

## Parliament coming alive

*Opposition must not leave the House for any reason*

AFTER many a month, the parliament is back on its two feet again. The Government and the Opposition are both there in full force and the House is beginning to come alive with the kind of activities it should be buzzing with all the time. This provides an opportunity to congratulate both the parties involved. It's giving people a chance even though one doesn't know how long it will last. But right now its springtime of the parliament and the agitating streets have been given the second row.

The Awami League's decision to join the parliament after boycotting it for long is very welcomed. Equally welcomed is the direction by the Government party leader and PM Khaleda Zia to show respect to the Opposition. The result has been a fairly decent show.

The first day was a short day for the opposition as they staged a walk-out but that too is part of the parliamentary culture and quite acceptable. However, it would have been more wholesome if the response to remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition, Sk. Hasina had been made by the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. This isn't meant to demean the status of senior BNP Leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan but a hope that parliamentary etiquettes can turn into practices and that into traditions which will strengthen the House itself in the end.

The debate in the House on the second day has been lively, fruitful and useful. The budget is being discussed and criticized where it should be and on issues that need so. The government has to listen to the other views and be heard as well, otherwise the much craved for legitimacy will be lost. It's best to recognize early on that the real legitimacy provider is a genuine parliament and both sides working together can alone achieve that.

We urge the opposition to make full use of the opportunities provided inside the House. We expect and demand of them to represent their constituencies and raise an alternative voice in the parliament. We do not want any dramatics or opposition for opposition's sake. We hope the opposition and the Treasury will learn the value of being present there and recognize that they are both ultimately responsible to the people who have voted them to the parliament. For their sake the parliament must become a relevant body. And for that we need a House that belongs to both in terms of verbal space. This is the public demand of the day.

## The hour of the hawk

*Bush plays unilateral in Palestine*

THE recently issued peace plan by US President George Bush has more war than peace written on it. It seems to have been devised by military leaders who want to impose a plan whether it's acceptable to those who are being offered it. More significantly, it ignores the long history of reconciliatory initiatives undertaken by previous US governments. Bush is rapidly losing that middle space which all mediating countries must occupy.

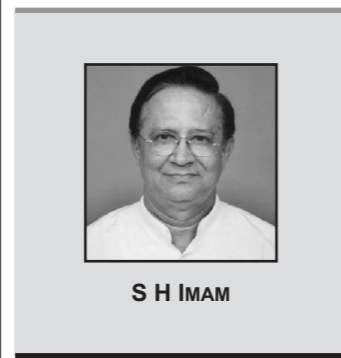
One of the key aspects put forward by the US is the removal of Yasser Arafat, the PLO Chairman which is barely couched under the term, "the present leadership" (requiring to be abandoned). To demand that an elected leader should be removed as a pre-condition for any meaningful peace efforts is a bit too much. It's up to the Palestinian people to decide who is going to be their leader and for Bush to ask for his removal is something little more than interference. Obviously give and take must be there and many analysts including pro-Palestinians will argue that there are better leaders than Arafat but ultimately that is for Palestine and not the US to decide.

Perhaps that is what has gone wrong in this asymmetric peace seeking. While asymmetric wars are common, peace is always by definition equal. Sadly that position is missing in the Middle East. Simply put, a people can't be bullied into peace, not with so much violence on. As Palestine burns, a fire in the area could erupt and lit parts of the world that might turn into a global blaze. That vision is particularly absent in this proposal.

Unless the US administration and its advisers can begin to treat the Palestinians with effective respect there will be no lasting peace. Even today, Israel suffers because of bad policies. Condemnation and counter-action have never stopped the suicide bombers and once fanaticism enters the blood, counter-actions of the violent kind can only stoke the fire. This is universal wisdom that the powers that be have chosen to ignore. The antidote to collective violence is collective peace.

As the supreme power in the world, the US has responsibility beyond that of the immediate events or friends. It can't take a decision that will lead to a greater evil and an endless chain of violence that will ultimately harm others and endanger its own people.

