

Tricky Afghan

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The jinx though was broken, or so we thought, after the Tigers squeezed a Test win over Zimbabwe in Mirpur. From then on, it was all uphill.

And that's the reason why the first game against Afghanistan tomorrow is all the more important. Mathematically, the match may not be a decider, but in terms of Bangladesh's confidence levels, it could very well make or break their fate in the competition.

That eerie feeling, in a sense, reverberated during Bangladesh's practice session in Canberra yesterday. The players gave it their all in the three-hour gruelling session. They may be facing one of the relatively easier opponents in the pool, but they know very well that the match against Afghanistan is going to be a juncture that they would want to pass by very quickly.

As Mashrafe put it, "Everybody is looking forward to making a good start. There is no need to think about what happened in the practice matches."

The two teams have faced just once in the past, during the Asia Cup last year and Afghanistan provided the shock of the tournament, dispatching the hosts at their own backyard. Despite having met in just one ODI, there won't be much too much of a secret between these players.

A number of Afghanistan cricketers have played in Bangladesh's leagues and they will all know each others' strengths and weaknesses in detail. For the Afghans, tomorrow's match will be an opportunity to prove to the world as to how far they have come. For Bangladesh, on the other hand, it will, in all likelihood, be their only chance to revive themselves mentally after consecutive warm-up defeats.

Farm sector

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blockade, Muhith said they would do it by this month.

Protesting the loss inflicted on their businesses by the blockade, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) last week had held a programme, where it presented figures on the economic loss of various sectors.

With sectors including garment, agriculture and transport bearing the brunt of the turmoil, the economy has already counted around Tk 75,000 crore in losses since the BNP-led alliance launched the nonstop blockade on January 6, the FBCCI estimated.

According to the FBCCI statistics, the garment sector was hit hard by the blockade as it suffered a loss of 36 percent (of the total amount).

Muhith disagreed with the statistics given by the garment sector about its loss, and said, "I don't think the textile sector has suffered much ... That is my assessment."

However, the minister said the country's garment industry would face an image crisis if the blockade continued. The sector might see a fall in getting orders in future.

Criticising the initiative of a group of eminent citizens for ending the political impasse, Muhith said the civil society should have first told BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia to stop her destructive programmes, which they did not do.

He said the blockade cannot go on like this and it is mainly the responsibility of the BNP to normalise the situation.

"I don't want to say that the BNP is such a worthless party that they don't know what is good for the country and what is bad for them ... Sorry," the minister said.

Formalin control

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lakh fine for possessing equipment of formalin productions or allowing the use of house or land or machinery without licence.

For transporting formalin or possessing it without having licence, the bill says, the punishment would be two years' imprisonment or Tk three lakh fine or both.

The punishment for filing false cases or harassing anyone would be one year's imprisonment or Tk two lakh fine or both. If any convicted person gets involved in such crimes again, the punishment will double.

In the objective of the bill, it was stated that formalin is a life-threatening chemical and it is necessary to formulate a law to control its misuse.

Tofail placed the bill in the House on January 21. It was then sent to the respective parliamentary standing committee for further scrutiny. The committee submitted its report on February 2.

By formulating this law, formalin use and businesses will come under a framework and transparency and accountability of marketing this item will be ensured, the objective of the bill said.

"As a result people will be benefited," it added.

Ironical yet deplorable

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people, deprived of their livelihood, are suffering.

Dhaka is not an ideal place to feel the effect of hartal or blockade. The real impact is felt outside the capital where all economic activities come to a grinding halt when a hartal is called. The BNP leader should have thought how a CNG-run three-wheeler driver is doing with his family, whether a bus driver's family is going without food, and how hundreds of thousands of daily bread earners are faring.

Had the BNP's blockade been fully successful and had our brave truckers not risked their lives to supply food to Dhaka city, over 10 million Dhaka city dwellers would have been starving now. Children would have died for lack of baby food.

