



LAILAT-UL BARAT

SYED ASHRAF ALI

LAILAT-ul Baraat is a very auspicious night in the annals of Islam. Almost every Muslim in Bangladesh celebrates Lailat-ul-Baraat with due solemnity. Unfortunately, however, there are some who inadvertently claim that Lailat-ul-Baraat has no religious significance in the eyes of Islam. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is true that Lailat-ul-Baraat has not been specifically mentioned in the Holy Quran (although mention is there of Lailat-ul-Mubarakatun), but there are numerous authentic Ahadith and historical evidence which testify so eloquently to the fact that the holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself used to attach great importance to this Night of Privilege or Night of Salvation. He not only said special prayers during this sacred night but also visited graveyards and prayed for the departed souls on this holy occasion. He even instructed his wives to honour the sanctity, divine excellence and majesty of this blessed occasion. What is more, a reliable tradition also testifies that Bibi Ayesha Siddiqa (RA) visited a graveyard in this Mubarak Night of Privilege in search of the holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh). It is really unfortunate and painful that a handful of Muslimsttry to fight shy of this sacred occasion on the plea that it has not been specifically mentioned in the Holy Quran as has been done in the case of Lailat-ul-Qadr or Lailat-ul-Miraj. One fails to understand how the learned opinion of great and revered authorities like Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, Baihaqi, Ibn Khuzaima, Syed Abdul Quader Jilani and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (peace be upon them) can be dismissed. All of these scholars testify to the fact that Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh), the Last And Greatest of all prophets, himself gave recognition to the sanctity, majesty and divine excellence of this glorious night. Of the nights in a year there are six which may safely be marked out for their grandeur and majesty, serenity and sacredness. These are Lailat-ul-Qadr, Lailat-ul- Miraj, the two nights of Eids, the Night of Arafat and Lailat-ul-Baraat. A person's prayers, his or her outpourings of the heart's sentiments, the reverential expression of the soul's sincerest desires before its Maker on this night never fail to evoke the most coveted

response from Benign Providence. Lailatul-Baraat , the glorious night on the 15th of Shaban, is popularly known as Shab-e-Barat in this subcontinent. Both the words Shab in Persian (and Urdu as well) and Lailat in Arabic mean "Night", and Bara'at stands for Salvation or Privilege. (Some, however, inadvertently think that the word is Barat, which means "Fortune", and the auspicious night is the Night of Fortune). Lailat-ul-Baraat is the Night of Privilege or the Night of Salvation. It is on this Night of Privilege that Rabbul Alameen, in His infinite Mercy, blesses each and every person with a unique opportunity to receive the most coveted Divine Mercy. Acclaimed traditionalist Ibn Maja (his Sunan is universally accepted as one of the Sihah Sitta, the six authentic traditional works) reported on the authority of no less a person than Sher-e-Khuda Hazrat Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA) that the holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "On this Night, from the moment the sun sets, Allah descends on the firmament of this earth and goes on asking till sunrise : "Is there any seeker of salvation, so that I may give it to him; is there any one in need of food, so that I may feed him; is there any one suffering, so that I may cure him?" The Encyclopaedia of Islam, published in Leiden, Netherlands corroborates this claim when it says, "In Hadith it is said that in this night, Allah descends to the lowest heaven, from there He calls mortals in order to grant them forgiveness of sins." (Tirmidhi, Sunan, B.39). (Tirmidhi's Sunan is also considered to be one of the six authentic traditional works). No wonder, the holy Prophet (pbuh), never failed to avail this unique and glorious opportunity and himself used to pray all through this Night every year with a view to receiving Mercy from the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful Allah. Records are there that on one occasion the holy Prophet (pbuh) spent half of this auspicious Night of Salvation through a Nafl prayer of two rakat and the rest of the Night through a long Sijdah or prostration. What is more, he (pbuh) used to offer this prayer with inimitable dedication and unfathomable concentration. Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqa (RA) reported that on one such occasion the holy Prophet (pbuh) was so deeply absorbed in his meditation and remained so long in prostration that she became awfully nervous and thought that he