# Cross-cutting themes to fight the epidemic waiting to be adopted



S H IMAM

A hope on HIV/AIDS should perhaps be seen as a flaw on the side of caution and, therefore, looked kindly on, given the magnitude of the challenge it poses to the world today. Like the bush-fire and the volcanic molten lava irresistibly crackling away engulfing newer regions or the floods inexorably heaving to their intrinsic water table defying embankments, the HIV positive in its proliferation has been similarly ruthlessly invasive, for all one knows. Not a single country has remained unaffected by the virus. In fact, people not perceived as being at risk are also becoming infected.

Taking refuge behind cultures and religions has proved a myth; fiercely touted national pride has been allowed a dilution by countries facing the scourge. The refusals to face up to facts, lest these pre-

sented a poor image of the society or reflected badly on governments because of HIV/AIDS' links to poverty and other forms of social pathology, should be matters of the past now.

Statistics can speak louder than words, but about the incidence of HIV positive these would invariably fall behind the true magnitude of it at any given point of time. So spiked and complex the data collection exercise can get owing partly to the enormous size of the undertaking

accounting for 0.7 per cent of her population. The figures for Myanmar are: population 45 million, number infected 5,30,000 making up 1.99 per cent of the country's population. Nepal with a population of 23.4 million has 33,000 infected comprising 0.29 per cent of the population; Pakistan peopled by 152.3 million has 74,000 infected accounting for 0.10 per cent of her population; Sri Lanka with a population of 18.6 million has 7,500 infected comprising 0.07 per cent of

epidemic through having a low prevalence to being in a nascent state.

Low prevalence countries have a tendency towards underestimating the lurking dangers otherwise germane to their inherent risk factors and vulnerabilities. Bangladesh now labouring under the impression of a relative lull over the last three years or so, needs only to look at Nepal's experience to shake off its complacency. The island kingdom had a static stretch for a similar

The links between trafficking and HIV/AIDS are well-established. Trafficking is ostensibly in search of jobs but it is primarily designed by the slave traders of today for sexual exploitation of women. The magnitude of the damaging correlation takes on a horrendous proportion when the size of trafficking is taken into account: around 200,000 women and children from Bangladesh were trafficked to Pakistan in the last decade. And, 10,000 to 15,000 girls are trafficked to India. In

enforcers operating under the same socio-cultural value system further the discriminatory regime against the women. All these require replacement of the outmoded so-called ethical and legal standards across the board. The agenda for involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS with the strategies designed to prevent and fight HIV/AIDS also call for a holistic legal approach.

A corpus of fresh laws is needed to address the serious flaws in the present system. The contradictions are ludicrous. If a commercial sex worker is found with a condom in hand, the police are mandated to arrest her thereby sending a patently negative signal to any sensitisation exercise about safe sex. An attempt to rescue sex workers, including the child ones, could lead to disruption of HIV awareness programme.

There are so many extremely relevant cross-cutting themes that a regional approach can girdle with the wonderful promise of carrying forward collaborative and multi-sectoral strategies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in recognition of the fact that if 'one country lags behind in response to the epidemic the region suffers as a whole.'

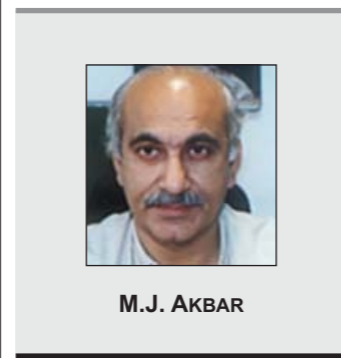
*(Next instalment on Bangladesh situation)*

SH Imam is Associate Editor of The Daily Star.

**JUST ANOTHER VIEW**

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## Atta Turks



M.J. AKBAR

THERE is one non-negotiable requirement for any Turkish belly dancer. You have to have a belly.