Not that we are not suffering now. Already prices have gone up for every commodity. Economy is on the verge of collapse and it will take a very long time for it to come back to the previous

2 children, 8 others hurt

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Witnesses said a group of miscreants hurled two crude bombs at a CNG-run auto-rickshaw near the local office of Bangladesh Betar in Mirer Maidan area around 1:00pm, leaving the two children and the auto-rickshaw driver injured.

They were rushed to Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Besides, miscreants set fire to a stationary microbus in front of Aarong in Noyasarak area in the city. ADC (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police Rahmat Ullah confirmed the incidents.

In Bogra, two truckers, a helper and a cattle trader were burnt as unidentified pickets torched their vehicles yesterday.

The victims were admitted to Ziaur Rahman Medical College.

Miscreants set alight a cattle-laden truck near Mokamtola area on Rangpur-Dhaka highway early yesterday. Cattle trader Abdul Kader, 64, of Comilla suffered 18 percent burns while driver Selim Hossain of Chittagong sustained head injuries in the incident.

Abdur Razzak, sub-inspector of Mokamtola Police Outpost, said the truck was going to Chittagong from Kurigram with police escort but it came under attack as it fell behind the convoy.

Abdul Kader said the attackers, who came in a private car, stopped the truck and set it alight in no time.

The second incident took place around 8:15pm when alleged pickets hurled a firebomb at a coal-laden truck on the Dhaka-Bogra highway in Bogra's Shajahanpur upazila.

Driver Abdul Kader suffered 10 percent burns while helper Liton Kazi suffered 20 percent in the incident, said Dr Shahidullah Dewan of the hospital.

The Manikganj-bound truck from Dinajpur came under attack when it reached Betgari area, said Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Shajahanpur Police Station.

Meanwhile, suspected blockaders torched a bus of Bablu Paribahan at Thanthania Bus Stand in the town around 6:00am. Following the incident, police arrested Jahangir Alam, a BNP activist and former ward commissioner of Bogra Sadar municipality.

In Chittagong, alleged pickets hurled a crude bomb and brick chips at a bus in the city's Kotwali area, leaving a passenger injured.

Nasir Uddin Chowdhury of Lohagara upazila suffered minor injuries in the head in the incident, said

Grameen Bank

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But Tahsina Khatun, one of the nine borrower-directors and also the spokesperson for the group, said they would attend board meetings as usual as their successors are yet to be elected.

"The borrower-shareholders are the real owners of the bank. A board where there is no representation of the borrowers can't be a board of Grameen Bank," she added.

The rules, however, do not state whether the nine elected directors, upon expiry of their tenure, would continue to hold their posts until the new committee is elected.

Until 2012, the Nobel Prize-winning organisation itself would hold the elections every three years to fill in the nine posts of borrower-directors. The election would be held at least two months before the expiry of the existing committee.

Then in November 2013, the government passed the Grameen Bank Act 2013, which gave the central bank the authority to hold the elections. Bangladesh Bank, however, refused to take the responsibility.

Subsequently, the government last year amended the rules to give itself the authority to form a three-member commission that would oversee the elections. A retired district judge will serve as the chief election commissioner.

The commission is yet to be formed, due to which this year's scheduled election could not be held.

But Muhith yesterday stated that the election commission has been formed.

level if things become normal even from today.

Meantime, to make its political ambition come true and its blockade successful, the BNP has been doing everything remorselessly, including throwing petrol bombs on trucks carrying daily essentials and burning people. It seems they are hell-bent on making the blockade a success and thus make the people starve.

We recall here one single heart-wrenching story of a man named Tara Mia who wanted to escape certain starvation as jobs fizzled out because of blockade and hartal. He took his family on a bus to travel to Dhaka. On the way, the bus was bombed and the whole family burned. His wife and a 12-year-old son died.

This has become a routine thing for BNP's blockade and this is exactly why Selima Rahman's statement about Khaleda going short on food sounds so cruel and crude.

