

Lailat-ul-Miraj

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It is perhaps no exaggeration to claim Lailat-ul-Miraj as the most momentous occasion in the annals of not only the entire human race but of all creations. It was on this glorious Night of Ascension that a creation was permitted to cross for the first time the "Ultimate Boundary," symbolically represented by a Lote -- Tree named Sidratul Muntaha, beyond which none, not even the archangel Jibrail (AS) favoured by or "brought near" Allah (mukarrabun), had ever been allowed to pass.

It was on this auspicious Night that the Creator enabled a creation to reach, through a long Journey immeasurable by mortal reckoning, the "Sublime Throne," achieve the closest proximity to Him, and "see of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest" in full bloom.

The Journey mentioned above refers to the Glorious Ascension (Mi'raj) of the holy Prophet (pbuh), testifying so eloquently to the divine eminence which he was to achieve and to the unsurpassable greatness to which Islam was to rise.

It was a Monday on the 27 of Rajab, one year and five months before the Emigration (Hijrat) to the holy Medina that the holy Prophet (pbuh) was first transported through a unique journey from the holy Makkah to the seat of the earlier revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the Seven Heavens, and blessed with the unique opportunity to meet the Most Gracious and Most Merciful Rabbul Alameen.

On that sacred Night of Ascension, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) was at Makkah in the house of his cousin Bibi Ummahani (RA), sister of Hazrat Ali Murtaza (RA). Having said his night prayers the holy Prophet (pbuh) was asleep with "closed eyes but a wakeful Kalb." It was Jibrail (AS) who roused him from 'sleep' and said, "Allah sends you greetings and invites you, and I have come to take you to Him. Allah desires to show the Wonders and to dignify you in a manner as He has not done with anybody else before. No one ever heard this nor could anybody ever conceive of it."

Accompanied by Jibrail (AS), the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) went to the holy Ka'ba, performed the circumambulation of Ka'ba (Tawaf) seven times, and sat for a while at the Hatim of the Holy House. Mounted on the Buraq, he then set forth toward the Great Unknown. He was first carried to Masjid-ul-Aqsa in Jerusalem. It is said that an assembly of angels received the holy Prophet (pbuh) with the ovation: "Salam be on you, O the first (Ya Auwalu); Salam be on you, O the Last (Ya Akheru); Salam be on you, O the Saviour (Ya Hasheru)."

The Apostle of Allah (pbuh) objected that the terms were applicable to Allah alone. But the angels explained that the holy Prophet (pbuh) was the first because Benign Providence created his Noor before anything else was created; he was the last because only his intercession (Shafa'at) as the saviour of sinners would be accepted by God on the Day of Judgment.

After leading a two-rakat prayer at Baitul-Mukaddas in which all the one lac and 24,000 Prophets participated, the Apostle of Allah set out for the Seven Heavens.

As he passed through various Heavens, he had the unique privilege to see Allah's "Signs" in various shapes and forms. It is claimed that he saw with his own eyes Bahrun Naqam, the great Sea the waves of which wrought Great Deluge inundating the whole world of the Prophet Noah (pbuh). He also had the unique distinction of seeing during his lifetime Hazrat Azrail (AS) in the fourth Heaven, Hazrat

Michaeel (AS) in the fourth Heaven, Hazrat Michaeel (AS) with the Great Scale (Mizan) in the sixth Heaven, and Hazrat Israfil (AS) with his Great Horn (Soor) in the seventh Heaven.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also met a good number of his predecessors during his Journey through the Heavens. He met Prophet Adam (AS) in the first Heaven, Prophets Isa and Yahya in the second, Yusuf, Dawood and Sulaiman in the third, Musa, Marium and Asiya in the fourth, Ibrahim, Ismail, Yaqub and Lut in the fifth, Noah and Idris in the sixth, and the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be on all the Propkhets) once again in the seventh Heavens.

In the Seventh Heaven the holy Prophet (pbuh) again led a two-rakat prayer at the Baitul Mamur mosque in which all the angels of the seventh Heaven participated. As the advanced further, he reached Sidratul Muntaha, the Lote-tree.