A belly must not be confused with a stomach. All of us have stomachs. Some of us go the extra mile and have two. The fashionable young people of today prefer to have none at all. Young women spend hours at the gymnasium to flatten the space between breast and crotch into a skating rink with the navel, preferably ringed, as its epicentre. They wear jeans or pants that skirt the lower hip instead of a boring waist in order to advertise the attractions of this skating rink. Fashion has taken jeans to where the hipster sari used to be a few years ago, which brings to mind a question -- where has the hipster sari disappeared?

Young men, on the other hand, seem convinced that the human being has only one asset, and let's not confuse that with the mind. This is the Age of Muscle Worship. I would not be surprised if their brains had become a mass of squirming muscles, each wanting to be photographed in a T-shirt. If Salman Khan is your role model your toes are bound to be more intelligent than your brains, in any case. Young men are now taut instead of taught.

The essence of the belly is tremor. There must be just enough flesh around the bones to form the basis of soft curves instead of strangled straight lines. We are not talking fat here. A dancer needs as much discipline as an Olympics athlete and it is far more difficult to keep curves in artistic order than straight lines. The belly dancer has more eroticism in her hint than a nude disco dancer might have in the sweaty obvious. This is not dancing only with your feet. This is dancing with your whole body and your mind. The reach of the wiggle and the rhythmic lift of the soft waist and rounded hip has spread into the whole of the region through what was once the Ottoman empire and regular dancing has all the charm of

its influence. To music that understands inflexion better than the beat. Dance your way through Turkey if you want, but don't leave your belly behind.

At 9.30 on June 18 morning Turkey shut down. I was in Izmir, once called Smyrna and known as the Paris of the Levant. At a little after 9.42 Turkey erupted in a single voice through a single word -- Goll! Goll!!! Goll!!! The roar must have reached Japan. A bad Japanese miskick had created the opportunity, and a Red Indian haircut head had scored. Then silence fell on two nations on either side of Asia, interrupted by cries of anguish or howls of expectation. A final whistle. And

Borgia about to administer poison to an unruly guest. He was still better than the chap at the Italy-South Korea match, who could have walked into the tango scene of any B-grade Hollywood movie and seemed to have both pockets open. Television has changed referees as well.

Sorry, Greece. Even Homer was a Turk. After he lived most of his life in Smyrna, or Izmir, circa 700 BC, rather than Athens or Sparta. To understand modern Turkish nationalism you must understand Izmir more than Istanbul. The records take this port city on shining sea surrounded immediately by glittering hills back to the tenth century

Aegean sea in Izmir has him pointing towards a quasi-British Greece. Quasi-British because it was Britain's ruthless ambition that encouraged the Greeks to invade Turkey. From London Lloyd George and Winston Churchill wanted to punish the Turks (who had hammered them at Gallipoli in the first world war but lost the war along with their ally Germany) by their invidious means of partition. They wanted to divide Turkey, keep Istanbul and European Turkey for themselves and hand over the rest to Greece. They had bought and intimidated the last Sultan Mehmed VI, a prisoner in his palace just as the last Mughal was their retainer and prisoner in Delhi

heard in Turkey: Yasha, yasha, bin yasha! Mustafa Kemal Pasha! A thousand years of life to Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

On 23 September Attaturk's soldiers took on the Great Powers, British troops who had been ordered to stop them at Chanak on the Asian side of the Dardanelles. But the Great Powers no longer had the nerve to fight Turk nationalism. On 19 October Refet Pasha, one of the leading nationalist generals, entered Istanbul. The people wept, sacrificed sheep and offered prayers at the mosque of Mehmet Fatih, the Ottoman who had conquered Istanbul in 1453. On 20 October Lloyd George resigned,

