

# DOWN TO EARTH

## A Museum with Hopeful Prospects

By A S M Nurunnabi

The Bangladesh National Museum located on an attractive site at Shahbagh, Dhaka is a definite addition to the cultural amenities of the city.

Having integrated the erstwhile Dhaka Museum which was established in 1913 at Nimital, the national museum came into being in a new shape in 1983. For a national museum to be properly equipped, the short period of its existence is apparently inadequate.

The exhibits, covering a wide range of subjects on ancient arts and crafts historical relics and cultural heritage, fauna and flora, etc. of the country, are displayed in forty-three galleries. In its scope, collection and display technique, the new museum, as compared with the old, appears to project a definite improvement.

Museum sources said that there are at present one lakh objects in the store and at the moment the museum display only one-third of that number.

The museum has an annual budget of 1.85 crore. According to authorities concerned, the multiplicity of programmes and activities that the museum has embarked upon has put pressure on the budgetary provision.

The total number of visitors daily average 2500 to 3000 on week days and 5000 to 5500 on Fridays.

The museum has three branch museums under it. Besides, the Usmani Museum

In Sylhet, the two other branches have been recently opened, the Ahsan Manzil in old Dhaka and the Zia Memorial Museum in Chittagong.

The museum has six departments under it, namely i) history and arts, ii) ethnology and decorative arts, iii) natural history, iv) contemporary arts, v) preservation and chemical laboratory and vi) public education.

Under the public education department, a variety of activities are organised. To help children and adolescents acquire direct knowledge of our history and culture, the museum with its own transport bring school students of Dhaka and neighbouring areas and arrange guided tours of the museum.

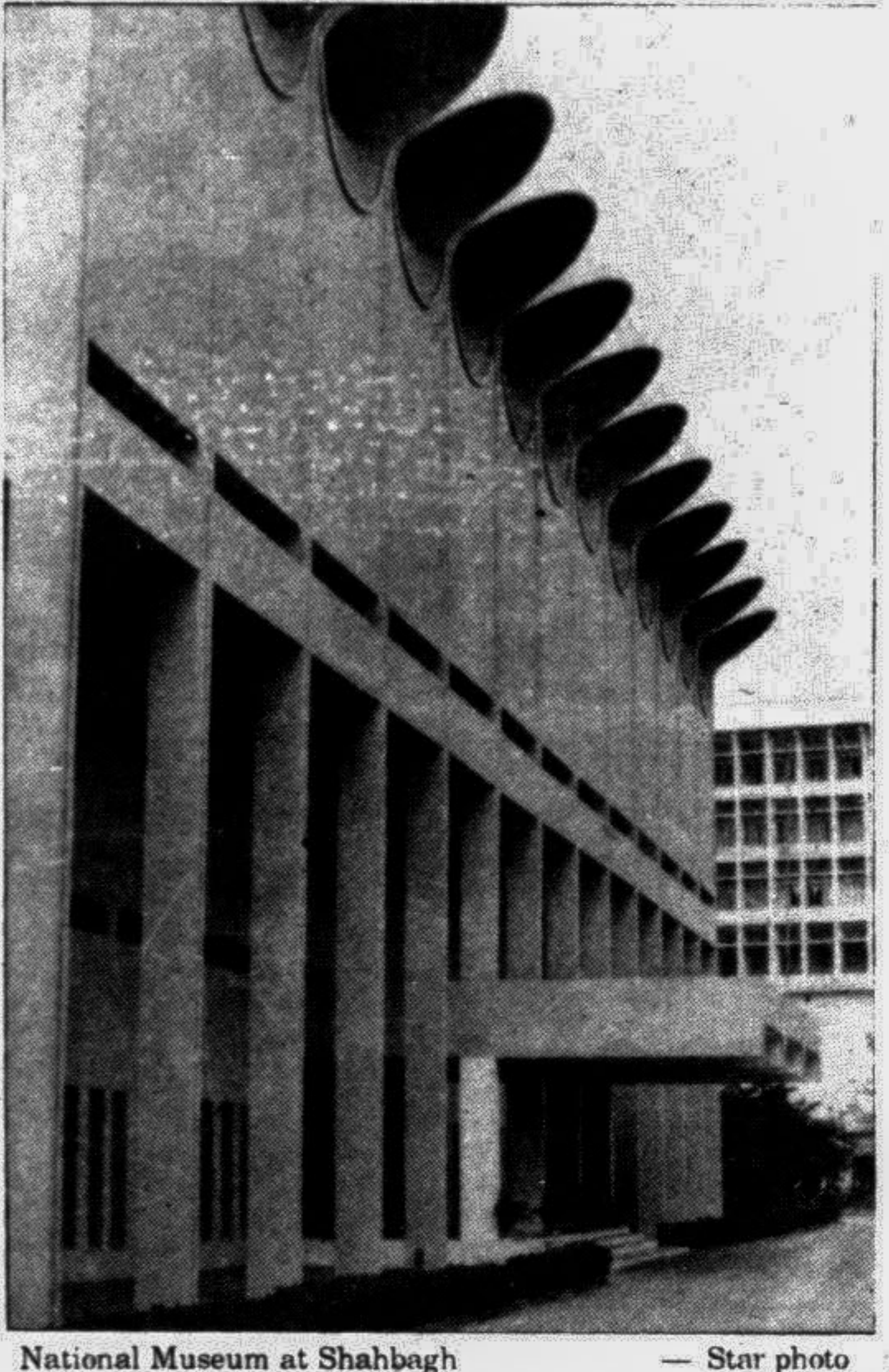
To make the village people conscious of our history and cultural heritage, mobile exhibitions tour the districts. Film shows are arranged in the museum auditorium free of charge twice every week. The museum has a rich library of 30 thousand volumes of books to facilitate the work of researchers.