It is indeed remarkable that even at this stage where the spiritual knowledge of man could reach no higher, the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) remained unperturbed. The Sufis interpret the Lote-tree in Islam to be what the Burning Bush in the valley of tuwa was to Moses (AS). Only, in the case of Moses (AS) it was but a prefigurement of the divine effulgence on this earth: in the case of Muhammad (pbuh) it was the Division Glory in Heaven itself, and it was "shrouded in mystery unspeakable." This was indeed "the Greatest of the Signs of the Lord."

The holy Prophet (pbuh) advanced further and reached Hijabe Zarbaft where Jibrail informed him that he (Jibrail) was unable to proceed any further. According to the Tafsir Ruhul Bayan, however, Jibrail (AS) halted at Sidratul Muntaha.

What followed indeed is unique in the annals of creation. For the first time since the birth of the universe was a creation allowed to proceed beyond Sidratul Muntaha and

approach the "Sublime Arsh." The holy Prophet (pbuh) passed through many a screen of Noor and Zulomat and ultimately reached, in the words of the Holy Quran, "the highest part of the horizon." "Then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of two bow-lengths or (even) nearer." (Chapter LIII, Verses 7-8).

Two bow-shots (counting 100 to 150 yards to bow-shot) would be a clearly visible distance. But Sufi mysticism would interpret: "two drawn bows, with their chords touching", making a complete circle of union.

Muhammad (pbuh), the Last and the Greatest of all the Prophets, had indeed seen the Greatest Signs of Allah. According to Tirmizi, the holy Prophet said: "I saw my Rab with my eyes and Kalb." The Miskat also testifies: "I saw my Rab in His best appearance... I was endowed with knowledge of whatever is in the Heavens and on the Earths." And the Holy Quran further adds: "The (Prophet's) heart in no way

and Muslim). These obligatory prayers, to be performed five times a day, form one of the pillars of Islam. And the five prayers so enjoined equals fifty in worth and reward. The holy Prophet (pbuh) testifies: "I went back to Him (Allah) and He said, 'They are five and at the same time fifty. What has been said is not changed with Me.' (Bukhari and Muslim)."

The holy Prophet (pbuh) completed the entire Isra (or nocturnal Journey), comprising the unique Audience with the Creator, visits to the Heaven and Hell offering of prayers various places on Earth and in the Heaves, discussions with numerous Prophets, in an incredibly short period. The astounding feat surprised many. The non-Muslims refused to accept it. Even a few Muslims went to the extent of claiming that the Journey was performed through a Vision. The holy Prophet (pbuh) himself silenced the Quraish who were questioning him about his night journey. Jabir told that he heard God's Messenger say, "When Quraish accused men of falsehood I stood up in al-Hijr then God made Jerusalem clear to me, and I informed them of its distinguishing marks whele I was looking at it." (Bukhari and Muslim).

And the handful of Muslims who unfortunately doubt the physical ascension of the holy Prophet (pbuh) perhaps forget that Allah can do and undo anything and everything. Nothing is impossible on His part. "He is the Best of the planners and when He hath decreed a Plan, He but saith to it, 'Be' and it is" (Chapter III, Verse 47). What more, the miraculous Journey of the Prophet of Islam may sound incredible to an ordinary person shrouded by ignorance about the latest developments in the realm of science, but not to a person who is acquainted with the Theory of Relativity wherein time does not remain constant but varies with the velocity of the object concerned.

The holy Prophet (pbuh) completed the Mi'raj mounted on the Buraq and the very word Buraq emanates from Buraqum which means electricity. This implies that the holy Prophet might have travelled as fast as the electricity, and the modern science still claims that the light, radio waves and various forms of electromagnetic radiation have the fast velocity in the universe which is denoted by 'c' and equals 186,282 miles per second.

The scientists of the Modern Age also admit that if a person manages to travel at the fantastic velocity of light his 'time' will vary enormously in comparison with the passage of time on Earth. No wonder the holy Prophet, mounted on the 'Buraq' and endowed with the Divine Blessing of the Lord of the Worlds could so easily perform so many acts in so short a period.

And if the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) could remain unharmed in the midst of the blazing fire kindled by Namrood, if the Prophet Yunus (AS) could survive in the stomach of a whale for several days, if the Magic-Stick of Moses (AS) could turn into a huge and fearful snake, if Adam and Eve could be created without any father or mother almost out of nothing, if Jesus (pbuh) could see the light of day without the help of any father, if the Nile could be split to enable Moses (AS) and his followers to escape to safety, why should it not be possible for Allah to enable His best Servant to ascended to the Heavens in person to meet his Creator?