Pankaj Barua, assistant sub-inspector of Chittagong Medical College Hospital police camp.

Meanwhile, an empty bus was set on fire in Chandgaon of the city yesterday, police said.

In Noakhali, a group of masked men looted and torched the house of Wahab Uddin, organising secretary of Kalorab union unit of BNP, yesterday.

Locals said the group stormed the house at Kalorab village around 12:30am and looted valuables from two rooms before burning them down.

Wahab held local Awami League men responsible for the incident.

In a separate incident, police detained Noakhali Puora unit BNP president Mizanur Rahman and three BNP activists for allegedly planning subversive activities.

A bus was gutted when miscreants threw a firebomb at the vehicle in Tangail's Ghatail upazila around 8:30pm.

Two passengers were injured while coming out of the bus, said Mokhesur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ghatail Police Station.

Meanwhile, police arrested eight Jamaat-Shibir men, two Hizb ut-Tahrir activists and 17 BNP men from different areas in Dhaka in the last 24 hours. Law enforcers also detained 15 people from Bagerhat, four Shibir men from Chittagong, and five from Mymensingh.

Our correspondents from the districts concerned contributed to the report.

Candy king

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It was Ferrero's father, a small-time pastry maker named Pietro Ferrero, who laid the groundwork for the Nutella recipe.

He famously added hazelnut to the mix to save money on cocoa, which was in short supply after World War II.

But it was Michele Ferrero who turned the paste into the Nutella now known the world over.

The first pot of the addictive mix -- whose name is a combination of the English word "nut" and "ella", the Latin suffix for sweet -- was made in Alba in northwestern Italy in April 1964.

Ferrero now produces around 365,000 tonnes of Nutella every year in 11 factories around the world. The biggest market is Germany, followed by France and Italy.

The Ferrero group also makes Ferrero Rocher, Mon Cheri and Kinder chocolates and employs more than 22,000 people across the world.

"I don't know. I think it has been done. Dates have been announced for the elections. Hasn't it?"

He was promptly corrected by the reporters, who pointed out that the government is yet to find the retired district judge who would head the commission.

"Oh, the people have not been appointed yet? In that case, how will the election be held? I suppose the issue then has been stuck at finding the men."

ASM Mohiuddin, acting managing director of Grameen Bank, said once the election commission is formed, it would have to organise elections within a year under the new law.

"In my opinion, the current committee has to hand over power to a new committee. But we have not got the new committee yet."

Meanwhile, Khondaker Muzammel Huq, chairman of Grameen Bank, has been unwillingly leading the microcredit organisation for a year and a half now.

He had handed in his resignation in August 2013 owing to illness, but his resignation was not accepted. "All the people that I offered the post to turned it down," said the finance minister.

As for the other two government-appointed directors, Suraiya Begum, secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division, has been told to continue to work until further notice, while Shah Alam Sarwar, managing director of IFIC Bank Ltd, has been given an extension of two years.

"This is a really horrible situation at Grameen Bank, thanks to Prof Muhammad Yunus," Muhith added.

Adulthood begins

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part of the brain known as the striatum, which is stimulated by "rewards" and this continues until the mid-twenties.

It is thought that the typical "adult responsibilities" of holding down a stable job, paying a mortgage and raising a family halt the effects on the brain.

Prof Luna said that the age people crossed the threshold of adulthood was "probably closer to 25".

In teenagers the sensation-seeking part of the brain works together with the "planning centre", or pre-frontal cortex, to drive curiosity and experimentation.

"Sensation seeking, which is really information seeking, novelty seeking, is evident across species and human societies," Prof Luna said at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in San Jose, California.

"I'm saying this is combining with a brand new shiny car called the pre-frontal cortex. The adolescent is, like, 'Oh, this is great, I can plan', but they're doing it in the service of this heightened sensitivity to motivation," she added.

