

Teachers' 'respect'

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Monday) with the ex-vice chancellors, deans and senior teachers. But, they had rejected that," he said.

The minister had urged the agitating teachers and students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) to discontinue movement, saying that a solution was possible through discussions.

Addressing a hurriedly-called media briefing at the education ministry yesterday, Nahid said, "I don't find any reason but to embarrass me by saying that they have done [postponement] this to show respect to me."

The minister's reaction came a day after the agitating teachers association postponed its demonstration for two days for what it said was "to show respect" to his initiative for resolving the ongoing crisis at Buet through negotiations.

Contacted yesterday, the association leaders however declined to comment on the minister's remarks, and said they had no alternative but to announce the decision of mass resignation of the teachers since the movement got momentum.

Nahid said yesterday, "As we figured out a way of solving the problem [at Buet] after taking opinions of the senior teachers, ex-VCs, and deans at Monday's meeting, the teachers' association at a counter meeting decided en masse resignation of all teachers, and such an extreme decision created barriers to a peaceful solution."

He noted that for a university, mass resignation of its teachers is an extreme decision on their part. In

such a case, a university faces a deadlock and it is ruined.

"They [association] may consider me a fool, but people of the country are not fools. It is clear that they held the meeting just to announce a counter programme," the minister said.

"They can pay respect to all by withdrawing their extreme decision, and pave the way for a solution through discussion," he added.

Nahid said the prime minister also asked him why she would discuss [Buet issue] with him when the teachers had already taken up an extreme programme.

Replying to a question, he said, "We are trying relentlessly so that the institution can run without any problem. Let us see how it will run." But the teachers association, he said, should remove the "barriers" and help solve the problem.

Asked, Prof Ashrafur Islam, general secretary of the association, said their programme was not a threat in any way nor did it have any other meaning.

"Since we are not getting any specific assurance from the government level for [meeting] our demand, we did not think it to be rational to backtrack from our movement that had got momentum," he said.

Besides, he said, they did not want the process to get prolonged, and gave the government six days to take a decision.

Prof Ashrafur hoped that the government would take a quick decision by removing the VC and pro-VC.

Fighting flares

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In line with the decision, the European Union said the body is preparing to freeze the assets of at least 26 Syrians close to Assad and readying plans to board vessels and planes suspected of sending arms to his regime.

Russia rejected the move accusing the West of seeking to use the proposed resolution to justify military intervention in the country.

The British text, backed by the US, France, Germany and Portugal, called for non-military sanctions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter if Assad does not withdraw heavy weapons from Syrian cities in 10 days.

Chapter VII of the charter permits the Security Council to impose sanctions and, should they fail, to pursue tougher actions.

Syrian rebels took control of all border crossings between Iraq and Syria yesterday, Baghdad's deputy interior minister told AFP.

A Lebanese security source said nearly 19,000 Syrians, many from the

India to send

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Bangladesh had handed over a list of places along the Indian border where many martyrs had been buried.

He said the delegation had also visited north-eastern Indian states, West Bengal, Agartala, Gohati, and Shilong.

India would hand over the remains of the freedom fighters to Bangladesh with state honour, said the report, adding that the mammoth task would require some time.

The Indian states concerned have also assured of their assistance in this regard. Akbar said, "The state governments are now appointing officers for the mission. The officers will keep in touch with the Bangladesh delegation and work together when the delegation arrives."

He said at first would be the identification and then repatriation of the remains.

A similar procedure was followed while returning the remains of Bishreshtha Hamidur Rahman to Bangladesh a few days ago.

capital, have fled from violence at home across the border into Lebanon since Wednesday. At least 214 people -- 124 civilians, 62 soldiers and 28 rebels died on Wednesday. That figure did not include the three regime members.

Strengthen market watch

JS panel asks ministry to keep prices stable in Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the commerce ministry to expand market watch by increasing the number of monitoring teams to 42 from 14 to keep stable the prices of essentials during Ramadan.

At a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, it also recommended strengthening Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

The ministry officials informed the parliamentary committee that TCB had already started selling lentils, pulses, dates and soybean oil on open markets by 26 trucks in Dhaka and five trucks in Chittagong, the committee chief told reporters after the meeting.

"A section of dishonest businessmen increase the prices of daily essentials by creating an artificial crisis in Ramadan," ABM Abul Kashem, chairman of the committee, said, adding the committee had suggested engaging more monitoring teams to prevent such a situation.

Currently, 14 teams under the commerce ministry are monitoring the market.

The parliamentary body also asked the commerce ministry to inform people of adequate stocks so that they do not get confused and dishonest traders cannot increase the prices of essentials.