The writer is former Director General of Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.

Election headed budget and our frustrated farmers

M. MIZANUR RAHMAN

WILL the national budget of Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-14 be good for our frustrated farmers? Though answering this in a single word is very difficult, our attention goes to two of the upcoming crucial decisions of the government i.e. cutting food grain procurement for keeping rice price lower in the domestic retail market, and cutting subsidy on some of the agricultural inputs. We need to seriously look into why the decisions are coming and what the impact of these will have on the country.

The national budget this year is crucial in many aspects among which its connection to the national election is the most crucial. The last year in budget of any government will try securing its vote bank in the upcoming election and that is why governments usually give lots of visible incentives, having direct implications to the people.

Interestingly, rice price plays a key role in securing the vote bank and that is why political parties promise to keep rice price lower in their election manifesto. It is not very difficult to understand that low food price in the market also means low return of agricultural production for the farmers. Again, it is also true that for the large part of the population, who are food buyers, it is very essential to lower the food price but, on the other hand, for retaining farmers in the agricultural production, it is vital to ensure a proper price for their production.

Governments often struggle to balance the interests of these two groups.

In this coming budget, there is some bad news for the agricultural sector of Bangladesh, and this news is coming at a time when farmers are already discouraged in producing food grains due to continuous low price, and they are tending to cultivate tobacco or other cash crops instead.

It is good to see that from the last few seasons, we are having bumper production of rice where the tremendous effort by our farmers is the most important one. But ironically, they are continuously receiving prices lower than their production cost.

This year, the government decided to procure food grains directly from the farmers with a reasonable price and we all welcomed this decision. But in reality we found a very limited implementation of this decision and farmers went selling their rice to the millers and in the local market with a lower price. This scenario gives a plain calculation -- due to surplus supply in the market, price is lower.

But surprisingly, with this given scenario, the government is planning to import rice.

According to a Daily Star report, the government aims to import 2.5 lakh tonnes of rice next fiscal year. But it may not become necessary to import the entire targeted amount if there is no natural calamity. Well, I think, there

is no harm with this if government takes it as a contingency plan but when it decides to slash the local procurement of rice by 3%, concerns arise.

The government cut imports but raised domestic procurement in the current fiscal year to help farmers get fair prices amid a bumper

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production. Even after this decision, the government could not ensure proper price for rice and the situation will worsen if government now decides to slash local procurement.

In the other scene, according to the New Age report, in the coming fiscal the government would drastically cut down expenditure on subsidies to 28,000 crore, down from 35,000 in the outgoing fiscal. The report says that in the coming budget, subsidies on agriculture is decreasing and out of 9,000 crore to be given in subsidies to this sector, 3,000 would be spent to clear arrear bills for fertilisers, diesel, pesti-

cides and other inputs.

So, what is the net support for the agricultural sector in this budget?

Now let us see what these decisions are for.

Firstly, the government wants to satisfy the largest portion of population who are the food buyers -- wanting to buy food in cheaper prices.

Government might have been anxious of seeing that in this first quarter of year, the average retail price of coarse rice has increased significantly by 12% from the last quarter. The countrywide retail prices of coarse rice started to increase from November 2012 following the increase in wholesale price of rice.

The average retail price of Aman HYV coarse rice in March was 29.2 Tk/kg, which is 4.5% higher than a year ago (FAO, 2013). This trend is very likely to have a significant impact in the next election. That is why, in the last part of this tenure, Awami League does not want the rice price go up.

Secondly, the government had agreed to cut down subsidies to fulfill International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions for accessing its nearly one billion dollar credit support in seven installments. In this crucial time, government does not want overlook this condition and be in an uncomfortable relationship with IMF. So, the farmers need to bear some extra burden of pricy inputs in the coming year also

when still they have no hope of getting a proper price for their production.

Finally, let us see what can be the consequences. I have talked to some tobacco farmers who even in the last year cultivated rice on their field. When they are getting some security of return, especially financially, from the tobacco manufacturing companies, rice producers are again and again being frustrated with the government policies posing a threat of unsecured return of their production. As a result, they are turning them away from food grain production. Recently Brac has also got a similar finding that cultivated land area has decreased in this year.