harem. Well, she explained, this was not quite where the snipping was done. That was somewhere else. This was where the boy came to rest and heal, and where he wore a crown during the celebrations for the event. Half the American men looked at their shuffling feet, the other half looked away. Did I detect a wild pang of totally unwarranted fear in an American eye or two? The young lady explained further: a boy became a man in the Turkish tradition the day he was circumcised. He had to leave the harem and his mother's apartments after that. Circumcisions were generally done in the 7th, 9th or 13th year. The men shuffled some more. The American women looked grim. I wondered if, carried away, our guide would narrate stories of how Suleyman the Magnificent celebrated the circumcision ceremonies of his three sons Mustafa, Mehmed and Selim in July 1530 when every foreign prince of his empire had to come to bow before the children and honour them with gifts and the people were indulged with weeks of festivities. Or that in 1583 the foreskin of the future Mehmed III was sent to his grandmother on a golden plate and the snipper rewarded with 3000 gold coins, a golden bowl, robes of honour and even a princess' hand in marriage. He was clearly not the local barber. To use an appropriate metaphor, our guide was cut off by a question. A greyhair walked up to her and, using that um-aw tone that Harvard dons reserve for discussions on nuclear strategy or particle physics, he asked the young lady why they left the ceremony so late, and did it hurt and were there any side-effects. The young lady shrugged as if to say that so far no complaints had come from either sex.

When we reached a waiting bedroom the palace had waiting rooms, the harem had waiting bedrooms the greyhair's wife strode up and wanted to know, on behalf of modern civilisation, what happened to the women when they became sixty or seventy.

The guide reassured modern civilisation that they were looked after very well until they died. The American lady's husband, both his eyes twinkling, turned to her and asked: "Worried?" The most striking of the 600 paintings in the palace is that of a young girl, Durshehvar, daughter of the last Sultan who had to leave the palace in 1924. The Sultan painted this portrait of his favourite daughter himself. She became the wife of the Nizam of Hyderabad and is still alive today, a lonely 90-odd. She lives in London.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

**BYLINE**

Attaturk did not live for a thousand years. He died when only 57 in the palace of Dolmabahce. Every clock in the palace has been stopped at five minutes past nine, the moment when he died. But Attaturk may have saved Turkey for the next thousand years...The Dolmabahce palace and Rashtapati Bhavan have one thing in common. The moment they were completed their builders, or their empire-builders, went into decline. Since the Ottoman was far more durable than the British its decline lasted longer.

Turkey exploded, again in a single voice but with a different word. Turkiya! Turkiya! Turkiya! The bright red flag with the historic crescent and star waved out of every car window (and some wipers as well), draped whole buildings and rippled like a ship on waves of young men and women flowing deliriously through the streets. Car horns filled the air with delight. A fire engine raced by and I could have sworn that the firemen were not heading towards a fire or a disaster but simply blaring their siren with undisguised joy, happy to be children for a day. Young people went out in bands to search for CNN and BBC cameras. Television has changed not only the game but also the audience.

There was only one sad face in Izmir, the same waiter who had been sad the previous evening as he served us dinner. I went back to him. His natural long face still wore its veil of woe. See, he mourned, now Senegal... The thought of tomorrow's pain had already burdened his today. I write this just before the Turkey-Senegal match on June 29 but there is no doubt about which team I shall support as I watch with my hosts in a small bistro called Crazy Pub. Turkiya! By the way where does FIFA pick up its referees? The one in the Turkey-Japan match looked like Cesare

before Christ. Its "modern" period started with Alexander and it flourished under the Romans, with Marcus Aurelius paying particular attention to its charms.

Across our hotel which in turn is next to a cement-wrapped American consulate, is the Church of St. Polycarp. This city was home to one of the seven original churches named in the Revelations. St. Polycarp was its first bishop. He was martyred when the Roman proconsul Quadratus ordered him burned at the stake because he would not forsake Christ.