About the functioning of TCB, commerce ministry officials said TCB sold commodities worth Tk750 crore at fair prices during the holy month last year and that it planned to distribute daily commodities of Tk 12,000 crore this year.

Enterprise

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local landmarks.

Others got to lay eyes on it as it sailed up the Hudson River on a barge.

Today, following its April and June sojourns, the piece of Nasa history is on the move no more.

The Enterprise, a 150,000-pound mammoth of a flying machine, goes on public display yesterday at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum's new Space Shuttle Pavilion.

Encased in the centre of an accommodating inflatable dome, the shuttle will be available for visitors to admire up close from just feet away.

At 57 feet wide and 137 feet long -- with a 78 foot wingspan to boot -- the Enterprise is an imposing figure with quite a presence in its new home.

The space shuttle, which was completed in 1976, was Nasa's first. Though it never actually flew a mission into outer space, it performed critical tests around the Earth's atmosphere and is widely credited with paving the way for five future shuttles.

Of the six shuttles Nasa built, only four remain. The other two experienced disasters during their missions, killing their crews: The Challenger exploded in 1986 and the Columbia disintegrated in 2003.

President Richard Nixon first announced Nasa's intention to construct the Enterprise in 1972 amid heightened tensions during the Cold War. With US officials fearing the Soviet Union would dominate the novel realm of space travel, the Enterprise was designed to be a reusable spacecraft that could also land safely -- allowing Nasa to conduct launches more frequently and with greater efficiency.

Previous space crafts could neither land nor be reused for future missions.

When tests including the Enterprise began in 1977, the shuttle would sit atop a 747 carrier aircraft that helped get it off the ground. Once it reached an altitude hundreds of thousands of feet in the sky, the Enterprise would separate from the flight and two pilots would glide the shuttle for several minutes before making a smooth landing. This was thanks in part to an aerodynamically designed tail cone.

Fred Haise, an Apollo 13 astronaut who piloted the Enterprise on five flights, said flying the shuttle was "nearly perfect."

"It's something exciting, especially when you put five years of development into getting it ready," said Haise, 78.

Of the moment right after his first takeoff in the Enterprise, Haise said: "I was immediately happy and grateful."

Fatal trip

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become treacherous in this rainy season with potholes veiled under the stagnant water. "My bike bounced after its front wheel fell into a pothole and immediately I felt that she [Zerin] was not with me," Ziaul said. Later, he found her lying on the road with severe injuries to the head.

"I am not sure but I saw a pick-up van go past me at that time. That might have hit her when she fell on the ground," Ziaul added.

He reached Dhaka Medical College Hospital with his sister around 12:40am, 25 minutes after the accident, when doctors said she had been brought in dead.

Zerin was a final year student of the marketing department of Jagannath University. She and Imranul Haque, an assistant professor of the same department, got married just one year ago.

The university authority in a press release expressed condolences at her sudden death and offered sympathies to the bereaved family.

Officer-in-Charge of Motijheel Police Station Hayatullah Mollah said the body had been handed over to the family without an autopsy as it had requested that no case be filed.

It may be recalled that on May 20, a woman fell victim to a similar accident and died while she was riding on the backseat of a motorbike with her son in the capital's Merul Badda.

Silence of the storyteller

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often distracting 1970s. It changed his life as it changed the thought processes of millions in Bangladesh. Suddenly there was a new man with a different take on fiction. Suddenly, the crowd of readers of Bengali fiction widened.

The storyteller will tell stories no more. The final chapter of the exciting, intense tale of his life came, not through words or literary nuances, but through the silence which descended on his life in distant New York last night. The news of Humayun Ahmed's passing, snaking its way into the nooks and crevices of the collective Bangladeshi soul in the depths of profound darkness, was jarring. It shook us up, even those who had not read Humayun Ahmed. It raised that painful, age-old question: did the writer know of the approaching end? He was here, back home, recently before travelling back to New York for a continuation of his treatment for cancer.

He deluded ourselves into believing that he had overcome the forces of death, that he would soon be back among us in revitalized form. But perhaps only he knew that the twilight was at hand? Perhaps he understood the need for a final experiencing of the air and aroma of his land of birth before the music of life drew to a close?

Yes, Humayun Ahmed was a powerful writer, one whose fiction sold endlessly. The young and the middle-aged never ceased talking about some book or the other by him. Prolific writing all too often mars quality in a writer. In Humayun Ahmed, quality remained a matter of consistency. His novels were lapped up by fanatical tribes of readers. His television dramas gave a new, sharper edge to middle class sentiments. Citizens across the spectrum spotted in his characters, both in the novels and in the plays, their own selves, warts and all. The pathos, the ambition, the ego, the secret desires

The lights go out

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The eldest among three brothers and two sisters, Humayun was also a renowned filmmaker and dramatist. He went to New York on September 14 last year after being diagnosed with colon cancer during a routine check-up in Singapore.

He had received chemotherapy in 12 cycles at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York before he returned to Bangladesh on May 11 to spend time with friends and relatives for 20 days.

Back in New York, he underwent two surgeries last month. After the second surgery, he was infected with a virus unknown to the doctors, which spread through the body.

A pall of gloom descended soon after the news streamed into the country and across it.

A former associate professor of the chemistry department of Dhaka University, Humayun came into prominence after the publication of his first novel, *Nondito Noroke*, in 1974.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia have expressed deep shock at the death of Humayun.

In his condolence message, President Zillur Rahman said the creative works of Humayun Ahmed

which on a quotidian basis assail us or keep us going, as the case may be, all gleamed in his works. In *Ei Shob Din Raatri*, in *Oyomoy*, indeed everywhere, Humayun Ahmed spoke to us. Or we were the characters portrayed in his tales, transported from the banality of our world into images where the banality acquired a special quality of its own. Reflect on *Baker Bhai*. He was our own local goon-cum-hero. We would not let him die. Neither would we put up with his mischief.

That was the creative imagination in Humayun Ahmed. Its roots lay in our social realism, of which the writer was only too aware. His mother and his siblings walked through the prism of moving time in the shadows of a deathly past. His father was done to death by an army of genocide in our long-ago war for freedom. That pain was a constant. In Humayun Ahmed, then, lurked the tale which beats in every Bengali's heart. There was darkness before

Humayun married Gultekin, granddaughter of Principal Ibrahim Khan, in 1973. The couple divorced in 2003, with the writer subsequently marrying television actress Shaon.

Humayun had his schooling in Sylhet, Comilla, Chittagong, Dinajpur and Bogra owing to his father's postings in these towns. He passed the School Certificate examination as a student of Bogra Zilla School.

A few months ago, Humayun Ahmed was appointed special adviser to the Bangladesh permanent mission at the United Nations by the government.

He continued writing during his stay in New York for cancer treatment. Humayun retired as a Dhaka University teacher in the mid-1990s to devote himself to writing and making films and television dramas.

His first film, "Aguner Parashmoni", based on the Liberation War, won the National Film Award in eight categories, including Best Picture and Best Director.

Humayun won the Bangla Academy Award in 1981 and the Ekushey Padak in 1994. His first award was Lekhak Shibir Prize in 1973. (Earlier report on page 10)

Govt weighs 4 options

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present there, they said.

Muhtith and Rizvi talked about it with the prime minister right after the meeting.

The finance minister yesterday gave hints about some alternative options for implementing the project. He said the government will decide on new financing arrangement by this month and will start the project work within the current fiscal year.

Muhtith was speaking to reporters in the cabinet division after a meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs.

Wishing anonymity, a finance ministry official said the government is likely to take some steps to engage the development partners afresh in the project and restore their confidence following the WB's allegation of corruption in the project.

A steering committee will be formed with the finance minister as its head to oversee the project's implementation. An international panel will be engaged to look into whether the Anti-Corruption Commission's probe into the corruption allegations was up to international standard, the official said.

In case of unavailability of soft credit from development partners, fresh tenders may be floated asking bidders to finance a part of the project,

review its decision. **SECOND OPTION** Another option is to implement the project through a new consortium of the ADB, Jica and IDB. Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Iqbal Mahmood last week visited Jeddah and had talks with IDB high officials on the matter.

The ERD secretary told Tuesday's meeting at Muhtith's residence that the IDB will continue its financial commitments for the project.

The finance minister made a plan to leave Dhaka yesterday for Japan and also visit the Philippines. But he later postponed the visits. Decision on his visits to the two countries may be taken after the Jica president returns to Japan from Washington.

Muhtith told reporters yesterday that the government had already completed talks with the IDB and had been in discussion with the ADB and Jica.

Muhtith said if the WB finally does not finance the project, the government will request the other three development partners to continue their financial commitments. And they will decide whether they will finance under the previous framework.

"However, I think the previous framework should do. If the WB finally leaves the project, the ADB may become the

lead donor."

THIRD OPTION The government may float fresh tender and the successful bidders will have to finance a part of the project. Chinese companies have expressed their willingness to participate in such bidding, said a finance ministry source.

The finance minister yesterday said if the present donors pull out of the project, the government will look for an alternative source. In that case, the government may not get a credit of \$2.3 billion. He, however, did not elaborate.

FOURTH OPTION The government may construct the bridge with its own resources if all other options don't work.