The system allows young people to seek out novel situations and not always ask "mummy and daddy".

Prof Luna is still conducting research to discover how far into adulthood the brain changes continue, but it is possible they may extend into a person's thirties.

"There are two ways to look at it. I'm a very positive person, I'd like to think the longer you have to specialise the better," Prof Luna said.

"Having the freedom to play a bit longer in life might be a good thing," she added.

Atish Dipankar era

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expressed hope that these finds would reveal many hitherto unrevealed sides of the saint's life as well as shedding light on the advent and decline of Buddhism in this region.

"This area could turn out to be a pilgrimage centre of Buddhism," said Nuh Alam Lenin, director of the excavation project.

"Touching the soils and walls here, my hands have felt Atish Dipankar's birthplace that had remained in his memories till his last days in Tibet. Here I can feel the religious reformation in Buddhism that had taken place from the tenth to the 12th century," said Professor Chai Hunabo, head of the archaeologist team from China.

Does Kejriwals plan resemble Modi's office?

NDTV ONLINE

Ahead of his first working day as Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal tweeted yesterday that he is feeling better after fighting a fever for a few days which included his huge oath-taking ceremony on Saturday at a public park in Delhi.

Kejriwal, 46, leads a cabinet of six ministers and has decided not to manage any ministry directly, appointing deputy Manish Sisodia to handle as many as six portfolios including Finance.

Sources say that Kejriwal plans to assimilate experts in different areas in his office, which will function as the nerve-centre of his government. That plan resembles the structure created by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his office.

Delhi, Colombo sign

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opens new avenues for cooperation, including in areas like agriculture and healthcare."

Sirisenara arrived here Sunday on his first foreign trip since assuming charge of the country after voting out Mahinda Rajapaksa from his 10-year rule in a bitterly contested presidential poll.

The pact would facilitate cooperation in transfer and exchange of knowledge and expertise, sharing the resources, capacity building and training of personnel in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including use of radioisotopes, nuclear safety, radiation safety and nuclear security.

It would also facilitate cooperation in radioactive waste management, nuclear and radiological disaster mitigation and environmental protection.

The Indian PM said he and the Sri Lankan leader also agreed to expand

Mamata due Thursday

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The Teesta pact between India and Bangladesh could not be inked then. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been giving much priority to Dhaka. Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj has already been here.

Modi during his maiden meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at New York Palace hotel said he was very much serious about resolving the pending issues like the Teesta water sharing treaty and the land boundary agreement with Bangladesh.

Trinamool Congress lawmakers Dev and Moon Moon Sen along with former party MP and famed singer Kabir Suman will accompany Mamata during her visit, The Times of India reported on Monday.

Singers Nachiketa and Indranil Sen, filmmaker Gautam Ghosh, poet Subodh Sarkar, and actor Arindam Sil will also be part of the chief minister's entourage.

According to officials in Dhaka, Mamata will meet Hasina and either Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali or State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam and will discuss the Teesta issue.

She will be the chief guest at the Bhasha Shahid Divas programme on February 21, which has been recognised by UNESCO as the International Mother Language Day.

She will be visiting Nazrul Institute

PM admits

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president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), as the mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation. And the candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation would be selected soon.

Earlier, at a cabinet meeting on December 8 last year, the PM announced that the elections would take place in early 2015. At that meeting, she rejected a proposal from the local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry for extending the tenure of the administrators to one year from six months.

The ministry placed the proposal saying the move will improve the city services. Interestingly, the government cited the same reason when it divided the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ignoring criticism.

The last time Dhaka saw a mayoral election was in 2002 with BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka winning the mayoral post of an undivided DCC. Though Khoka's tenure ended in May

the defence and security cooperation.

"We welcomed the progress in our maritime security cooperation, including in the trilateral format with the Maldives," he said.

Modi also said he believed that destinies of both the countries were "inter-linked" and that "our security and prosperity are indivisible".

