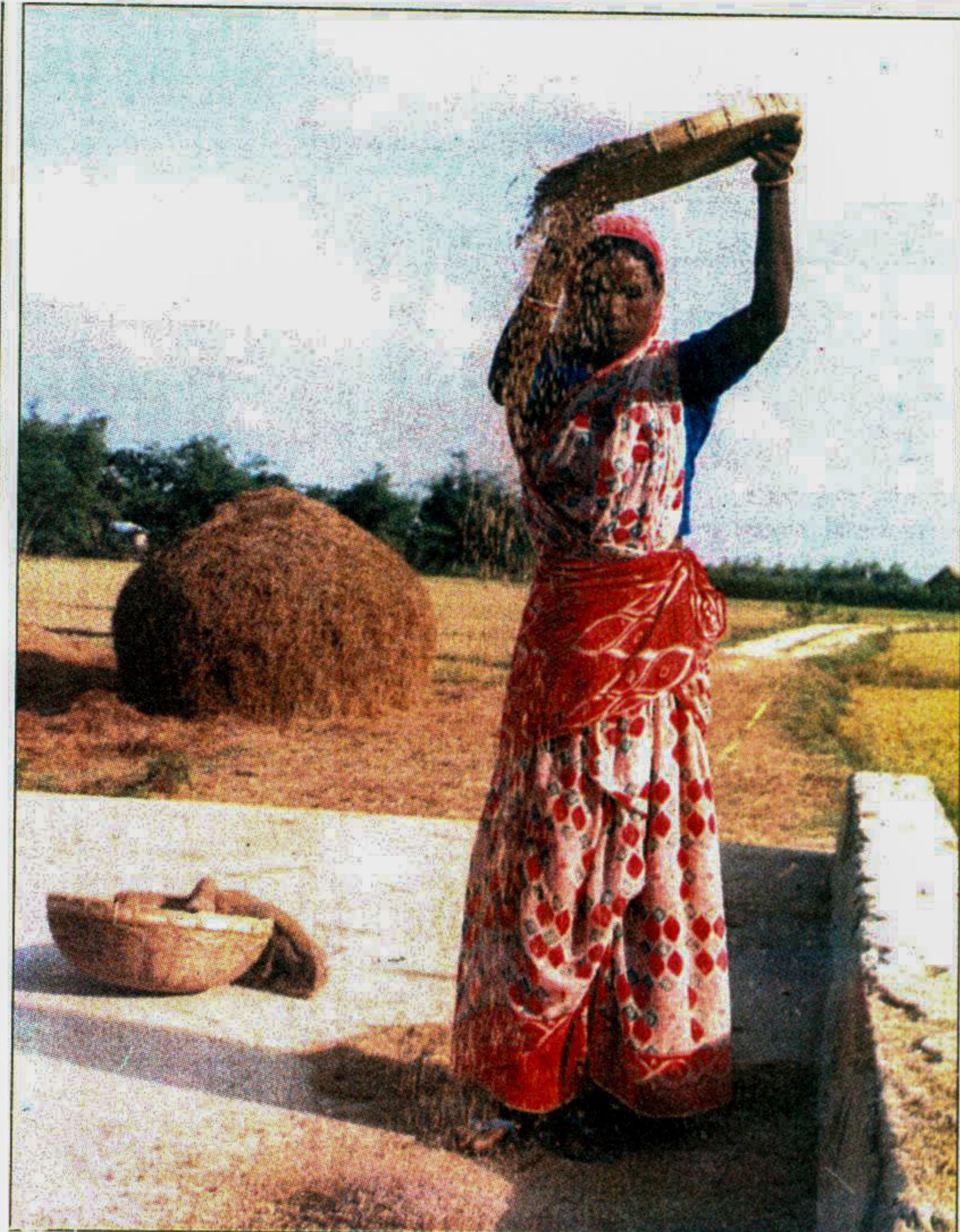
Eminent cultural personality Kalmi Sharafi and adviser of the Parishad will inaugurate the festival on December 3 at the Institute of Fine Arts of the Dhaka University campus at 3:30 pm.

