

Death toll rises to 53 in India cold snap

AFP, Lucknow, India

The death toll from a cold snap sweeping northern India rose to 53 Wednesday with three more homeless people reported to have succumbed to the chill.

Two men died overnight in Uttar Pradesh, taking the cold-related toll in the northern state to 44 since early December, the Press Trust of India quoted government officials as saying.

A homeless worker died Wednesday in Punjab, which took to seven the death toll in the state bordering Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and one of its poorest.

Two other people have died in neighbouring Haryana state.

Lakes, springs and rivers, meanwhile, froze in Himachal Pradesh

Speculation intensifies over Blair's departure

REUTERS, London

Facing a charismatic new opponent, doubters in his party and a clock he set ticking on his own premiership, politicians and analysts say Tony Blair's departure date will dominate British politics next year.

At his year-end news conference on Wednesday, the prime minister did not discuss when he will stand down and pledged defiantly to press on with policies many in his party oppose.

"I've never felt more confident about the fact we are doing the right things for the long-term future of the country," he said. "I'm battling on all fronts but I'm enjoying battling."

Blair has declared he will not fight a fourth election, expected in 2009, but intends to serve a full third term.

His allies insist he will remain until 2008 at least. Others in the ruling Labour party say he may be gone within a year.

One thing is certain -- new Conservative leader David Cameron has spiced up British politics and revived his party which has languished in opposition for over eight years.

An ICM opinion poll this week showed two-thirds of British voters think Blair's government has run out of steam, putting the Conservatives a point ahead of Labour on 37 percent - only the second time since 1993 they have led in an ICM survey.

European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, a close Blair ally, said Labour faced a challenge from a leader far more appealing than his predecessors. "We are living in interesting political times," he told BBC Radio.

Cameron, at 39, is 15 years younger than Blair's likely successor, finance minister Gordon Brown.

He has won plaudits for a natural, media-friendly style.

"Cameron changes the Conservative brand," said Philip Cowley, political analyst at Nottingham University. "Until now, nobody was prepared to listen them. Now they will and will take them seriously."

If Cameron stays ahead in the polls for several months, Blair loses key votes in parliament and Labour fares badly in next May's local council elections nationwide, the prime minister's position could become increasingly shaky.

Cowley said mid-term election blues were to be expected of every government. Since 1997 Labour has never suffered them but will do so this time.

"That's not going to force Blair out but the majority of Labour MPs have never been behind like this before. There could be some panic," he told Reuters.

The past year has produced signs of Blair's weakening authority since he put a time limit on his premiership.

His campaign for a third election win leant heavily on Brown's iconic record as the legacy of Iraq continued to weigh on the prime minister.

Blair suffered his first major parliamentary defeat over terrorism laws

Pro-AL Blue Panel

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and five executive member posts.

Prof Sharifullah Bhuiyan of history department was elected the president defeating his rival Prof Sadrul Amin, dean of Arts Faculty and chairman of English department. Prof Bhuiyan bagged 556 votes and Prof Amin 528 votes.

Securing 558 votes, Prof Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman was elected the general secretary for the third consecutive time. His rival Prof Zahidul Islam, provost of Zahurul Huq Hall and chairman of anthropology department, bagged 516 votes.

Prof Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury won the post of the treasurer with 559 votes, defeating his rival Prof ABM Shahidul Islam who got 498 votes.

Prof Tazmeri SA Islam (556) and Dr Mamun Ahmed of White Panel were elected vice president and joint secretary. They defeated Md Hossain Monsur (514) and Dr Emran Kabir Chowdhury (487).

The newly elected executive members from the Blue Panel are Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique (587), Prof RIM Aminur Rashid (597), Prof

state as the mercury plummeted to minus 20 degrees Celsius (minus four degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of the mountainous region Tuesday night, the weather office said.

Several northern states have closed schools and colleges while hospitals have geared up services to treat homeless people suffering from hypothermia.

Tens of thousands of people shivered in sub-zero cold in Indian-administered Kashmir where a 7.6-strength quake in October damaged or razed some 100,000 homes.

The winter takes a heavy toll each year around South Asia as poverty forces many homeless people to sleep under the stars or in flimsy shacks.

Last year, some 400 people died from cold in Uttar Pradesh alone.

'Sweet tooth' may be in human brain Say US researchers

AP, ANN ARBOUR, Michigan

Researchers at the University of Michigan have found a "pleasure spot" in the brains of rats that may shed light on how food translates into pleasure for humans.