The museum has two auditoria the main and the other for children, in which seminars, symposia and other cultural programmes are held under the auspices of the museum.

purposes. On the occasions of the Bengali New Year's day, 21st February, Independence Day and Victory Day, various programmes are arranged under the auspices of the museum. Seminars are held twice every month on the cultural heritage of Bangladesh.

Some of the important projects of the museum which are reportedly under way at present are: (a) Work for preservation of the cultural heritage of each district, (b) A video film on the singers' community of Bangladesh, (c) A video film on the fauna and flora of the Sunderbans, (d) A 16 mm film on Dhaka—a city of mosques, (e) Reproduction of the museum's journal entitled Lalitkala. The sources said that these projects would have a smooth sailing if there is no budgetary hindrance in their way.

A museum is regarded as a cultural university of a country. Since, as custodian of a nation's history and culture it reflects the different phases of their evolution, its importance in the life of a people can hardly be exaggerated.



National Museum at Shahbagh — Star photo

# Several hundred former Soviet tanks missing

VIENNA, Feb 5: Several hundred former Soviet tanks have gone missing although they should have been destroyed as scheduled under the 1990 disarmament treaty concerning Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), a West European diplomat said today, reports AFP.

The West demanded clarification after the problem was noted last November. But the latest figures provided on December 15 show that the "situation remains confused" regarding equipment targeted for destruction in the former Soviet republics, according to the source.

He said there was some suspicion of "tampering" with figures of "several hundred" armoured troop transport vehicles and artillery pieces showed up again on Russia's lists during the December review, after they were considered as destroyed on the

November toll, the source said. "We do not want to make a big deal out of this because we understand the chaos," in the former Soviet Union, the source said, noting that there was still time left since the CFE treaty, signed in Paris in November 1990, set a three-year deadline for destruction targets.

"But we are insisting that the collective reduction obligations be carried out." The 30 states that signed the CFE treaty—The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries, Eastern European states in the old Warsaw Pact, and former Soviet republics in the treaty zone which runs from the Atlantic to the Urals—sent representative to a special conference here Friday.

It was called to ratify an agreement between Prague and Bratislava on how they would handle their arms and troops reductions following

the split of the old Czechoslovak republic into two states last month.

Under the 1990 CFE text, the Soviet Union said it had slightly more than 20,000 tanks and would destroy about 7,000 to give it a new total of 13,150.

When the Soviet Union became defunct, the treaty obligations were divided among former Soviet equipment in eight republics—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Kazakhstan.

But the source said it was clear that even under Russia's revised figures "several hundred tanks" are still awaiting destruction.

# The Midnight File

## UN okays sending troops to frontier between Iraq, Kuwait

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: The Security Council today approved sending a battalion of 750 soldiers and support staff to patrol the potentially explosive frontier between Iraq and Kuwait and use force to repel any incursions.

## 25 people burnt alive as bus rammed tractor

ISLAMABAD, Feb 5: At least 25 people were burnt alive when a passenger bus rammed into a tractor trailer in central Punjab Province today, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said.