A colourful procession will also be brought out from the Institute premises at 3 pm which will parade campus.

Renowned cultural groups and noted vocalists of the country will take part in the Utsab at the Bakutala of the institute till late night on the day.

Different local food items including Mur, Chira, Khai and various kind of Pitha (cake) and payes will be displayed at the Utsab venue.

Chairperson of the Parishad and eminent artist Lalla Hasan addressing the press conference said that they would celebrate the Utsab with a view to uphold the folk tradition and familiarise it to the urban people, particularly among members of the new generation.



Nabanna in the city

The metropolis will trace its roots today as the country celebrates the advent of the harvesting season at the national level for the first time in history.

Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Judges' plea for better pay endorsed SC tends to disagree with HC rule on separation of judiciary

By SC Correspondent

The Supreme Court yesterday partly allowed the government's appeal against the High Court judgment that had said separation of the judiciary from the executive does not call for constitutional amendment.

However, the SC upheld the directive of the HC regarding payment of enhanced salary and other benefits to the judges of the lower courts.

The SC judgment said, "The appeal is partly allowed without any order as to cost. The directive of the High Court Division with regard to payment of salary and other benefits will continue."

A total of 441 judges of different Civil Courts in the coun-

try from Assistant Judge up to District and Sessions Judges had filed a writ petition before the HC.

A Division Bench of the HC, comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Hoque and Justice Md Hassan Ameen, heard the writ and gave the judgment.

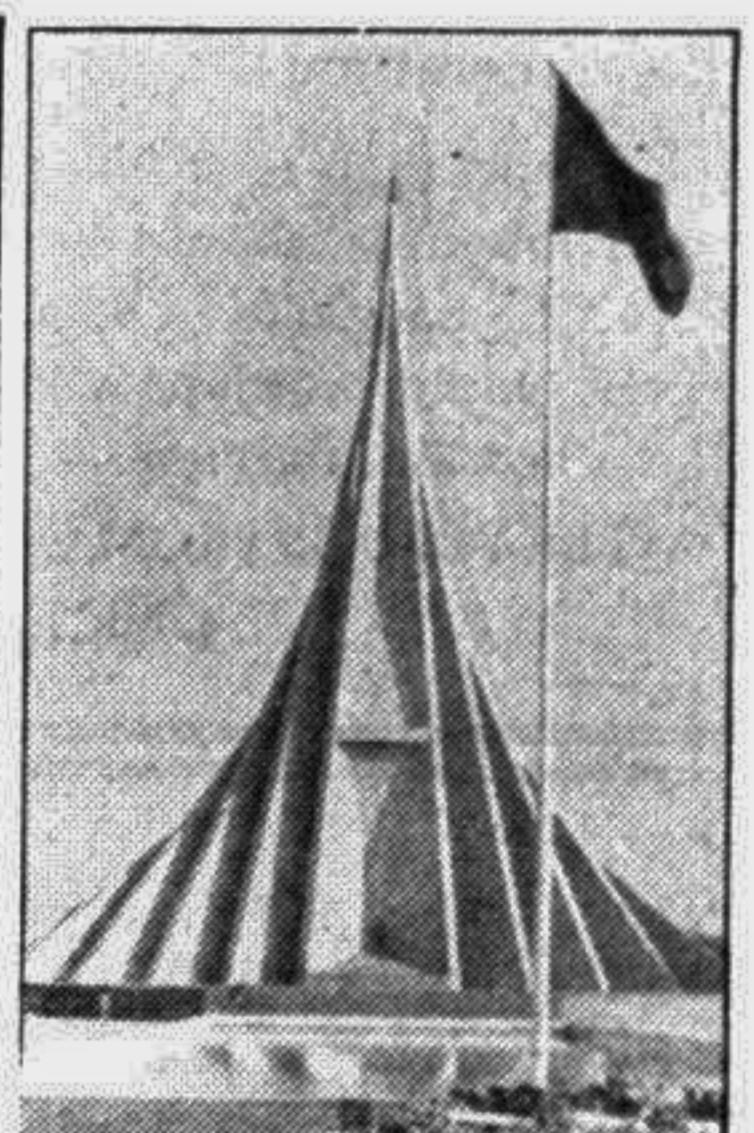
The HC declared that in order to give effect, carry out and implement fully separation of the judiciary from the executive organ of the state, no constitutional amendment is necessary as the provisions for such separation are there in the constitution itself.

