

The responsibility to deliver

The demands on the UN are growing. The challenges of our time are increasingly collaborative in nature. They require our full engagement, all nations working together -- rich and poor, north and south, developed and developing.

BAN KI-MOON

THE past year was difficult for us all. I have called it "the year of multiple crises." The next promises to be even more so.

The challenges that lie ahead in 2009 -- ranging from climate change to the economic meltdown -- will test our commitments and good intentions as never before.

In the realm of human rights, we speak of the responsibility to protect. In the larger sphere of common international endeavour, we should speak of the responsibility to deliver. Looking back at 2008, I would say frankly that our record has been mixed.

I am pleased, for example, at the way the world has come together in the face of economic recession. Yet I fear we are only at the end of the beginning. This crisis will challenge the sense of global solidarity that is key to any solution.

I am pleased at how we responded to natural disasters from Myanmar to Haiti.

Yet I am disappointed by the unwillingness of the government of Myanmar to deliver on its promises for democratic dialogue and the release of political prisoners.

UN forces have held the line in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with bravery under the difficult circumstances. Yet we have not been able to protect innocent people from violence. Our record on human rights is on trial -- in many places, in many ways. But we must continue to stand strong on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I believe we coped well with one of the year's most serious issues. The food crisis no longer dominates news headlines, but it has not gone away. The United Nations system has come together to tackle this problem in all its complexity: nutrition, agricultural production, trade and social protection.

We are well on the way to changing decades-old policies in agriculture and public health -- mainstays of our work in promoting the Millennium Development

Goals and protecting those most vulnerable to climate change, poverty and economic crisis.

Of all the challenges before us, none is more important than climate change. A few weeks ago, I joined world leaders in Poznan, Poland. We recognised that climate change could not await a resolution of the global economic crisis. Most accepted the need for what I call a "Green New Deal." Investment in eco-friendly technology should be part of any global economic stimulus.

All agreed that there was no more time to waste. We have only 12 short months before Copenhagen. We must reach a global climate change deal before the end of 2009 -- one that is balanced, comprehensive, and acceptable to all nations.

Success will require extraordinary leadership. I myself will continue to push the pace and galvanise political will. I plan to convene a climate change summit at the beginning of the 64th General Assembly. But I expect that world leaders will need to meet before then if we are to conclude 2009 in triumph. Working together, we can fulfill our responsibilities to the planet and its people -- our responsibility to deliver.

We should see the challenges of 2009 as opportunities for collaborative international action. We are entering a new multilateral era.

We face the immediate imperative of

ending the violence in Gaza and southern Israel. The escalation and suffering of civilians are deeply alarming. A cease-fire must be put in place without delay. Regional and international partners must use their influence to bring about dialogue and a return to the negotiations that had been showing modest but encouraging signs of progress. There is an urgent need for Israelis and Palestinians to continue on the road to peace.

In Iraq, security has vastly improved. Provincial elections are scheduled for January. I urge Iraqi leaders to work together in a spirit of reconciliation as they assume full responsibility for their national affairs. All this requires strong UN support, and we shall give it.

The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe grows more alarming every day. The nation stands on the brink of economic, social and political collapse. I said so to President Robert Mugabe at the recent summit in Doha. He promised to allow my envoy to enter Zimbabwe to facilitate a political solution. Now we are told that the timing is not right. If this is not the time, when is?

In Somalia, the danger of anarchy is clear and present. So is the need to act. Last week, I proposed to the Security Council a series of steps to advance the Djibouti peace process, deal with piracy and issues of humanitarian access, reinforce the current African Union mission



Small waves can erode solid rock.

in Somalia, and set the stage for a possible UN peacekeeping operation.

I am also gravely concerned by the worsening humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan. A political "surge" and a clear change of direction are required. We have made a great many promises to the people of this ravaged country. It is our responsibility to keep them.

The demands on the UN are growing. The challenges of our time are increasingly collaborative in nature. They require our full engagement, all nations working together -- rich and poor, north and

south, developed and developing.

Over the course of the past year, I held more than 700 bilateral meetings, including some 350 meetings with presidents, prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs. I spent 103 days on the road, visiting 35 countries and flying more than 400,000 kilometers.

Numbers do not always equal results, but they are a measure of our effort. The world expects no less. It is our responsibility to deliver.

Ban Ki-moon is Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Teachings of Muharram

So, what was the alternative left for the revered Imam but to fight the unequal war at Karbala without surrendering to the enemy? The enemy commander ordered the cruel-hearted Shimar to take Hazrat Hussain dead or alive to Kufa. All the members of the Imam's family embraced martyrdom.

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

MUHARRAM is the first month of the Islamic calendar. This is the month in which Hazrat Imam Hussain (A), the beloved grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) embraced martyrdom 1400 years ago on the burning sands of Karbala while fighting an unequal war against 4,000 soldiers dispatched by the local governor of Kufa on behalf of his master cruel-hearted Yazid, son of Muawia the erstwhile Caliph of the Islamic state. The day was Ashura, the 10th day of the month of Muharram.

Now the pertinent question is why Hazrat Imam Hussain (A) was obliged to fight an unequal war. It may be stated here that there was an agreement entered into

by Hazrat Imam Hussain (A) and Yazid's father Hazrat Muawia that after Muawia's death Hazrat Imam Hussain (A) would be the next Caliph of the Islamic state.

But in flagrant violation of this agreement Hazrat Muawia illegally nominated his son Yazid to be the next Caliph after his death. As a result, Yazid declared himself as the Caliph and wanted to perpetuate the rule of his father. Imam Hussain got himself directly involved because the people of Kufa, being oppressed by the local governor, invited Hazrat Imam Hussain to come to their help.

The kind-hearted Imam could not remain indifferent and quiet, and decided to proceed towards Kufa with a view to helping them. Before he left for Kufa he, however, detailed his cousin Muslim to go



Mourning for a martyr.

to Kufa to ascertain whether the invitation extended to him was genuine.

On receipt of a favourable reply, Imam Hussain (A) left Medina with a handful of soldiers and his family. While on his way to Kufa he heard the sad news of the death of Muslim and, as a result, he was very much distressed but continued his

onward march.

On the way towards Kufa the Imam's party was intercepted by an Arab tribal chief Al-Howe and his cavalry. Consequently, the helpless Imam had to change his route and proceed along the western side of the river Euphrates, leaving Kufa on his right. But the governor of Kufa did not like the movement

of Imam Hussain and his party in the vicinity of Kufa.

He immediately dispatched 4,000 soldiers under the leadership of Omar bin Saad. When this happened, the Imam camped with his companions at Karbala on the bank of river Euphrates on the first day of the month of Muharram.

Finding no other way out, the Imam proposed an amicable settlement considering the hardship of his companions, particularly the plight of the women and infants. But governor Obaidulla's commander declined to accept the compromise proposal.

The helpless Imam was not even allowed to meet Yazid so that he could discuss the whole matter with him, nor was he allowed to go back to Medina. Because of the blockade the Imam's men could not even reach the bank of the nearby river for water to quench their thirst.

So, what was the alternative left for the revered Imam but to fight the unequal war at Karbala without surrendering to the enemy? The enemy commander ordered the cruel-hearted Shimar to take

Hazrat Hussain dead or alive to Kufa.

All the members of the Imam's family embraced martyrdom. On the 10th of the month, i.e. Ashura, when the Imam was proceeding towards the nearby river with his infant son Asgar on his lap for a little water to quench his thirst, a spear from the enemy side struck his beloved son and he died then and there. The bewildered and aggrieved Imam then sat down in front of his tent and then a little later another flying spear from the enemy side struck his chest and he also embraced martyrdom.

As soon as the enemy soldiers understood that the valiant Imam had breathed his last they immediately came forward and desecrated his body in different ways. Such treatment to the Imam was inhuman and without any parallel in human history.

This is how the beloved grandson of the Prophet (SM), Hazrat Imam Hussain (A), embraced martyrdom some 1400 years ago for a just and noble cause. Since then, the occasion of Ashura every year undoubtedly teaches us to be just and fight for a noble cause.

Kazi Aulad Hossain is a retired government high official.

Play to win learn to lose

Begum Zia and her party and alliance are not the first in the history of stunning election defeats, nor the last. As a politician you just have to learn to accept defeat with grace and begin preparation for playing for a better next innings. Play to win, learn to lose.

ABDUL MANNAN

HUMAN nature is such that no one wants to lose in a game, especially if the game is politics. Competitors want the game to end with the ideal win-win outcome. Though such an outcome might be a possibility in the world of diplomacy, it is not in the world of politics. There are winners and losers, especially if it happens to be a democratic system.

Defeat should be accepted with grace, even if it means swallowing a bitter pill. In politics, the losers always try to discover their causes of defeat in the opponent's camp. They normally cry conspiracy, intrigue, rigging to justify their claim.

The Four Party Alliance expected to win the election. The pragmatic thought the battle with the Awami League led Grand Alliance would be close. Now the world knows the result. The Grand Alliance won more than two-thirds

majority and has already formed the government. Keeping with our past political culture, the Four Party Alliance cried foul, and boycotted the oath taking ceremony of the new government.

Jamat leader Nizami is surprised that in his constituency 80 to 90 percent of voters cast their votes. He even demanded an enquiry. The nation is surprised why, in his constituency, and in constituencies where Al-Badar commanders were contesting, the election the turn out was not 100%? Begum Zia and her cohorts still believe in the conspiracy theory and declared that people's verdict has not been reflected in the result. Now a bit of lesson from history, if she cares to read.

War time British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who was instrumental in winning the war along with Roosevelt and Stalin, lost the election, held within two months of the end of the war, to Clement Attlee and his Labour Party. The

result of the election was almost totally unexpected, given the heroic status of Winston Churchill, but reflected the voters' belief that the Labour Party would better be able to rebuild the country. The Labour Party ran on promises to create full employment, a tax funded universal National Health Service, and cradle-to-grave welfare state, with the campaign message "Let us face the future."

Churchill and his Conservative Party (like Begum Zia and her Alliance) ran a poor campaign in comparison to Labour; Churchill's statement during the campaign that Attlee's program would require a Gestapo type organisation to implement was considered to have been particularly poorly judged by the electorate. Equally, whilst voters respected and liked Churchill's wartime record, they were distrustful of the Conservative's domestic and foreign policy record in the late thirties. Churchill made a comeback in 1951, became the prime minister and later won the Nobel Prize for literature.

One of the most successful and iconic prime ministers in India's history, Indira Gandhi, lost the election in 1977. She had President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declare a state of emergency following the High Court Order on June 12, 1975 that her election to Lok Sabha be declared void on grounds of malpractices in an election

petition filed by Janata Party's Raj Narain.

The court ordered her to be removed from her seat in Parliament and banned her from running in elections for six years. When she appealed the decision, the opposition parties and their supporters, eager to gain political capital from the situation, rallied en masse -- calling for her resignation.

A catastrophic situation followed, resulting in the declaration of emergency. Thousands of political activist were detained without trial, her son Sanjay Gandhi launched a campaign of clearing slums from Delhi, which came to be known as Gharib Hatao, and forcibly imposed vasectomy on thousands of males. The people were not impressed.

In 1997, Indira called an election. One factor was the economic gains, though there may have been political considerations at play. She may have grossly misjudged her popularity by reading what the heavily censored press wrote about her. In any case, she was soundly defeated by Raj Narain. Sanjay Gandhi also lost, and Congress was cut down to 153 seats compared with 350 in the previous election.