# Mitterrand to renew ties with Indochina

PARIS, Feb 5: French President Francois Mitterrand will renew his country's ties with Indochina next week as the first western head of State to visit Vietnam and Cambodia in decades, reports Reuters.

A highlight of the trip will be his visit to Dien Bien Phu, where Vietnamese forces defeated the cream of the French army in a 60-day battle in 1954 that changed the region's destiny.

# Italian PM survives no-confidence vote

ROME, Feb 5: The spectre of political chaos in Italy receded today after Prime Minister Giuliano Amato survived a crucial no-confidence vote in Parliament, reports Reuters.

Amato's shaky coalition, facing the stiffest test of its seven-month life, won the vote comfortably after two days of often heated debate.

# AL hartal

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conspiracy" by ruling BNP to snatch away people's verdict in Mirpur by-election.

In a statement yesterday the Awami League President alleged that the government, apprehending a certain debacle in the by-election, had resorted to a dirty conspiracy to manipulate the result in its favour.

"Specific allegations are there that announcement of election results were stopped at the direct intervention of the head of the government," Hasina said referring to the stoppage of supplying results Wednesday to the Election Commission after 78 polling centres.

She said the Election Commission tried to build up an independent image for institutionalising democracy despite all odds and obstacles. But the authority of the EC in conducting the polls independently was challenged.

The ruling party had announced the results by conspiracy and media coup in utter violation of the election rules, the opposition leader said.

Pointing to several figures of election results announced by the government, Hasina said the discrepancy in the results clearly shows that BNP had changed the result sheets and took shelter of media to bring the result in its favour.

# Bosnia

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of death, but hundreds of thousands," he said.

He said the Serbs should be given a deadline to end the siege. "If they do not comply, they should be bombed."

Committee members were sympathetic, saying the United States and European nations should do more to end the war. "I am ashamed because my own government has, at least until now, been a partner in Europe's refusal to take definitive action to stop the violent aggression by one country on the sovereignty... territory of another," said Senator Dennis Deconcini, co-chairman of the committee.

# Pak Jamaat expresses solidarity with Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Feb 5: Rallies were staged in Pakistan today answering a call by the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Party to express solidarity with the "freedom" movement in Indian-controlled Kashmir, reports AFP.

The main gathering today was in the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore where witnesses said up to 4,000 people gathered to here, JI chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed denouncing Indian "atrocities" against the Kashmiris.

A few hundred participated in a procession in Peshawar, capital of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), residents said.

A planned rally was put off in Quetta, capital of Southwestern Baluchistan province because of an official ban on public gatherings in connection with Saturday's meeting there of 10-nation regional economic cooperation organisation.

In Karachi, capital of Southern Sindh province, hundreds of youths gathered in a Park but police did not allow them to form a procession as

# Maghi Purnima today

The Buddhist community in Bangladesh will observe the Maghi Purnima today with religious fervour, reports BSS.

Maghi Purnima, one of the holy religious celebrations of the Buddhists, marks the holy anniversary by Lord Buddha on his passing away (Nirvana) on Baisshaki Purnima day at Chapal Chaitta in Botshali. Later, he embraced Nirvana at the foot of a shal tree at Kushinagar on Baisshaki Purnima.

Bangladesh Buddhist Federation has drawn up an extensive programme in celebration of the day at the international Buddha Bihar at Moul Badda.

Bangladesh Buddha Krishithi Prachar Sangha will also observe the day through similar programme at Dharmarajik Buddha Bihar at Kamalapur.

A week-long Thegorpur Mela will be held at Paltiya in Chittagong in observance of the Maghi Purnima. Buddhists from different parts of the country would assemble at the mela, beginning today.

# Iran pardons 619 prisoners

NICOSIA, Feb 5: Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has pardoned 619 prisoners as the nation celebrates the 14th anniversary of the Islamic revolution, the Islamic Republic News Agency announced Friday, reports AP.

# India shuts Kabul embassy

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been reported killed over the past two weeks in reignited battles between troops of the Islamic government and guerrillas led by radical fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

In Islamabad, Pakistan, UN envoy Sotirious Mousouris urged the Afghan factions to lay down their weapons or risk losing badly needed aid.

"If this situation continues for very long the donors may be discouraged, and when a country is put on the shelf it is very difficult to take it off again, given the other demands," said Mousouris, the UN secretary-general's representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Hekmatyar has vowed to destroy Kabul unless President Burhanuddin Rabbani hands power over to a leadership council representing the 10

# Mahathir's Feb 12 visit aimed at boosting trade, investment

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad will visit Bangladesh and Pakistan from February 12 to 17 to boost trade and investment, the Foreign Ministry said Friday, reports AP.

