

Undoing the wrongdoings

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MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

It would possibly take years for any future government with noble intention to undo the wrongdoings committed by the past BNP-Jamat government during its tenure from 2001 to 2006. Its design was aimed primarily to keep the alliance's firm grip on all organs of the state in order to perpetuate its rule and to shield allied wrong-doers from any potential prosecution and subsequent conviction. Two of the casualties of their arrogance of state power were the history of our liberation war, which otherwise could have been the rallying milestone of our nation, and the higher judiciary, the last refuge for citizens to seek justice.

From its inception, the BNP-led government started to cleanse the administration out of any suspected sympathisers of its main opponents. Even the members of the armed forces and the judges of the High Court (HC) were not spared.

Dozens of armed force officers were given the forced retirements

and in an unprecedented move, 15 of the additional judges of the High Court appointed by the previous AL government were not confirmed by the BNP-Jamat government sidetracking the positive recommendation of the chief justice in favour of their confirmation.

Instead, the BNP-Jamat governments appointed around 40 or so additional judges, many of whom, according to SCBA, are incompetent, and were allegedly appointed solely under political considerations.

Termining the appointments a "serious storm" over the higher judiciary, the then chief justice Md Ruhul Amin told a function in Noakhali last year that its effect would remain in the judiciary for more than 20 years.

Since the assumption of state power on 1/11 by the current caretaker government (CTG), it has undone many of the wrongdoings committed by the BNP-Jamat government. The most visible one was the reconstitution and reformation of the EC and getting rid of not only the partisan and incompetent members of this

constitutional body and the preparation of the new voter list that corroborated the allegation of the around 12 million false and fictitious voters created by the erstwhile EC.

Many of the wrongdoings were undone either through executive order or through the promulgation of ordinances.

To get the long-awaited benefits of the independent judiciary, there were demands from many quarters to remove the incompetent and blatantly partisan judges through a Supreme Judicial Council.

In a relevant context, a welcoming verdict was delivered by a three-member special bench of the HC on July 17, directing the government to reappoint (with seniority) the 10 judges who were not confirmed by the BNP-led government within one month.

Implementation of the verdict, apparently, should strengthen the government endeavour to depoliticise, neutralise and equilibrate the higher judiciary with competent judges.

However, it is, indeed, paradoxical that the government has filed

an appeal against the verdict. This is tantamount to condoning the wrongdoing committed by the BNP-Jamat government, which, in the observations of the HC judgment: "non-compliance with the chief justice's recommendations in this regard will be violation of the constitution."

In addition, in an unprecedented move, nineteen judges of the HC and a lawyer (how could he be an aggrieved party?) affiliated to Jamaat-e-Islami filed separate applications with the Supreme Court against the HC judgment.

In the other front, in its effort to belittle the leaders of our independence movement, institutions after institutions which were named to pay due recognition to their contributions to the creation of our nation, were renamed.

Arrogance of the absolute state power, for instance, made the then finance minister question the identity of Syed Nazrul Islam in the national parliament, the acting president of the provisional Mujibnagar government, while renaming a bridge named after him.

One of its most despicable acts was to cancel August 15 as a national day of mourning, a public holiday, the day on which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated along with most of his family members in a military coup led by a group of

disgruntled army officers. It had also prohibited flying of the national flag at half-mast for paying respect to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation.

Upon a writ petition filed by three lawyers, a division bench of HC on July 27 declared illegal the immediate past BNP-led 4-party alliance government's order for cancelling observance of national mourning day and a public holiday on August 15 and prohibition of flying of the national flag at half-mast for paying respect to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bengali of all times.

The landmark HC verdict has been hailed by the political leaders from all spectrums including a few senior leaders of the BNP. This is indeed a positive phenomenon and should set a rallying precedence in the current government's declared effort to create a national consensus on certain issues that must not divide the nation.

Last year on August 15, after placing floral wreaths and paying homage to the great leader at the grave of Bangabandhu at Tungipara in presence of the chiefs of the three services, the Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed wrote: "On behalf of the government and myself, I pay my deepest respects to his



We have come far from those violent days.