(pbuh) had shuffled off the mortal coil. On another occasion, according to Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqa (RA), the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) said his prayers in this Night were offered with such unparalleled devotion and dedication that his feet got swollen. Abu Busa al-Ashari (RA) reported Allah's Messenger (pbuh) as saying, "Allah Most High looks down on the middle night of Sha'ban and forgives all his creatures, except a polytheist or one who is hostile." Ibn Majah transmitted it and Ahmad transmitted it from Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As (RA). His version has, "except two, one who is hostile and a murderer." Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqa (RA) also said, "I missed Allah's Messenger (pbuh) one night and found him at al-Baqi (Jannatul Baqi). He (pbuh) said, 'Were you afraid that Allah and His Messenger would act wrongly towards you?' I replied, 'Messenger of Allah, I thought you had gone to one of your wives.' He said, 'On the middle night of Sha'ban Allah Most High descends to the lowest heaven and forgives more sins than the hairs of the goats of Kalb.'(According to an estimation, the tribe of Kalb during that period had more than 20,000 goats). Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah transmitted it. It is also reported that the holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "Allah forgives every Muslim in this Night. He does not, however, forgive the Mushrik , the jealous, the cruel, and the adulterer." Baihaqi transmitted it. According to another tradition, Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqa (RA) reported the holy Prophet (pbuh) as saying, "Do you know what happens this night?" meaning the middle night of Sha'ban. She asked, "What happens in it, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "In it record is made of every human being who will be born and of every human being who will die this year; in it their actions are taken up to heaven and in it their provisions are sent down." Baihaqi transmitted it. Let us not, therefore, question the religious sanctity of this great night. Let us celebrate it through prayers and meditation and fasting during day, certainly not through crackers and candles. The writer is a former DG of Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh

Finance minister's food for a rethink

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

FINANCE Minister A. M. A. Muhith gives a good copy to newsmen. He fancies unconventional words, creates controversy out of nowhere and takes on big institutions and sometimes heavyweights with copious ease. He is now-hilarious, then-combative sometimes with a fleeting frown in changing mood plays; it's never dull about him, always interesting reflective of a certain zest in his work.

And as they say, 'Only fools don't change their minds', Muhith, being highly intelligent, does change his. Let me cite two instances to carry my point: One, his commitment to present a white paper before the new parliament on shooting-at-the-foot financial scandals in the preceding term of the AL government; and two, his promise to strike out the provision of whitening black money from the NBR regulations at the post-budget press conference.

The 'white paper' is papering over the paralysis of action on the part of the government during the time the plunders had occurred. The scandals made a minced meat of any semblance of financial discipline and trust in an important segment of the financial system. Now a white paper is poised to be issued, that too not immediately but in the middle of next fiscal year! Effectively, a must-do, look-in exercise that should have been undertaken with the findings made public immediately after the spleens were vented out over the scams is set to come out as a stale academic narrative -- seven years too late. Meanwhile, the soft belly may have been distended -- unnoticeably without treatment may only be a balm applied on sore points.

The first tasks of the government were to have stopped the hemorrhage and put a corrective auditing system in place. As these steps went largely by default, no financial transparency and accountability could be bred into the system giving a free hand to collusive grabbing schemes of all types. Thus we hear of the rag-to-riches stories and the collateral rise in financial and other allied crimes.

Finance minister has himself admitted to a lack of inherent capacity to reform the system. That's why his budget speech did not suggest

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anything about the financial swindles. With this important direction missing in the budget, the impunity culture may be fed on a fresh diet. The onus, however, is not mainly on the budget to put such things right for which strong administrative and political wills will have to be employed top-down.

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Not surprisingly, Muhith's budget speech kept mum over black money. The finance minister himself has given the reason why. Said he, "Taka 34 crore has been whitened in the current fiscal year. From that point of view, there is no black money in the country."

