

## Opposition's return to parliament

Welcome, but they must stay

THE opposition BNP joined the ongoing budget session of 9<sup>th</sup> Jatiya Sangsad on Monday. Their lawmakers had been keeping themselves out of the JS for 83 consecutive sittings since March last year. And it was time for them to return, if they were to save their membership.

Their decision to join the parliamentary session is a step in the right direction in a very important way. Especially because the last budget of the incumbent government is going to be placed in this session. The opposition lawmakers' participation will hopefully make the discussion on budget lively and meaningful.

Also importantly, since this is an election year both the opposition and the ruling party can make the most of this JS session to sort out the major issues of discord between them. In fact, it has offered the much-awaited opportunity for the AL and BNP to engage themselves constructively and devise a way out of the prevailing political impasse over the shape and nature of the polls time government.

It is a good augury that the Treasury Bench lawmakers greeted with enthusiasm the opposition's return to parliament and that unlike in the past there was no use of abusive language, nor a pandemonium in the House over any point of discord on the inaugural day.

This goodwill should continue if only not to give the opposition MPs any cause for abandoning the session.

Hopefully, the opposition BNP will not revert to the boycott culture, but continue to attend the present session through to its end yielding an understanding on the interim government issue.

## Ashraful's confessions

Concerning for national cricket

CRICKET fans and spectators were jolted by cricketer Ashraful's baring his connivance in match fixing over a generally noteworthy 12-year career in cricket. Though we are appreciative of the fact that he came clean when grilled by the Anti-Corruption and Security Unit of the International Cricket Council, we are nonetheless appalled at the sordid revelation. Here is a man who created history with his Test debut against Sri Lanka in 2001 as the youngest centurion. But he no longer can claim to be a role model among younger generations, if the allegations against him are proven through an inquest.

Here he stands with his fame in tatters and the game somewhat tarnished. The game known as the "gentleman's game" and a symbol of fair-play has been brought to disrepute. A series of scandals have hit the game as in India's IPL and some Pakistani cricketers' wrongdoing in England in terms of fixing matches.

It will be a sadder day for Bangladesh cricket, should another cricketer have allowed himself to be seduced by quick money, a vice that apparently has permeated of our society at large. But this should not exonerate the practitioners of cricket who have taken upon themselves the role of playing an essentially clean game. The placing of temporary ban by Bangladesh Cricket Board on Ashraful is a step in the right direction, but the board must get to the bottom of the issues of integrity in the sport. Standards of exemplary performance and behaviour must be established and enforced to keep cricket unblemished.

## Corruption here too!

FARIZA RAHMAN

THE only word that comes to mind is "shame." We did get only a few things to be proud about and one of them was cricket. I sadly had to use "was" because of the recent disclosure of the darkest chapter of BD cricket. It never occurred to me that our brothers could actually be involved with spot and match fixing. All other issues such as poor performance can be endured but this sort of allegations simply broke the hearts of millions of BD cricket fans.

And the spot fixing allegations involved Mohammed Ashraful who was considered as one of the most talented cricketers the nation has seen till now. Not only him, there are talks about some other former players who once served the nation and repeatedly gave us moments of happiness. But now with these facts gradually coming under the spotlight almost no respect is left for them.

The way Dhaka Gladiators authority insisted players to play fixed matches by threatening them with salary simply left me dumbfounded thinking of how people can scoop so low just for money.

Even if the situation was extremely adverse, our cricketers should not have done this absolutely unacceptable treachery. And the confession of Mohammed Ashraful proves that spot fixing took root in our cricket long since taking advantage of our ignorance.

Whenever I used to talk about this issue naturally "Pakistan," "India" and other nations came in my conversation but never did I think about the Tigers. Because I had the firm conviction that we might not be able to play like the top class nations but we indeed got one thing running in our vein called "honesty."