In 1402 Taimur added Smyrna to the list of cities he destroyed but its fortunes swung up when in 1535 Suleyman the Magnificent gave foreign merchants the right to live here. Ever since his cosmopolitan style has made other Turks call it infidel Izmir. Izmir took the charge in its stride and prospered. A merchant had to be fluent in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Italian, English and French to do business here while Russian was useful. Four hundred years of peace came to a terrible end in 1922 when the Greek armies arrived to occupy Turkey and take revenge against Muslims.

The equestrian statue of Netaji in Calcutta has him pointing towards British Delhi for that was his goal. The equestrian statue of Mustafa Kemal Attaturk on the edge of the

between 1803 and 1857. But the Turks were not ready to be defeated.

The nationalists under Attaturk rallied at Ankara.

In 1920 the Greeks, with arms from the allies and support from British, French and Russian troops who had occupied Istanbul and Gallipoli, invaded Turkey. Over the next two years they ravaged their way through Izmir, Manisa and Bursa till they reached the gates of Ankara. In July 1922 they sought to enter Istanbul. Thank God they were stopped by their allies or Istanbul would have suffered like Manisa: only 500 of Manisa's 18,000 historic buildings survived the rape and devastation of Greek troops.

On 26 August 1922 Attaturk gave his famous battle order: "Soldier! Your goal is the Aegean!" Then followed one of the more astonishing reversals of military history. The Turks ripped up and routed the Greek army. Half were taken prisoner. The other half fled. Izmir was destroyed by fire as the Greeks rushed home in ships from this port. Their commander Trikoupis, a descendant of the Mavrocordato family that had served Sultans for centuries, was captured. Attaturk entered Izmir on 9 September. It is still celebrated as independence day. There was only one chant

defeated by the Turks, never to return to public life again. His successor recognised that Britain could no longer be the policeman of the world.

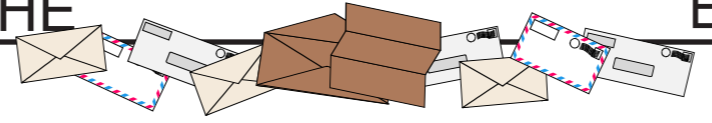
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The Dolmabahce palace and Rashtapati Bhavan have one thing in common. The moment they were completed their builders, or their empire-builders, went into decline. Since the Ottoman was far more durable than the British its decline lasted longer. Most of our group touring the palace was American. Evidence? Floating conversation. "After this I've got to deal with that Texan in breeches..." Another voice, a sympathetic lady as we headed towards the harem: "I don't think the poor dears had any choice."

They were called and had to do it. But they were all right. They had to do it once or twice then they lived in luxury..."

My heart went out to the American men as our guide, a young lady barely out of college, stopped by the Blue Bed over whose canopy rested a huge golden crown. This was the circumcision room, she said, in the

# TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



## Korea's brave World Cup

First it was Portugal, then the 'hand-some' Italians and then the Spaniards were conquered by the Koreans. Though they lost to Germany in the semi-final, Korea made all the Asians feel proud.

True that the refereeing was a bit dodgy in the match against Portugal and Italy but let's look at the brighter side. In 1998, not even one Asian team made it to the second round let alone the quarterfinals. Now, Korea and Japan can be dangerous to their European counterparts.

All of us should be proud of the feat and not get mad about Argentina's early exit! Let us just wait and see what the Koreans can do in future. And by the way, which team does not get a little home advantage?

England deserved to win!

Isam Dhaka

I am writing in response to Ms. Sonya's letter "Bias towards the host" (June 22) where she expressed her distress about the referees' partiality to World Cup co-hosts South Korea. I would like to ask Ms. Sonya to look at the bright side of the generous referees' antics. Already, newspapers have hailed Korea as Asia's pride in the World Cup; the referees are the best way to bring football's greatest honour to our Asia.

Our Asian brothers from Korea glided through the first round, the second round, the quarterfinals and into the semi-finals. The stubborn and shameless bias of the referees have given Korea historic wins over teams as skilful as Spain, Italy and Portugal. And though they lost to Germany in the semi-final, its great to watch an Asian team flourish.