The spot in rats' brains makes sweet tastes more "liked" than other tastes, biopsychology researchers Susana Pecina and Kent Berridge found.

The pair detailed their findings in the December 14 issue of the Journal of Neuroscience.

Sweetness by itself is merely a sensation, they note. Its pleasure arises within the brain, where neural systems actively paint pleasure onto the sensation to generate a "liking" reaction.

The study pinpointed a pleasure spot within a larger part of the brain responsible for appetite in the nucleus accumbens, the lower front of the brain.

"There's a liking cube tucked within a larger wanting cube," Berridge said in a telephone interview.

Previously, scientists knew the general part of the brain that was responsible for pleasure and appetite. But they did not know whether those functions were separable, Berridge said.

"In our experience, they're intertwined and inseparable," Berridge said. "In our brain, they are separable."

Pecina and Berridge made microinjections into rats' brains of drugs that stimulated receptors for opioids or heroin-like substances, causing nearby neurons to activate particular genes that began producing proteins.

The microinjections caused rats to eat more food soon afterward. Using a new mapping technique, the researchers pinpointed where in the brain the microinjections activated increased liking reactions. The pleasure spot was much smaller than the larger appetite-increasing zone.

Berridge said the study could ultimately have applications for treating eating disorders.

The researchers used sweet things in their study, but Berridge noted the reaction would be the same with any liked food.

PM's speech

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who have been patronising militants and creating anarchy.

Eminent lawyer and Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain said, "This is not the opposition, rather some people in the ruling BNP and its partner, who are accused of patronising militants and this allegation has been made by the BNP men themselves."

Dr Kamal told The Daily Star, "The prime minister's first job is to investigate the allegations against those in her government. If the allegations are found true, she should go for action against them."

On the PM's refusal of the opposition demands regarding reforms in the caretaker government and the EC, Kamal referred to a previous statement of LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urging the opposition to sit in a dialogue inside or outside the parliament on the issue.

"If the prime minister outright rejects the opposition demand, I think she should arrange a dialogue with the LGRD and cooperative minister urgently to fix a common statement," he said.

"We are not afraid of threats of sedition case as all autocratic rulers during the Pakistan regime--from the 1952 Language Movement to the 1969 Mass Uprising--labelled people's struggle as sedition acts," AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"Rather, Khaleda Zia is afraid of the people's unity...people do not want to see the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition in power anymore," Tofail said.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said, "We faced enough sedition cases during the Pakistan regime...I took part in the Liberation War with a punishment of seven years' imprisonment in a sedition case filed during the Ayub Khan regime.

"Those who had filed sedition charges to stop struggle of the people had to flee themselves," he said. The government has not filed any sedition case against the arrested militants "as the militants are created and directed by [Khaleda Zia's] government," he added.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu said the PM's remarks and threat to implicate the opposition in sedition charges prove that she herself is behind the rise and protection of militancy in the country.

New anti-militant

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different and information on the operation will only be given to the law enforcers on 'need to know' basis limiting the chances of information leak.

The operation is being launched on the directives of the home ministry and it will continue till its goal is achieved, he said adding, the success of the operation depends on the availability of necessary manpower and logistical supports.

Sources from the Khulna DIG office said Khulna, Satkhira, Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Chuadanga and Meherpur are the key districts this operation will concentrate on.

PM warns against

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supporters thronged the meeting venue in small processions carrying the portraits of party founder late president Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman as well as the national and party flags.

Slogans like "Resist militants and save democracy", "Khaleda Zia, you move on, we are behind you", "People are the source of power and BNP is the torch-bearer of development" were painted on the chest and back of some activists.

They were also carrying sheaves of paddy, BNP's election symbol, and holding banners, placards and festsoms. Many of the processions also included musical bands.

MILITANT ISSUE

Referring to the ongoing bomb attacks, the prime minister urged people to help arrest the extremists. "It is not possible to install CCTV (closed-circuit television) everywhere in the country, people are our CCTV."

Urging the people to remain alert about the militants she said the people must inform the police whenever they come across any militants.

"Don't give them shelter... One can't become martyr and cannot go to heaven by killing people. They are enemies of the nation, country, democracy and Islam...they are terrorists, they want to destroy the country," she said.

Khaleda said the militants have no faith in Islamic values and they want to disturb peace and discipline in the country. "The government will not spare anyone of them."