(Bangabandhu) memory and pray for the salvation of his soul. It is my strong belief that everyone irrespective of parties and opinions will come forward unitedly to implement Bangabandhu's dream of building a happy, prosperous and progressive golden Bangladesh."

Through his words of sagacity, the CA has rightfully echoed the

sentiment of the whole nation. The present CTG has recognised Bangabandhu's contribution to the independence of Bangladesh and decided to propagate the real history, including Bangabandhu's contributions, in the textbooks.

Likewise, hopes and aspirations of the masses have been solemnly reflected in the current verdict of the nation's highest

court. Its immediate implementation would undoubtedly add an extra grandeur to the CTG's own feat to put the history of the nation to its true perspective. It must not attempt to undo the High Court's undoing of the other's wrongdoings.

Dr. Mozammel H. Khan is the Convener of the Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Bangladesh.

Lailat-ul-Mi'raj

The miraculous journey of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) may sound incredible to an ordinary person shrouded in ignorance about the latest developments in the realm of science, but not to a person who is acquainted with the theory of relativity or the modern concept of space and time wherein the time does not remain constant but varies with the velocity of the object concerned.

SYED ASHRAF ALI

It was on a Monday on the 27th of Rajab (though other dates are also given), one year and five months before the emigration to the holy Madinah that the holy Prophet (pbuh) was first transported through a unique night journey from the Holy Makkah to the seat of the earliest revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the Seven Heavens, even to the Sublime Throne, and blessed with the unique opportunity to meet the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful Rabbul Alameen.

In the following morning the holy Prophet (pbuh) described his glorious journey to Hazrat Ummahani (RA). He went to the mosque and told those whom he met there of his journey to Jerusalem. When informed of it Abu Jehl not only disbelieved it but also taunted and jeered at the holy Prophet (pbuh).

His enemies were immediately triumphant; for they now felt they had an irrefutable cause for mockery. But some of those who had found the story incredible began to have second thoughts, for the holy Prophet (pbuh) described the caravans he had undertaken on the way home and said there they

were and about when they might be expected to arrive in Makkah; and each arrived as predicted, and the details were as he had described.

The glorious incident occasioned heat and debate amongst people holding that it was a vision or that the soul (rooh) went on the journey but the body lay on the bed. But the holy Prophet's (pbuh) best Companions and most of the Muslims during his period believed earnestly that the Glorious Ascension to the Heavens was definitely in person and not a vision.

The detailed description of Mi'raj testifying to the physical flight of the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) had been narrated by at least twenty-six Sahabis and Sahabiyas including great personalities like Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique, Umar Faruq, Ali-al-Murtaza, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Kulsum bint Rasulallah, Belal Habshi, and Abu Zar Gifari (peace be upon them).

In fact, the majority of the commentators take the Glorious Night Journey literally but some of them allow that there were also other occasions on which spiritual journey or vision occurred.

Even on the conclusion of a miraculous bodily journey, which

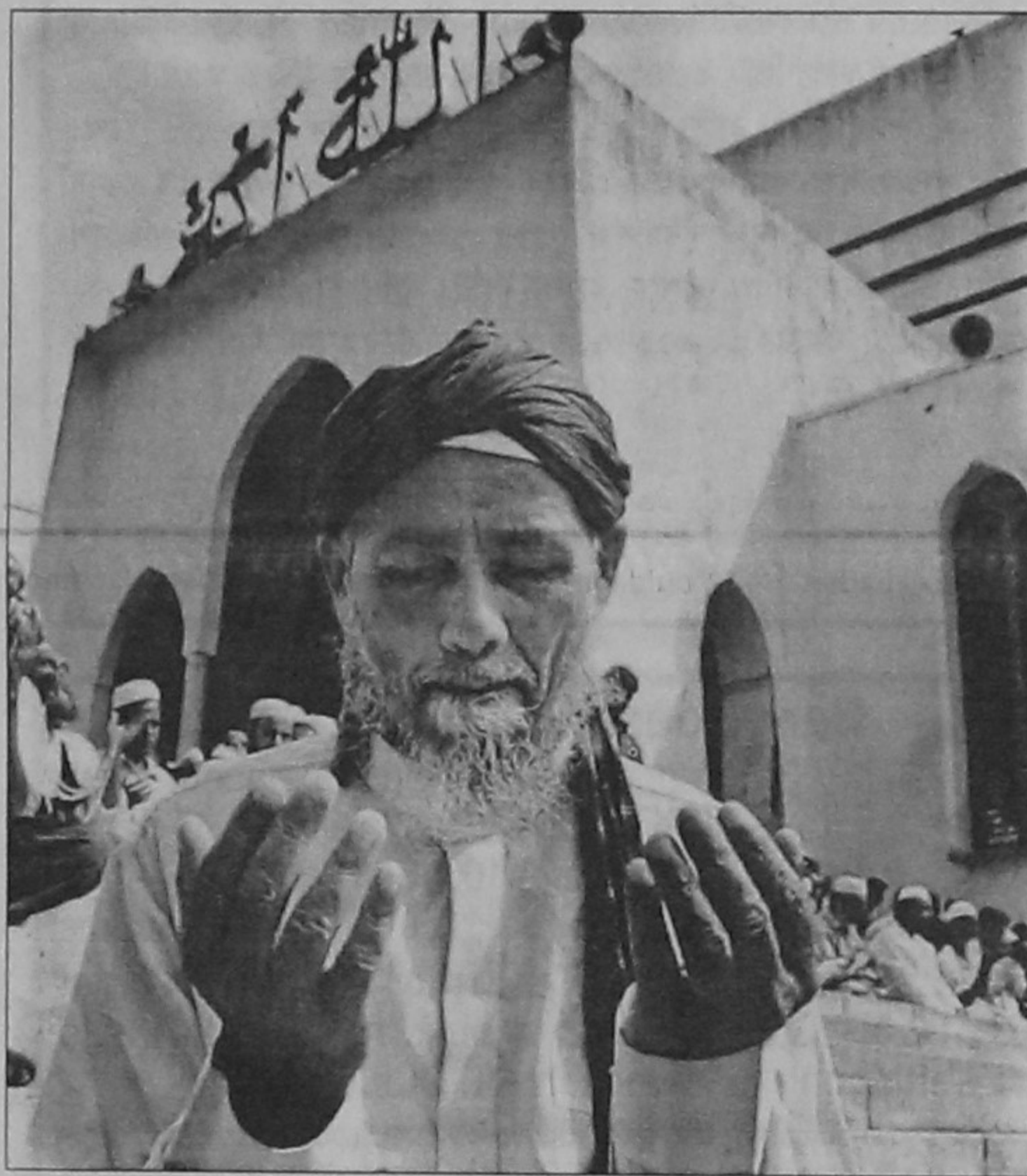
is certainly possible if and when the Almighty desires, it is conceded by some that the body was transformed into a spiritual fineness.

Of those who believed in the spiritual ascension were Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqua and Mu'awiyah (RA). The opponents claim that according to Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqua (RA) the sacred body of the Prophet did not disappear on the auspicious Night of Ascension.

Hazrat Mu'awiyah (RA) opined that it was a dream.

But eminent commentators point out that Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqua (RA) was of tender age at the time which made it difficult for her to grasp or conceive of the uncommon incident, and that Hazrat Mu'awiyah did not accept the faith of Islam at the time of holy Mi'raj. It is also to be noted that Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqua (RA) and Hazrat Mu'awiyah (RA) expressed their own views and interpretations but did not cite any saying of the holy Prophet (pbuh) in support of their views.

The miraculous journey of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) may sound incredible to an ordinary person shrouded in ignorance about the latest developments in the realm of science, but not to a person who is acquainted with the theory of



Prayer: An ordinary man's journey to the Creator.

relativity or the modern concept of space and time wherein the time does not remain constant but varies with the velocity of the object concerned.