Muhith ascribes land as the biggest source of black money pointing to the huge difference between registered price of land and its real price. In part it's true but the real propeller of black money is its sloshing through the political arena, giving it a de facto recognition.

Here, too, the finance minister has to content himself with a promise to conduct a study to know the extent of black money in the country and how it is generated. That a big parallel economy is operational both in and out of the country as a loss percentage to the national income and GDP growth is a fact of life.

It is time perhaps that we became a part of the international financial monitoring and surveillance system.

Only when Bangladesh turns into a hugely lucrative destination for investments, primed on strong infrastructure and connectivity networks that the lost monies perhaps would be funneled into the country.

Meanwhile, Muhith is happy over the prospect of taxing gold which is surfacing in abundance. Our levy on gold is much less than it is in neighbouring India leaving a margin for upward adjustment to discourage smuggling. A small gift in waiting!

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Vuvuzela to Upazila

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHUB

Under the Trades Description Act of UK, technically the World Cup is not really a cup. But who cares? It is the biggest sporting event, to be overshadowed only by an unplanned solar eclipse.

One out of seven people on this planet are watching. The rest must be aliens...

For the earthlings, each has a voucher for a ninety minute spa treatment, with a fifteen minute break in between. This voucher is valid for a whole month. And if any game goes into extra time, that's icing on the cake. We now have no excuses to grumble during an extended religious sermon. South Africa

ALL teams are in Brazil, ready to hunt, skin, mince, salt, grill, and chew and swallow their opponents. In reality, some teams are bound to end up being mere tourists in Rio. Nevertheless, it is still the cup of the cups, though all teams say, "Just one would make me happy."

taught the drill sergeant that he can use the vuvuzela instead of the bugle to get all the fresh cadets to stand in formation sharp at 4am. This time, it is the Samba that gets us all paying attention at the same hour.

As some educational institutions here prepare to go on *sine die* engineered by diehard fans, two fans are electrocuted in separate incidents while hoisting the Argentinean flag. Raising this flag is indeed hazardous, whether it be in Bangladesh or in the Falklands. With so many Argentinean flags fluttering all over the country, I hope there is no Royal Navy flotilla heading towards the Bay of Bengal...

And *et tu Brazil?* Yes. All are confused -- which one is actually the Brazilian Ambassador's residence? One thing is for sure, we now have countless Argentinean and Brazilian Honorary Consuls in the country.

Flags galore. More Brazil and Argentina flags than the green and red ones from four consecutive December 16s combined. At least some are making lots of money by selling lots of merchandise. Hey, how about we tax these flags instead of cell phones? Hurry, because there are no refunds on the flags if your team loses. South Africa saw the omnipresent vuvuzela. Bangladesh sees the omnipresent

flags all the way to the upazilas. Flat screens are everywhere, too, though I hope none in hospital surgery theaters.

The fun is in that 'A' is always a rival of 'B'. It's Argentina and Brazil, just like AL and BNP, Ananta Jalil and Brad Pitt, while (sometimes) *Amma* and *Baba*. The one exception -- Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, as they seem to get along just fine. So, no Brangelina in the world of football? Yes, indeed. As Bangladeshis literally fight over their arch rivals, Argentina and Brazil speak out in rare unison, "Who?"

TV channels around the world have geared up for live broadcasts. Not sure what US TV networks will do. They might find the game 'too slow' to broadcast and instead, show golf or even curling. Will there be any brawl charts? Sure! If no English hooligans are arrested, then shame on the English. So, let's all enjoy the Samba and forget about Qatar 2022. For the latter, who knows, more petro dollars may clear up the smoke as all eyes are on Brazil...

For now, *bon-a-football!*

The writer is an engineer & CEO turned comedian (by choice), the host of NTV's *The Naveed Mahub Show* and the founder of *Naveed's Comedy Club*.

QUOTABLE Quote

If you haven't any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.