She thanked the Alems (Islamic scholars) for their role in combating the militants. She also appreciated the police, Rapid Action Battalion, BDR, Ansar and intelligence agencies' performance in the battle against the extremists.

She said those who are carrying out bombings using the name of Islam have actually taken side against Islam. "They are giving false interpretation of Islam and misguiding people. It's a sin," she said.

The prime minister also requested all political parties, social institutions and cultural organisations to become more active on the militancy issue.

ON NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Those who are conspiring and not joining in the national dialogue do not want democratic practices to take a firm root, the prime minister said.

"Everybody else is united today except for them. Pirs, ulema, and people irrespective of their religion and origins are united with the government to maintain democratic practices, development process, peace and to root out terrorism. We have already made much progress and hope to be successful," she said.

"Everybody has taken part in the national dialogue, political parties, professionals' bodies, business leaders, except the main opposition. They even did not receive the invitation of the government, what kind of party it is!"

OPPOSITION BLASTED

Criticising the oppositions, the premier said they are hatching conspiracy against the country as they do not do politics for the people.

They did not do any development work, destroyed the economics and could not ensure public security.

"People will never again vote for them no matter how big a coalition they form. The result will be zero. People have no faith in them," she said.

On the oppositions' ultimatum, she said it will not be able to force the government to step down.

"I have heard they have issued another ultimatum. We will remain in power until our tenure and meet you again here."

The oppositions have gone mad seeing BNP's development programmes, they now want to split

the coalition at any cost, she said.

Without mentioning any name, the prime minister said those who want to see Bangladesh remain dependent on others are conspirators. "We have faith in Allah. People are the source of our power."

OTHER LEADERS

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said as long as Sheikh Hasina remains the opposition leader democracy cannot be established in the country.

Over the last four years the country's economy has grown much stronger and foreign investment is increasing, he claimed.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said it does not matter if a particular party does not take part in the national dialogue; the government taking the people along with it will root out the militants.

"And you will be identified as the accomplices of the militants," he told the opposition.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain claimed that BNP alone has been able to hold a rally with ten times more people than that of the 14-party opposition combine's rally at Paltan Maidan.

Environment and Forest Minister Tarikul Islam said when AL was in power they had patronised the bombers. No bombers were brought to justice during their rule. "It is Khaleda Zia who has declared a war against the militants."

The rally was also addressed, among others, by BNP's senior leaders Moudud Ahmed, KM Obidur Rahman, Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Ashraf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Selima Rahman, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Harris Chowdhury, Amanullah Aman, Barkatullah Bulu and Abdus Salam.

Senior ministers, state and deputy ministers, lawmaker, BNP standing committee members M Shamsul Islam, MK Anwar, Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, central leaders Mafiqul Hasan Tripti, Emran Saleh Prince were also present.

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Festive look

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city as well as from remote districts came to join the rally by buses, minibuses, trains and launches and other vehicles.

The law enforcers stopped plying of motorised vehicles at around two kilometres from the venue and erected barbwire barricades at the entry points and checked people who were heading towards the ground.

As the buses were stopped at Shahbag in the west, Sayedabad in the east and Shantiniagar in the north and the Judge Court area in the south, people had to walk a long way to reach the rally venue.

"I came from Comilla and arrived at Sayedabad bus terminal in the noon. I had to walk all the way to Paltan ground as no buses or minibuses plied," said Abul Qasheem.

Many people, however, started going back much before the speech of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia that ended at 5:15pm. A large number of people were seen leaving the venue even during the PM's speech.

Security forces installed closed circuit cameras on several points and groups of Rapid Action Battalion patrolled the surrounding areas on motorcycles. A large number of police were deployed on the ground, at the entry points, and on top of buildings around.

Through the microphones at the rally venue, songs and speeches were publicised from the morning that disturbed work at the nearby secretariat. The ministers came out of the secretariat in the noon and walked to the Paltan ground.

The entire city faced tremendous traffic jam yesterday as the vehicles were diverted from near the venue from the morning.

Importers' conflict

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over the crisis, the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture meets this morning mainly to address this issue.

Unless the crisis is resolved immediately, it would badly affect boro, potato and other winter crop production this season.

The indefinite fertiliser supply stoppage came at a time when farmers use 80 percent of their yearly fertiliser requirement for growing boro, potato and other winter crops.