As an Asian, Ms. Sonya should've supported Korea's progress through the World Cup, however it was earned. After all, we can't change the results that

brought the downfall of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Fair Play. **A Sarcastic Soccer Fan Dhaka**

## Want to know more about Tareq Zia

Now that we have a new PM-in-waiting with Tareq Rahman, shouldn't we know a little more about him?

What are his academic accomplishments? What degrees does he hold and from which universities? Which schools did he study in, apart from that short stint at St. Joseph's? What were his SSC/HSC results?

Where do his children study, in English medium schools or government public schools?

Has he ever attended any seminars on governance or parliamentary affairs? Does he have any political views apart from the usual political garbage?

Has he ever written an article or paper on democracy or on any topic for the matter?

In short, apart from being President Zia's son, what makes him tick?

Bastiat Dhaka

## Babul vs Babar

I do hope you won't find my thoughts on the Babul vs. Babar issue too cynical but I'd still like to share them with you.

I'd imagine a lot of other people have had the same thought, Babul bought out enough people in the BNP and the rest of the government in exchange of the lucrative liquor licence. Later with Jamaat kicking up a fuss and BNP swinging to the right his permit, legally granted under dubious circumstances, was cancelled.

I'm sorry but if I were a very rich man who had liberally "donated" to the BNP cause, I'd be pretty mad if my friends failed to come through for me.

In Babul's defence, he was doing

business the only way he knows, through contributions. I'm sure he was only kidding about publishing all the details of his dealings with the BNP in his paper.

Dorji Dhaka

## President's resignation

To our utter surprise President Prof. A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury resigned on a whimsical ground. A change or shift in any top ranking grade is not uncommon in the history of Bangladesh, but such a form of shift in the presidential rank is unique in the history of Bangladeshi politics.

We are concerned over the obscurity in the ongoing process. The President does not hold a brittle existence in the political ran.

If existence of our country is at stake and on the verge of vicious quagmire which results in numerous problems, then what is the crop

we harvested so far by tagging up ourselves in those abortive malfunction which generates no outcome in the long run?

Iftekar Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

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This sad incident only proves the fact that politics in our country is run more by whim than by reason, logic and love towards the motherland. The President (whom they themselves nominated) is supposed to be neutral and unbiased as per the constitution. Either BNP lawmakers don't know much about the constitution or they want to change the role of the country's most respected chair. They probably didn't even realise that they made themselves a fool in front of the people, and they also humiliated Bangladesh in front of the world.

Prof. Chowdhury was one of the few appropriate candidates for the post of the President. He displayed appropriate and also showed

respect for the President's office now by stepping down voluntarily. He was one of the founder members of BNP and one of the closest aides of late Ziaur Rahman. And BNP "Turks" wants to show him how to show respect to Zia! The saddest part is that Begum Zia is singing along too...

This 'Man above Party', and 'Party above Country' attitude needs to be shed immediately. This is ruining the nation.

Shafqat USA

## Young BNP MPs

If this is the face of our future leaders then I am very scared. By all accounts the President was an unassuming genial fellow harmless from what I've seen so far although I would count being one of the founders of BNP as a black mark. The only thing he's done so far which I found wrong though predictable was handing over his seat to his

son. This attack by the Hawa Bhaban MPs is terrifying in its ferocity and pointlessness. These are the same men who are the up and coming leaders of the party and our Cabinet Ministers to come. Yet they seem to have this provincial village outlook and can't see beyond their own narrow interests.

I didn't know that Mahi B Cowdhury gave Hasina a reception on her visit to his constituency. But I do think it was a great thing he did. It shows greater maturity and understanding of politics than any of our other State Ministers.

I dearly hope we are looking at a split in the BNP. Between the Hawa Bhaban Storm troopers and the more liberal mature wing that refuses to genuflect to the heir to the throne. When that happens, I am joining the splinter group.

Astreix Dhaka