We are a struggling nation with natural and man-made disasters, corruption, political and social unrest crumbling our hopes and dreams. We had cricket to trigger our unity and enthusiasm, to make us stand again with heads held high. So we cannot let corruption enter into our cricket arena.

Let us respect cricket as a game rather than think of it as a way of making money. Hope the guilty gets the deserved punishment and the spirit of honesty be voiced everywhere in every aspect of our beloved motherland.

We indeed want to feel proud of the Tigers' achievement of course attained through honesty upholding the true spirit of the game.

The writer is a class XI student.

# Make war a crime

STRATEGICALLY  
SPEAKING



Brig Gen  
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN  
ndc, psc (Retd)

ing to the war veterans on Memorial Day in the US, President Obama, while recalling the sacrifices of the US soldiers in war, implored his fellow countrymen to remember their soldiers who are not being fully appreciated by the Americans.

And he went to say, "But even as we turn the page on a decade of conflict, our nation is still at war." A decade of conflict! Some historians think that America has been perpetually at war, with brief interregnum, since its independence in 1776?

In contrast Mr. Mahathir Mohammad, in his keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity, held in the island of Jeju in South Korea between May 29 and 31, 2013, suggested that waging war be made a crime, that seeking resolution of differences between countries through use of force be made a crime against humanity.

The former Malaysian prime minister was echoing the idea which he had been espousing for the last several years in this regard. But much before the pacifists came up with the idea of making waging of war a crime and those who imposed it on others be tried as war criminals, it had been castigated by leading literatures and intellectuals almost hundred years ago. I have always held firmly to the notion that, "there has never been a cause worth killing for but always worth laying down ones life for," and that I never think that war, "no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime."

The two differing attitudes, on war, are what is predominating the discourses on international security today. The former, of war being the final arbiter of all issues conform to the reality, while the latter, to abjure it altogether as a means of resolution of

ifferences, is too utopian to even merit serious intellectual cogitation or the time of the world leaders, unfortunately. And when the only super power in the world continues to be prevailed by the thought that the country is still at war, very little by way of alternative means for resolution of differences between states can be conjured up.

For American leaders, detractors aver, war has been a way of life. In fact, some say, going to war has been one of the great American pastimes. And digging into the annals of history one finds that hardly a decade has gone by when the US has not been involved in one conflict or the other in one part of

trated by groups such as race violence, terrorism, war etc.

As a consequence, peace came to be seen as more than merely absence of war (negative peace), and instead of just being the absence of war, peace is now seen as activities involving society at large, aimed at creating more equitable and just structures therein (positive peace).

And that is the question that I put to Mr. Mahathir Muhammad, that while he had been calling for making war a crime, the leader of the most powerful country, while ruing the fact that only 1% of his people volunteer for the military, consider his country



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the globe or the other.

So how does one go about ensuring the victory of the pacifists? It must not be forgotten though that absence of war would not necessarily ensure peace in the world but may be a first step towards creating conditions for enduring peace.

But what is peace? Is it a state of mind -- or is it a state where there is absence of conflict? Scholars since the early fifties have moved away from looking at peace as a mere structural phenomenon rather than that stemming from direct violence at individual level or that which was perpe-

as being still in a state of war.

As one pacifist says, "War is not an accident. It is the logical outcome of a certain way of life. If we want to attack war, we have to attack that way of life." And change in that way of life can only come, according to Mahathir, if the people choose to elect leaders who would promise to renounce war. He said that just like slavery, people would one day come to their senses and realise that war was wrong. And it is people who should make it difficult for their leaders to go to war.

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| **The New York Times** EXCLUSIVE

## The drone war is far from over

AKBAR AHMED

WHEN people in Washington talk about shrinking the drone program, as President Obama promised to do last week, they are mostly concerned with placating Pakistan, where members of the newly elected government have vowed to end violations of the country's sovereignty. But the drone war is alive and well in the remote corners of Pakistan where the strikes have caused the greatest and most lasting damage.