The holy Prophet (pbuh) performed the Mi'raj mounted on the Buraq, and the very word Buraq emanates from Barqun, which means electricity. This implies that the holy Prophet (pbuh) might have travelled as fast as the electricity (or even faster than that, for Allah can do and undo anything

and everything).

Modern science claims that light, radio waves and various forms of electromagnetic radiations have the fastest velocity in the universe and equals 186,282 miles per second. Modern science also claims that if a person manages to travel at this fantastic velocity, his "time" will vary enormously in comparison with the passage of time on Earth.

No wonder, the holy Prophet (pbuh), mounted on the Buraq and

ended with the Divine Blessing of Rabbul Alameen, could so easily perform so many acts in so short a period.

The dispute regarding the holy Prophet's Glorious Ascension in person originates mainly on the material conception of the impossibility of such a journey with the physical body, totally forgetting the fact that there is nothing impossible for the Almighty, that He can do and undo anything and everything He desires, that He hath power over all things.

And if Prophet Abraham (AS) could remain unhurt in the midst of the burning flame kindled by Namrood, if Prophet Jonas (AS) could survive inside the stomach of a whale for several days, if the stick of Prophet Moses (AS) could turn into a huge and fearful snake, if Prophet Noah (AS) could easily survive even when the great deluge inundated the whole world, if Prophet Jesus (AS) could see the light of day without the aid of any father, if Prophets Adam and Eve (AS) could be created without any father or mother almost out of nothing, if Gabriel (AS) could come to the world thousands of times, why should it be impossible for the Prophet Muhammad (SM) to ascend to the Heavens to meet his Creator? He did ascend to the Heavens and performed miraculous deeds simply because Allah, in His Infinite Mercy, wanted him to do so.

Syed Ashraf Ali is ex-Director General, Islamic Foundation.

Vittachi

ONLY IN ASIA

by Nury Vittachi

A sentimental journey to a tranquil land called BF

YOU know the terms BC and AD? Well, I would like to propose that new terms are introduced for a similarly dramatic historical event -- but which only applies to people who have had children: B.F. and A.F.: Before Family and After Family.

Somewhere in my personal journey, I acquired a spouse and some children; and everything changed: my habits, my values, my way of life, and -- most dramatic of all -- the acreage of bags under my eyes.

Before Family: A lie-in is when you stay in bed until noon.

After Family: A lie-in is when you stay in bed until seven am.

Before Family: A "short-break getaway" is a long weekend in a sun-soaked Thai resort.

After Family: A "short-break getaway" is five minutes in the only toilet in the apartment with a still-working lock.

Before Family: Gastronomic ecstasy means sampling recipes in the new Nigella Lawson cookbook.

After Family: Gastronomic ecstasy is when you manage to persuade a child to consume a piece of broccoli.

Before Family: The perfect floor covering is imported hardwood maple planking in a satin-wax finish.

After Family: The perfect floor covering is pink and blue squares of textured rubber.

Before Family: The ideal wardrobe is a range of elegant black outfits from Armani or Zara.

After Family: The ideal wardrobe is a range of factory outlet rejects that you can throw away after they acquire too many vomit stains.

Before Family: The pinnacle of cinematic entertainment is Blade Runner: The Director's Cut.

After Family: The pinnacle of cinematic entertainment is The Lion King, which actually moves you to tears.

Before Family: The best summer vacation destination is an unspoiled tract of coastal wilderness far from civilization.

After Family: The best summer

vacation destination is anywhere, which has sterilised water, french fries and Pampers, oh, and a McDonald's and a Starbucks, and -- blow it, let's just stay at home.

Before Family: You thought you needed space, time and peace to work.

After Family: You discover you can type perfectly well with one child on your lap, another wrapped around your leg, and the third watching Barney videos at full volume one and a half metres away.

Before Family: You thought the finest furniture was Philippe Starke designs in minimalist industrial chrome and leather.

After Family: You know the finest furniture is a big ugly sofa that can absorb orange juice, urine and milk, and double as a scratching board for the cat.