-- Bob Hope

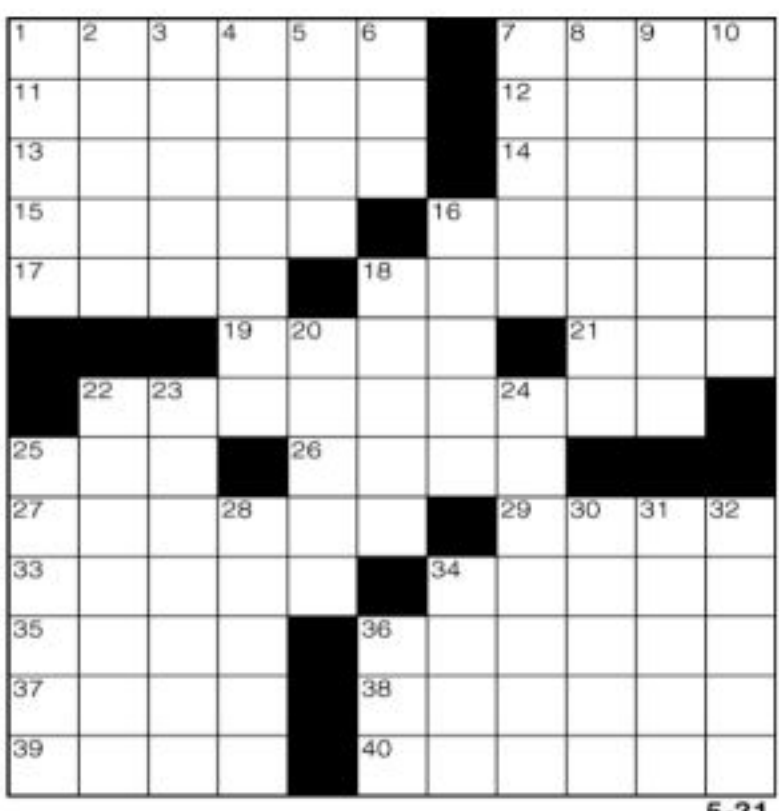
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Complete
- 7 Even
- 11 Zoo resident
- 12 Golf goal
- 13 Well
- 14 Rams' mates
- 15 Bikini, for one
- 16 Sweet liqueur
- 17 Behind schedule
- 18 Team member
- 19 Fictional plantation
- 21 NY neighbor
- 22 Yuri Gagarin, for one
- 25 Big truck
- 26 Bankrupt
- 27 Made blank
- 29 Folded food
- 33 Gunpowder ingredient
- 34 George Burns prop
- 35 "Yeah, right!"
- 26 Phone feature
- 37 Varnish layer
- 38 "We -- amused!"
- 39 Mark's replacement
- 40 Get snug

Down

- 1 Barge site
- 2 Writer Loos
- 3 Lace loop
- 4 Brunch orders
- 5 Plunge
- 6 Jeans feature
- 7 Heyer-dahl's " -- Expeditions"
- 8 Grateful reply
- 9 Tin or titanium
- 10 Maroon
- 16 Families
- 18 Strutting
- 20 Traffic light color
- 22 Moose's cousin
- 23 Causing
- 24 Now and then
- 25 Shylock's home
- 28 Fight
- 30 IRS worker
- 31 Seasonal song
- 32 Make speeches
- 34 Give a hoot
- 36 Fire



CRYPTOQUOTE

SNMWZRS OWFZASCIS PMRZIOISNM
BAOSOIV SACJIM OR SNCS CIQ
WCIZREAOFS OR OWFAZHMJ OK QZK
EXS CBCQ SNM KCS.

-- AZLMAS NMOIPMOI

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: EVERY WORD THAT IS UNNECESSARY ONLY POURS OVER THE SIDE OF A BRIMMING MIND.

-- CICERO

Yesterday's answer

LATHE WATER
ASHEN ETHNO
SPEND ALERT
HIM LIV KIT
ERA ONE ICE
REZONE ETON
ENGRAVE
RARA TIARAS
EMU TIM URN
DAN RAE NCO
INNIE DINAR
ADELE AVERT
LARKS TYROS

A XYDLBAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte

