

“In Singapore, you are not allowed to beg. Peddling without a permit is an offence too.”

“If that is forbidden, how can I seek help to build the dormitory for our madrasah students?”

This question now urged the man to climb the steps of a shrine in Singapore.

“Next to the small mosque, there is a shrine. You will definitely not miss it. From far away, the shrine’s dome can be clearly seen, compared to the roof of the mosque,” Mudir

Jemendar Ali Khan, the principal of the madrasah and former Public Health Inspector, had said to the man. Mudir Jemendar once worked in Rawalpindi, representing the Public Health Office of Pakistan, and he received a Diploma in Air Pollution from Singapore in 1980.

The man entrusted with numerous requests from a village in Rawalakot Azad Kashmir was allowed to stay in the storeroom of Sabar Menanti, a restaurant within the nearby Palmer House. He then left his wares in the storeroom and went to Masjid Haji Muhammad Salleh. The harsh heat of the afternoon sun stung the back of his neck. His confidence burned bright; surely, at this hallowed ground, where the well-known ascetic saint Habib Noh had once spread the ideals of love and virtue, blessings would still abound even past the 19th century.

When he was reciting Surah Yasin from the Quran, the *azan* announcing it was time for the afternoon Asr prayers had yet to rise. The shrine’s modest dome cast an elliptical shadow. As the shadow lengthened, it cooled the yard that led to the mosque. The shadow caressed the million blades of elephant grass and grains of earth from the hill that for years had witnessed significant upheavals upon the countenance of Shenton Way.