Before Family: You thought your dream car would be a hand-built Morgan Aero 8 convertible.

After Family: You realise your dream car is a second-hand Toyota Previa with washable plastic seats.

Before Family: You thought the soundtrack of your life would be dreamy, experimental pop from an indie band like The High Llamas.

After Family: You realise that the soundtrack of your life is High School Musical 50 times a day.

Before Family: You thought recyclable and reusable packaging was the unshakable wave of the future.

After Family: You wonder how anyone could survive without bulk purchases of disposable 250 ml tetra-pak fruit juice boxes.

When you consider all the changes to your lifestyle, it's hard to avoid thinking that acquiring a family is seriously bad news.

But the interesting thing is that people who've been through this are adamant about one thing. We wouldn't have it any other way.

More family humour can be found at our columnist's website: www.vittachi.com.

The American people know me

While riding in a black SUV through a crowd of protesters on his way to deliver a speech at the 2008 American GI Forum in Denver, Sen. John McCain spoke with Newsweek's Suzanne Smalley.

Smalley: You value straight talk. McCain: I'll give you that. Some of your proposals seem a little gimmicky, like the \$300 million prize for inventing a new, more powerful car battery. If someone were capable of inventing it, wouldn't they have done it

already? You could argue tax cuts could be viewed as a gimmick; anything we do for people to encourage American entrepreneurs and innovators could be viewed as a gimmick. And I don't view it as a gimmick. I view it as an incentive

to address one of the most important challenges Americans face today, and that is to become energy-independent and to have automobiles that they can drive without having to be bankrupted. You've advocated for lifting a ban on offshore drilling. Why is drill-

ing there preferable to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Because the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, I believe that offshore drilling is clearly called for. I think we need to do it, and we have to do it. You've taken heat lately for a string of misstatements about foreign-policy issues. Some news reports have suggested your age could be slowing you down. How do you explain those gaffes?

I spend most of my days with town-hall meetings and with people -- people like you. And occasionally there will be a misstatement. But you know, at a town-hall meeting I've never had a person stand up and say, "Hey, Senator McCain, you've made a gaffe." They stand up and they say, "How do I stay in my home? How do I keep my job? How do I afford to drive to work?" Et cetera. And, by the way, some of those "gaffes" have not been [misstatements], but they've been portrayed as such. But I'm not complaining. It's fine with me. The American people know me.

On torture, why should the CIA be treated differently from the armed services regarding the use

of harsh interrogation tactics?

Because they play a special role in the United States of America and our ability to combat terrorists. But we have made it very clear that there is nothing they can do that would violate the Geneva Conventions, the Detainee Treatment Act, which prohibits torture. We could never torture anyone, but some people misconstrue that who don't understand what the Detainee Treatment Act and the Geneva Conventions are all about.

What should our policy be toward gays who want to serve in our military? And would your decision be influenced at all by the needs of commanders on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially with more soldiers needed?

Obviously, we listen to our commanders on the ground, who are in charge and have a responsibility for those young men and women. They say that "Don't ask, don't tell" is working, so unless they recommend otherwise I'm certainly going to support their recommendations, which were originated with Gen. Colin Powell.

Do you think that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is a

tool of Vladimir Putin? And if our ally Georgia is threatened or attacked by Russia, how would you respond?

Well, I can't get into hypotheticals, but I can tell you that ... the relationship between Medvedev and Putin is unclear, but it certainly is disturbing, the trend of their behaviour towards their neighbours, including their failure to cooperate with us in face of the Iranian nuclear buildup.

How do you plan to win the votes of women? What policies can you point to that will help you win their support?

Job creation is one of their No. 1 issues, and education and equal opportunity. I have not only a very clear record, but I have a very clear vision to restore our economy, to create jobs and particularly small businesses and to protect America for their sons and husbands and friends and cousins and [family] members, men and women, who are serving in the military.

Are you worried being pro-life will drive them away? The majority of women in America, in my view, respect the rights of the unborn.

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