The services of the judicial officers and the magistrates performing judicial functions

shall be known as 'Judicial Service of Bangladesh' under the direct control and supervision of the Supreme Court, the HC judgment said.

The HC also directed the government to take immediate steps to make necessary Rules under Article 115 of the Constitution to ensure separation of the Judiciary from the executive organ of the state.

Attorney General Mahmudul Islam with newly appointed Deputy Attorney General Bazlur Rahman Chahana moved the appeal, while Barrister Syed Iftaque Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister M Amirul Islam opposed it.



December is a month of joy and sorrow

By Staff Correspondent

December is a month of sorrow and joy. This month inspires the nation with the memories of victory and gaining freedom from the clutches of Pakistani aggressors. At the

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Belfast begins self rule

BELFAST, Dec 2: Northern Ireland began an unprecedented era of self-rule Thursday at the stroke of midnight as Britain ended 25 years of direct administration over the troubled province, reports AFP.

As the hour chimed, London devolved power to the new cross-party government in Belfast, as part of a 1998 peace accord aimed at ending three decades of sectarian strife.

For the first time, this power-sharing government represents all shades of Protestant and Roman Catholic opinion, including the paramilitary IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein.

Continuing what has been a bewildering pace of change, the new government was to meet Thursday to begin running the province's affairs again.

The Irish Republican Army was also expected Thursday to name a go-between to an international body set up to oversee paramilitary decommissioning of weapons.

And in Dublin, the Irish government was to modify the country's constitution to delete those sections making a terri-

cross-border bodies on areas of mutual interest to north and south.

The changes falling into place this week after 30 years of sectarian violence were foreseen in the historic Good Friday peace accord of April 1998.

This accord had until last Saturday remained largely theoretical because of an impasse over the timing of devolution and paramilitary disarmament.

The logjam was broken when the Unionists, the province's largest Protestant party, voted on Saturday to let Sinn Fein into government without a prior IRA weapons handover.

On Monday, a 10-strong executive was voted in, containing three ministers each of the Unionists and SDLP and two each from Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionists (DUP).

"It is up to (the executive) to prove they can move beyond the politics of posture and get on with the harder, more mundane business of devolved government," Britain's left-leaning Guardian newspaper commented in an editorial.

Northern Ireland has been ruled directly from Westminster since 1972, when an earlier attempt at power-sharing was scuppered by Protestant hardliners -- including, ironically, some of those now prepared to sit with Sinn Fein.

The IRA has fought for the reunification of Ireland since the country was partitioned in 1921, when 26 counties in the south broke free from London but six in the north remained under British rule.

Many Protestants remain deeply sceptical about allowing its political wing an unprecedented role in government, and Unionists have threatened to scupper the whole arrangement if no weapons have been given up by late January.

The IRA denounced the Unionist move, but confirmed in a statement Tuesday that it would appoint a go-between.

In its editorial, the Guardian noted that "both sides need to make the new settlement work so well that republicanism's shift from violence to democracy is thoroughly vindicated."



A lake looted

The *peersahib* seems to have his ways with the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), wishing for changes in Dhanmondi Lake Development Project and getting it.

Star photo: A K M Mohsin