Janata's election campaign was run on the theme of choice between democracy and dictatorship. Indira found herself without work, income or residence, until she won a by-election in 1978. In 1979, Indira Gandhi regained the people's

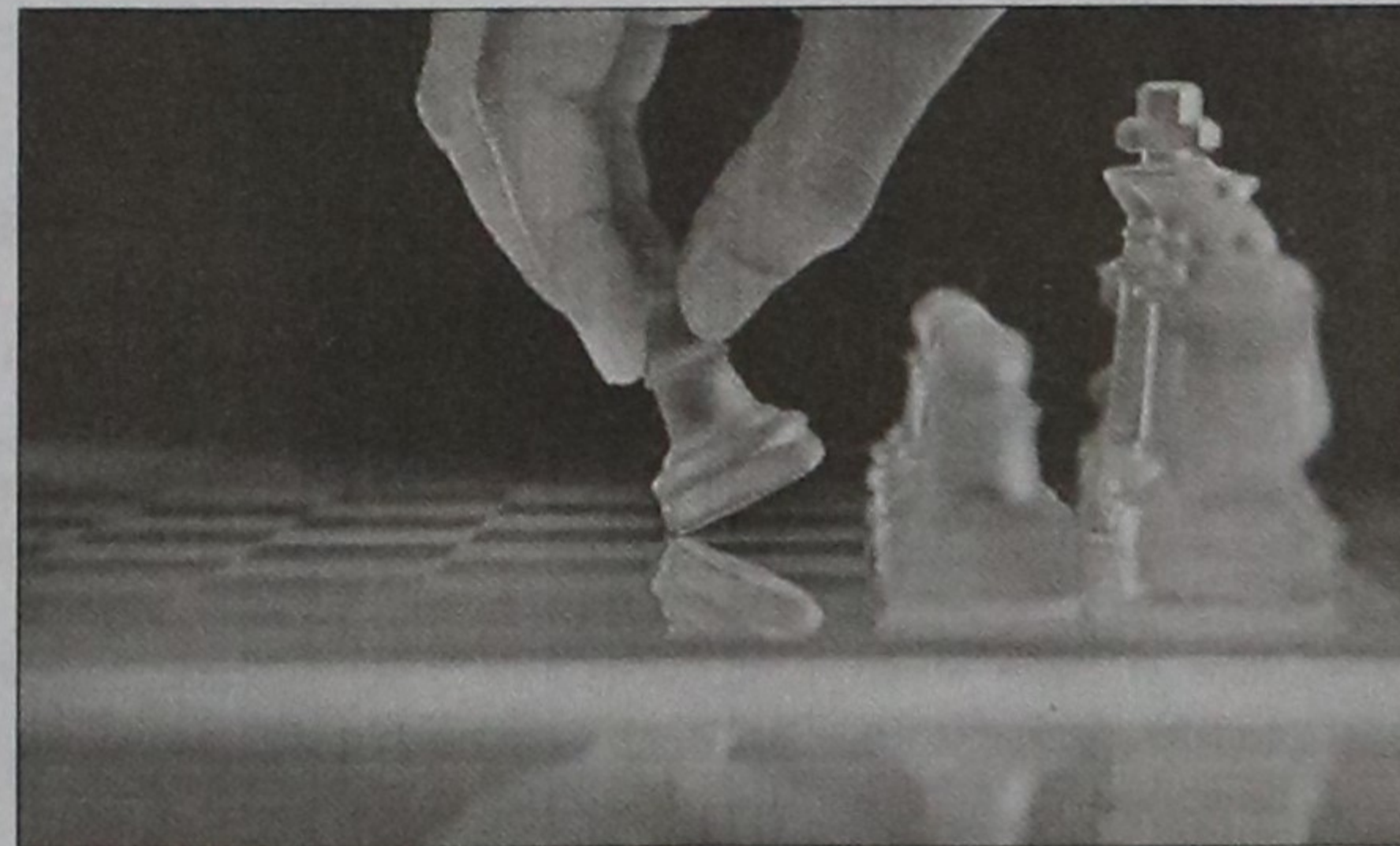
confidence and made a come-back -- and her Congress Party formed a government. She remained in office till her tragic assassination on October 31, 1984.

In Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) the historic defeat of the powerful Muslim League and Nurul Amin in the election of 1954 to United Front of A. K. Fazlul Hoque, Bhasani and Surahwardi is one of the legendary episodes in our political history. Muslim League, the party that created Pakistan, believed that they would stay in power for a hundred years.

The voters had the last say. All-powerful Nurul Amin was defeated by young student leader Khaleque Nawaz. Muslim League never came back.

Begum Zia and her party and alliance are not the first in the history of stunning election defeats, nor the last. As a politician you just have to learn to accept defeat with grace and begin preparation for playing for a better next innings. Play to win, learn to lose.

The writer teaches at ULAB and is a former vice-chancellor, Chittagong University.



Good moves win, bad moves lose.

Fail-safe New Year resolutions

NURY VITACHI

IT'S January, and that means it's time for you and me to make our New Year resolutions.

Now I read every newspaper in the world (or at least it feels like it) and I've noticed that practically every community in the world makes the EXACT SAME resolutions.

In fact, I would wager that your Top Five list is more or less identical to mine, which is as follows.

- 1) Lose weight;
- 2) Spend less;
- 3) Exercise more;
- 4) Spring-clean; and

5) Find new places to store the corpses of people who upset me.

Am I right?

Yet despite their predictability, statistics say the vast majority of us fail to keep our resolutions.

So you can imagine how intrigued I was when one of my workmates found a magazine article entitled: "Three Fail-Safe Rules for Keeping Your New Year Resolutions."

She cut them out and pinned them over her desk.

Rule Number One was: "Don't be too hard on yourself. Tell yourself IT'S OKAY TO FAIL."

This she found very comforting. At

lunch, she told me: "This is the first day of my diet, so I should really skip dessert, but on the other hand, IT'S OKAY TO FAIL, so I think I'll have two."

Rule Number Two was: "Reward yourself whenever intermediate goals are met."

This led to her decision after lunch the following day: "This is the second day of my diet and this time I succeeded in skipping dessert. I will have a triple-scoop of Haagen Dazs on the way back to the office as a reward."

Rule Three was: "Tell all your family, friends and colleagues that you are losing weight so that they can help and encourage you."

This led to the following conversation taking place on the third day:

Me: "Mmm, this chocolate fudge cake is SO yummy."

Her: "I'm going to have one, too. According to experts, it's OKAY TO FAIL."

I cannot put my finger on exactly why, but my gut says her "fail-safe" system is going to fail.

Meanwhile, in a newspaper article on keeping New Year resolutions, I read the following: "The key thing is to give yourself an achievable goal." In which case, my goal will be as follows: "In 2009, I will continue to get fatter, but more slowly, or possibly not."

The only person I ever met who kept his New Year resolutions had a simple, masculine, achievement-orientated system. It could be characterized as: "The Obnoxious Extremes Method."

He didn't just cut a few calories. He went on a no-food detox diet and told everyone about it all the time. "I have not eaten anything for five days, six hours and 12 minutes. I have not eaten anything for five days, six hours and 13 minutes." And so on.

He didn't just do a bit of exercise. He became a total gym junkie. He worked out three hours a day and talked endlessly about how many "reps" he did of each exercise.

He didn't just save a bit of cash here and there. He became an obsessive miser. He saved most of his income, and probably lived off ketchup sachets and slept in his car.

His method really worked. But unfortunately it made him obnoxious beyond endurance and he lost all his friends.

If you're nice to me, I'll tell you where I buried his body.

Tomorrow, a no-hunger diet secret GUARANTEED to turn overweight folk into average ones.

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