Drone strikes like Wednesday's, in Waziristan, are destroying already weak tribal structures and throwing communities into disarray throughout Pakistan's tribal belt along the border with Afghanistan. The chaos and rage they produce endangers the Pakistani government and fuels anti-Americanism. And the damage isn't limited to Pakistan. Similar destruction is occurring in other traditional tribal societies like Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen. The tribes on the periphery of these nations have long struggled for more autonomy from the central government, first under colonial rule and later against the modern state. The global war on terror has intensified that conflict.

These tribal societies are organized into clans defined by common descent; they maintain stability through similar structures of authority; and they have defined codes of honor revolving around hospitality to guests and revenge against enemies.

In recent decades, these societies have undergone huge disruptions as the traditional leadership has come under attack by violent groups like the Taliban, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Somalia's Al Shabab, not to mention full-scale military invasions. America has deployed drones into these power vacuums, causing ferocious backlashes against central governments while destroying any positive image of the United States that may have once existed.

American precision-guided missiles launched into Pakistan's Pashtun tribal areas aim to eliminate what are called, with marvelous imprecision, the "bad guys." Several decades ago I, too, faced the problem of catching a notorious "bad guy" in Waziristan.

It was 1979. Safar Khan, a Pashtun outlaw, had over the years terrorized the region with raids and kidnappings. He was always one step ahead of the law, disappearing into the undemarcated international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the very area where Osama bin Laden would later find shelter.

I was then the political agent of South Waziristan, a government administrator in charge of the area. When Khan kidnapped a Pakistani soldier, the commanding general threatened to launch military operations. I told him to hold off his troops, and took direct responsibility for Khan's capture.

I mobilized tribal elders and religious leaders to persuade Khan to surrender, promising him a fair trial by jirga, a council of elders, according to tribal custom. Working through the Pashtun code of honor, Khan eventually surrendered unconditionally and the writ of the state was restored. The general who had argued for using force was delighted.

We were able to get Khan without firing a single shot by

relying on the three pillars of authority that have traditionally provided stability in Pashtun tribal society: elders, religious leaders and the central government.

Over the past few decades, these pillars have weakened. And in 2004, with the Pakistani army's unprecedented assault and American drones' targeting suspected supporters of al-Qaida in Waziristan, the pillars of authority began to crumble.

In the vacuum that followed, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or Pakistani Taliban, emerged. Its first targets were tribal authorities. Approximately 400 elders have been killed in Waziristan alone, a near-decapitation of traditional society.

Large segments of the tribal population were displaced to shantytowns surrounding large cities, bringing with them traditional tribal feuds and a desire for revenge against those they saw as responsible for their desperate situation.

As the pace of the violence in the tribal areas increased, the Pakistani Taliban sought to strike the central government. They kidnapped Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, stormed Army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, and assaulted a naval base in Karachi. In 2009, fighters attacked a military mosque, killing 36 people, including 17 children. Taking hold of children's hair and shooting them point-blank, they yelled "Now you know how it feels when other people are killed."

For the first time tribesmen resorted to suicide strikes -- in mosques, bazaars and offices in which women and children were often the victims -- something categorically rejected by both Islam and the Pashtun tribal code.

The tribesmen of Waziristan have for years seen the Pakistani government as colluding on drone strikes with the Americans, against whom their tribal kin are fighting across the border in Afghanistan. Therefore, they take revenge against the military and other government targets for those killed by drones.

Their suspicions of Pakistan complicity proved correct. Former President Pervez Musharraf admitted to CNN last month that his government had secretly given permission to the United States to operate drones inside Pakistan.

Drone strikes have made Waziristan's already turbulent conflict with the central government worse. Almost 3,500 people have been killed by drones in Waziristan, including many innocent civilians.

Those at the receiving end of the strikes see them as unjust, immoral and dishonorable -- killing innocent people who have never themselves harmed Americans while the drone operators sit safely halfway across the world, terrorizing and killing by remote control.