He, however, said it will be difficult to mobilise foreign currency to implement the project. In that case, the ministries may not get foreign currency according to their demand.

Muhtith said it will require Tk 1300 crore in the current fiscal year if the government is to implement the project with its own resources. He said there was already a budgetary allocation of Tk 800 crore for the project and another of Tk 500 crore might be made through budget revision.

He said \$1.8 billion to \$2 billion will be required for the project, and of which, nearly \$350 million will be required in the current fiscal year.

the dawn. That is the tale. But even dawn sometimes comes draped in the tears of the past. So it was with Humayun Ahmed, with his characters.

He was our first writer who crossed the threshold to celebrity status. Stardom was his to savour. Much as you argue over his place in the history of Bengali literature, much as you might take issue with his approach to things imaginative, to his interpretations of history (as in *Deyal*), you cannot but agree that he touched lives in a way no other spinner of words in this land has done before. He looms over you as a formidable presence.

And now comes the loud silence, one that mortality will not allow to be lifted. Humayun Ahmed has transited to a world beyond ours.

Suddenly, in searing manner, our world is changed. Our weekend good cheer has given way to the question: what do we do, now that the master storyteller is gone?

US navy ship did not warn Indian fishermen: Dubai police

AFP, Dubai

Dubai's police chief has rejected US claims that a navy ship warned Indian fishermen to move away from it before firing and killing one of them after they failed to heed the order, media yesterday reported.

The fisherman died and three others were wounded on Monday when the ship opened fire on their vessel near the port of Jebel Ali off Dubai in the tense waters of the southern Gulf.

The "Indian fishermen were not warned to move away by the US Navy," General Dahi Khalfan said, according to Khaleej Times daily.

"The crew ... told the Dubai police that they did not move towards the ship and instead attempted to avoid it."

Khalfan criticised the way the US ship had dealt with the incident, saying it had moved into international waters right after the shooting. Dubai police will deal with the case as a "murder," he said.

US defence officials said the fishing boat had ignored warnings not to approach the refuelling ship USNS Rappahannock, and that sailors on board the American vessel feared it could pose a threat.

Cop tortured to death

Another missing for 8 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Law enforcers yesterday recovered the body of a constable from the bank of the Sugandha river in Nalchity upazila of Jhalakathi, eight days after he went missing from Barisal city.

The dead is Khokor Chandra Roy, 50, of Bauphal upazila in Patuakhali. He was posted at Barisal Chief Judicial Magistrate's court.

Meanwhile, another constable Shamim Akon, 40, driver of the deputy inspector general (DIG) of Barisal police, disappeared on July 11 from the city.

In a general diary lodged with Kotwali Police Station in Barisal on July 12, Khokor's wife Jharna Roy said her husband went out of their Bogra Road house on July 10 afternoon to withdraw money from his general provident (GP) fund and did not return home.

Acting on information by locals, police recovered Khokor's body at 8:30am and sent it to Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy. Md Masuduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Nalchity Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The victim's legs, right ear and right-hand fingers were chopped off.

High officials of Barisal police visited the spot where the recovery was made.

Law enforcers said a case will be filed on the basis of the findings of the post mortem.

In the other incident, constable Shamim Akon went missing since he left his rented house in Barisal city on July 11 morning.

Contacted, Shamim's younger brother Al Amin Akon said they tried to reach him over the phone, but it was found switched off.

Sources at DIG's office said Shamim was granted a 10-day leave from July 11, but later the authorities cancelled his leave on emergency grounds.

Kotwali police recorded a general diary on July 14 in this connection and sent messages to all police stations across the country, but are yet to trace him.

BNP leader shot dead in Jessore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gunmen shot dead a BNP leader at Noapara of Abhaynagar in Jessore last night.

The dead, Lutfar Rahman, 55, was general secretary of Abhaynagar municipal unit of the main opposition party.

Lutfar was in his grocery shop at Dhopadi when four to five criminals coming on two motorbikes shot him in the throat around 10:00pm, reports our Jessore correspondent.

The criminals shot him once, killing him instantly, said Kazi Abdus Saleh, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station.

The gunmen fled the spot after exploding five bombs, spreading panic in the locality.

60 killed in Darfur fight

AFP, Khartoum

Nearly 60 people have been killed this week in fighting between Arab tribes in Sudan's conflict-plagued Darfur region, the official SUNA news agency said yesterday.

Fierce clashes along the border between East Darfur state and South Kordofan killed 35 Misseriya tribesmen and 23 from the rival Zeizegat tribe, South Kordofan governor Ahmed Haroun was quoted as saying by SUNA, citing a preliminary assessment.