The Sri Lankan president expressed happiness over the outcome of the talks and said the friendship between the two countries was not only important to each other but was significant for the region as well.

"I really appreciate Prime Minister Modi's efforts (to improve ties). Relations between the two countries will be strengthened further," he said.

Modi also thanked Sirisenara for inviting him to visit Sri Lanka and said he was "eagerly looking forward to visiting the country in March".

ISIS beheads

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Before the killings, one of the militants stood with a knife in his hand and said: "Safety for you crusaders is something you can only wish for." Afterwards, he says: "And we will conquer Rome, by the will of Allah."

The head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis, condemned the killings. "They were killed simply for the fact that they were Christians," he said at the Vatican. "It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians!"

Egypt's Coptic Christian pope was one of the public figures who backed Sisi when he, as army chief, ousted Islamist president Mohamed Mursi in 2013 after mass protests against him.

The beheadings could pile pressure on Sisi to show he is in control of Egypt's security, even though he has already made progress against Islamist militant insurgents in the Sinai.

2007, he continued in office until the corporation was split.

Announcing the name of Annisul Haque yesterday, the PM said Mahmudur Rahman Manna, under the banner of civil society, might take part in Dhaka north mayoral race. Against Manna, Annisul Huq is the best choice.

According to insiders, the AL was looking for nonpartisan personalities with good images and over the last few months, party leaders maintained contacts with Annisul Huq.

Sources said the PM rejected some ministers' demand for Chittagong City Corporation polls prior to Dhaka's.

A few of her cabinet members also proposed the names of late mayor Mohammad Hanif's son Sayeed Khokon as the candidate for Dhaka south polls and AL leader Rahmatullah for Dhaka north, sources said.

Asked about the PM's announcement, Annisul said he learned about it from the media. "Please wait and see," he told The Daily Star.



REQUEST FOR INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS

The **Business Finance Challenge Fund (BFCF)** of the Business Finance for the Poor in Bangladesh (BFP-B) Project is a transparent funding mechanism enabling financial sector players to develop innovative business ideas that will increase financing for micro- and small enterprises (MSEs) in Bangladesh. The BFP-B is funded by the UK aid from the UK government and implemented by Bangladesh Bank. The BFP-B is managed by Nathan Associates (London). The BFCF is designed to be a responsive, user-friendly mechanism that meets the needs of the financial sector. The total grant funding available for projects is £7.0 million (about BDT 84 crore).

The two-fold objectives of the BFCF are to:

- * Increase the supply of market-based, appropriate business services for MSEs.
- * Increase products, delivery channels, platforms, and business models for Banks, NBFIs and MFIs to provide MSE financing.

The BFCF now invites applications in the form of "Concept Notes" for its Round One bids for risk-sharing, cost-sharing grants, from Business Development Service (BDS) providers, private commercial Banks, NBFIs MFIs, other financial intermediaries and institutions, and private sector for-profit entities operating in Bangladesh; for grants to part-fund projects in the following priority areas:

- * Expand and innovate financial institutions' product range for MSE financing;
- * Innovate new business models and channels to increase outreach for MSEs;
- * Develop segment-specific strategies for financial institutions' MSE products and services; Develop new delivery channels and platforms for financial services; and
- * Develop/replicate other new concepts for increasing formal sector financial access for MSEs.

Concept Notes should be received by 17:00 hours Dhaka time, Monday, 23rd March 2015, by e-mail to (achowdhury@nathaninc.com) or (fislam@nathaninc.com) or to The **BFCF Managers**, BFP-B Project office, Level 5, House 13, Road 34, Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212.

Concept Note Form with explanatory notes and Concept Note Guidelines are available on BFP-B website www.bfp-b.org Potential Applicants are advised to contact the **BFCF Managers** to discuss their ideas before submitting their concept notes by e-mail or mobile: +880-1711268178 / 01733955390.