Obama should not assume that his pledge to scale back the drone war will have an appreciable impact on America's image or Pakistan's security unless the strikes stop and the old pillars of tribal authority can gradually be rebuilt.

Until then, American policy makers would do well to heed a Pashto proverb: "The Pashtun who took revenge after a hundred years said, I took it quickly."

The writer, the Islamic Studies chair at American University and the former Pakistani high commissioner to Britain, is the author of *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### No hide-and-seek, please

BNP chief Khaleda Zia claims that her son, Tarique Rahman, is not involved in any corruption. If so, then why is he in exile? He should step out from exile, face the charges brought against him, and prove them all wrong. This will ease the tension. We, the people, do not like to see this hide-and-seek from the political parties.

M Haque  
Dhaka

### DCC, local MP take note

I am a resident of Arambagh, which is adjacent to Fakirapul Bazar area. The other day I was on my way to office. Suddenly my rickshaw started bumping severely. I was about to fall as I was not prepared for this. I felt pity for the poor rickshaw-puller as the road was so worn-out and muddy for driving the rickshaw. I don't understand what the city corporation and the local MP of the area are doing. Do they not have any responsibility about this?

Kazi Salam  
Arambagh, Dhaka

### Suffering innocent Afghans

Poor Afghanistan has really suffered, and it's now suffering worse than ever. The poor, the women, children, and old folks suffer the most because they have so little already and are so needy, so often they don't survive. And the men go off to fight and often they don't make it either. War is horrible, so in a way, the U.S. is reaping what it sowed in Afghanistan -- war. The Afghans themselves are reaping what they've sowed in many ways. Now don't get me wrong -- there are many poor innocents in Afghanistan, and I'm not speaking of them. But the Afghans as a whole have been lawless, ruthless and bloodthirsty for centuries.

So both the U.S. and the Afghans are suffering for their sins, and the longer U.S. keeps up this war, the more they'll both suffer. Please pray for the innocent, the helpless and needy Afghans, that they can find peace and refuge from the war.

Ted Rudow III, MA  
Encina Ave  
Palo Alto, CA

### Sharp weapons sell openly

Recently I went to Baitul Mukarram to check out some camera gears. On my way back, I stopped at the roadside stalls where they sell lamps, calculators, diaries and other things. Suddenly I noticed that switchblades of various designs were being sold at a shop. I also noticed small knives there. I asked the shopkeeper how he got to sell these and whether he had a license or not. He replied that he didn't have a license and said there are people who buy the switchblades in dozens. According to him, some of his customers complained that these switchblades were so sharp that the victims fell just after the first stab. Where is the law and order maintenance authority? Whose duty is this to stop this?

Anonymous  
One e-mail

### Comments on news report, "No proposal," published on June 4, 2013

#### Monica, Atlanta, USA

Moudud Ahmed should know that any political violence and killings in the name of protest is a crime. Here, I like the home minister's decision. Bangladesh should work out its politics with values in a new way. They have to come out of dynastic third world politics towards open-minded politics of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Syed

There is a deadly old virus in Bangladesh named HEK (Hasina-Ershad-Khaleda). The virus is committed to destroy young leaders and democracy. It has no cure, no vaccine.

#### Anon

It has no cure? I disagree with this comment. How long will corruption last in our country? How powerful do the corrupt leaders think they are?

#### A reader

Walkout by BNP? It is not a matter of surprise or something new in our country. BNP has just maintained the tradition of the opposition party of Bangladesh.

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### "No lessons learned" (June 04, 2013)

#### Iftekhar Hassan

This is the problem in Bangladesh when dealing with the bureaucratic process.

#### Anonymous

Will the people here ever learn something from the past?

#### Ali

Those who learn have nothing to do. And those who can't learn possess the power.

#### Maya

What is the government doing? Are they waiting for another massive accident?