These signals are never good for the country. Government needs to understand that the food producers i.e. the farmers and their family members are also voters and getting their votes is also important and at the same time, it is more important to save our farmers if we really want to save the country.

We need to look into the path in between the farmers, the primary producers and the final buyers. And for doing this, a pro-farmer food procurement policy and its effective implementation are mandatory. Cutting agricultural subsidy and local food grain procurement will never bring anything good for the country.

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- ACROSS
- 1 Variety of lettuce
- 5 "Eureka!"
- 8 Book of prophecies
- 12 Lotion additive
- 13 Chaps
- 14 Tooth-paste container
- 15 Anger
- 16 Conventional
- 18 One up?
- 20 Western occurrence
- 21 Leopold's co-defendant
- 23 Four qts.
- 24 One of Monopoly's light blue avenues
- 28 Speech impediment
- 31 Great noise
- 32 Disrobe
- 34 Female deer
- 35 Bird of peace
- 37 Decoration
- 39 Finish
- 41 Ireland
- 42 Secular
- 45 Servile
- 49 Form a union
- 51 Top
- 52 Isn't well
- 53 Calendar abbr.
- 54 Prolonged sleep
- 55 Run away
- 56 Automaton, for short
- 57 Slaughter of baseball
- DOWN
- 1 Zinger
- 2 Pelvic bones
- 3 Nut partner
- 4 Pvt. Bailey
- 5 Cherub, in art
- 6 The girl
- 7 Picnic invaders
- 8 Musically keyless
- 9 Flood aftermath
- 10 Reed instrument
- 11 Send a naughty message
- 17 Embrace
- 19 Billions of years
- 22 Wilkes-, Pa.
- 24 Peculiar
- 25 Brazilian tourist mecca
- 26 Lure
- 27 Ache aid
- 29 Junior
- 30 Teacher's
- 33 Rind of
- 36 Put in a box
- 38 Threaten
- 40 Novelist
- 42 Unsliced bread
- 43 Seed coat
- 44 Owl's perch
- 46 PC picture
- 47 Magazine contents
- 48 Meadow
- 50 Menagerie

Solution time: 24 mins.

GOALS, SCHLIST, SUBMIT, PAUNCH, PROPER, ARTHUR, ABEL, AMMO, ADDO, AIL, AGRA, AUNT, FRENCH, QUARTER, TEST, TUMT, SOY, OIR, ALIE, BIBLE, GENEVA, NATION, REEVES, TWANGS, ELDEST, SENSE

Saturday's answer 4-29

CRYPTOQUIP

EXQFAFYQHTFAV GX KVC
XEE GCV KQXRAZ Y
IRHHKIVY AVVZI GX CFPV
ETLEFOYTYGL PYFOYTYGL

Last Cryptoquip: OUR FATHER IS DEFINITELY AN ANGLING ENTHUSIAST. HE LIKES TO TELL FOLKS HE'S AN A-FISHIN'-ADO.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals F

Non-Surgical Cancer Treatment
125-iodine seed implants, tumor oriented therapy

Innovation is the hope of cancer treatment. Cancer therapy is a systemic project with high clinical care and quality life must be ensured. 125-iodine seeds implant are an energy radionuclide which can give off continuous, short-range Y-ray to kill tumor cells. It can achieve the same internal radiation effects on tumor as surgery does. Under CT or ultrasound guidance, 125-iodine seed implants are directly placed into the tumor by a special set of equipment or placed into residual tumor bed and possible paths of metastasis lymph node spread. These implants keep emitting Y-ray within tumor, as "land mines" targets tumor cells accurately. Radiation is limited to inside tumor and avoids damage to normal tissue, effectively kill tumor by continuous and effective exposure up to 180 days. Relieve pain and increase survival rate and quality of life.

To consult about therapies please contact:
0177-5105555, 0177-5106666, Saturday 9 am. to 5 pm. Sunday to Thursday 1 pm. to 5 pm. or visit us in 9/C, Navana Tower, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212, Also you can visit our website: <http://www.asiancancer.com>, Log in: <http://www.facebook.com/cancerhealthcare>