While in Bangladesh, Mahathir will hold talks with his counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia, officiate at the opening of the Malaysian Trade Center and be presented with a key to the city of Dhaka, a Foreign Ministry official said.

He will also visit Chittagong to see the Export Processing Zone.

Trade between Bangladesh and Malaysia is still very small and Bangladesh is keen to sell more of its raw materials, especially jute and semi-manufactured products, to Malaysia, the official said.

While in Pakistan from February 14 to 17, Mahathir will sign several agreements on joint ventures in palm oil, including one between Malaysia's Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and Mapak of Pakistan.

Bangladesh and Pakistan are major suppliers of labour to Malaysia. Mahathir will also discuss making formal arrangements to protect the interests of both the workers and their employers in Malaysia.

Mahathir will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, International Trade and Industry Minister Rafidah Aziz, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Hamid Othman

# 2 JCD leaders hurt in armed attack

Mahbub Amir Mohammad Faisal, assistant General Secretary of Tejgaon College Students Union and Cultural Secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Motiheel Thana Unit, was seriously injured when the armed miscreants of the Jatiya Party attacked him at Shahidbagh crossing on Thursday evening a JCD press release said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Faisal was attacked when he was going to undertake organizational activities from his residence.

Motiheel Thana Unit of JCD held a protest rally here yesterday to condemn the attack on the JCD leader.

Speakers at the rally demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for the attack.

The rally was followed by a procession which paraded different streets.

Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami bases south of the city. Afghanistan's warring factions are bitterly divided over what constitutes an Islamic state and by religious and tribal rivalries.

Most embassies have evacuated non-essential staff from Kabul, Iran, India and Pakistan said this week they would withdraw most of their embassy staffs.

On Monday, four people in a UN convoy were killed outside the eastern city of Jalalabad, in a lawless area controlled by Hekmatyar's guerrillas. No one claimed responsibility.

# AL: Legal action

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Violating the EC's request, he said Police Commissioner Huda went to Mirpur thana and gave instruction to his subordinate police officers. He also visited the election control room at Mirpur No. 10 crossing at 8-15 pm and created an unpleasant situation there.

He further said the announcement of the results through radio and television quoting UNB declaring the BNP nominee elected unofficially as a gross interference in the EC conduct and clear violation of aforesaid Articles 118 (4) and 119 (1) of the Constitution.

In his written statement Jahangir depicted the situation how he was misguided in Mirpur by the election officials just before the time of vote counting and tabulation and the subsequent developments on Feb 3.

He also mentioned incident of firing at Shaheed Smriti Centre and election irregularities at some centres including Rupnagar and Bagbari.

Replying to a question, Jahangir said the Awami League will go to High Court and the Election Tribunal to seek justice.

Begum Mattia Chowdhury said that the Mirpur electoral results had been manipulated in favour of the AL candidate but the government had manipulated the results.

Kamal Ahmed Majumdar demanded repolling in 18 centres, claiming that he won the election by a minimum margin of 1926 votes.

# Attack on UNITA hqs: 30 killed

LUANDA, Feb 5: Fighting raged in the Angolan provinces, including an attack on Huambo in which 30 UNITA soldiers were killed, state radio and media said today, reports Reuters.

Water was restored in the capital Luanda, where rebels sabotaged the main waterworks two weeks ago, but elsewhere there was no apparent let up in the fighting which resumed when UNITA rejected UN-supervised elections held last year.

The radio reported clashes in six provinces across the vast Southwest African country, including the elimination of a UNITA rebel company in Huambo, the guerrillas' central highlands headquarters.

The radio said many rebels fled the scene, leaving behind an assortment of weapons.

# Salam

From Page 1 Col 4  
In a statement here Barrister Salam Talukder said the armed hooligans backed by the Awami League had disrupted the public life through killing the BNP workers and attacking their houses, looting, damage, firing and bomb blasts in different parts of the city including Mirpur before the announcement of the results of the by-election of Dhaka-11 seat of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The BNP Secretary General condemned such terrorist acts and said these actions had manifested the characters of the defeated forces in the election.

He asked the identified force to refrain from doing loss of lives and the properties of the BNP workers.

Barrister Salam demanded exemplary punishment for the persons responsible for the killing of JCD worker Asad. He expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the peace of the departed soul.

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