The government introduced 25 percent subsidy on imported fertilisers including TSP, MoP, and DAP in the last fiscal year. Under the new arrangement, fertiliser importers started selling their imported stock with a 25 percent rebate.

The importers received Tk 171 crore of the allocated Tk 271 crore rebate. The rest remains unpaid since last June.

Approval of an amount of Tk 60 crore is pending with the finance ministry for months while the agriculture ministry is scrutinising the bills for another Tk 20 crore and the deputy commissioners are yet to approve the remaining Tk 20 crore.

Refuting allegations of importing fertiliser meant for subsidised sale at inflated price, BFA Chairman

Kofluddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that several layers of cross-check mechanisms are there in the government's fertiliser subsidy policy. "Had we over-invoiced, the agriculture ministry would not have approved the bills and forwarded the same to the finance."

Slain journo's

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family including her only son Iqbal chowdhury Shagar and two daughters Lalla Jaharun and Shailatuz Jaharun with the regular financial assistance that she receives from the leader of the opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina and from the management of the Dainik Purbanchal.

"I have a lot of sorrows and allegations to talk about. But I cannot speak without fear about how the police have done injustice in dealing with the murder case under political influences and also for monetary gain. Because, the killers of my husband and their masterminds threatened to kill me and my son time and again if I don't stop talking about the case", Minu said in a choked voice.

CPD on WTO

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More importantly, Bangladesh's inability to "activate its political connections and mobilise political clout to withstand these pressures" was another factor that went against the country's trade interests.

Debapriya said the US has always maintained a protective policy in textiles. In Hong Kong talks the US used Pakistan effectively to counter Bangladesh's demand for free market access for its apparels.

The CPD said Bangladesh's initiative to set up a separate negotiation group, namely the G14 + 1, was done on a very ad hoc basis and at a late stage of the negotiations, on the fourth day of the six-day conference. Besides, it observed, "There was no analytical and conceptual background paper explaining the rationale, articulating the objective and setting the concrete goals. The initiative diverted scarce negotiating capacity at critical juncture of negotiations."

The CPD brief stressed taking preparation from right now to make best use of whatever advantages and benefits are given under the Hong Kong Declaration, especially in the areas of agriculture, cotton, food aid, non-agriculture market access, services, fisheries and the Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS). Apart from technical preparations, what is necessary for doing that, the CPD said, is political steadfastness, familiarity with the WTO process, effective political outreach and the nerve to withstand pressure.

The CPD also emphasised export diversification to reduce dependence on textiles, scraping of tariff concessions and improving market competitiveness for promoting export.

Rejoinder

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OUR REPLY

It was inadvertently mentioned in the report that Niko was "negotiating" with Lafarge for the gas sales, as it is still a one-sided proposition from Niko. We regret the error. Niko made this proposal to Lafarge several months ago, but there had been no negotiation.

Road crashes

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Abdur Rashid, 42, of Ranirbandar village of Dinajpur and Abdul Momin, 28, of Munshichar Diptara village of Narsingdi died on the spot while another person aged about 60 died on the way to hospital.

Of the injured, 20 were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital, while the rest were taken to local clinics in the town.

Five cows were also killed in the accident.

In another accident, Abul Hossain, 35, of Dobila village of the district was run over by an autorickshaw tempo at Mannan Nagar of Tarash upazila in the district.

The police recovered the dead bodies and sent to the general hospital morgue for autopsy.

Our Chittagong Correspondent reports: Two persons were killed and three others were injured in a road accident in the city yesterday.

The police said the accident took place as a city service bus knocked and ran over an autorickshaw tempo on the Bayezid Bostami Road in front of the Baby Super Market under Khulshi Police Station at around 7:50am.

Two tempo passengers--Abdur Rahim, 35, of Patiya of Chittagong, and Abdus Samad, 55, of Rangpur, died on the spot.

Three critically injured passengers were admitted to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital.

Angry people held bus driver Rakan Uddin and handed him over to the police.

Trees fall

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worker told The Daily Star at 2:00am yesterday.

"We have been asked to work only after midnight," added the worker, who along with his fellows was sawing trees near the naval office on airport road.

The DUTP director said, "We will also carry out some beautification work of and by the road. We will knock down some old walls and reconstruct them after extending the road."

"We will decorate the roadside walls with pieces of art. Besides, we'll build footpaths where space is available. It is a huge and very good project."

He assured that they would plant trees again by the extended road.

Regarding bio-diversity expert Prof Anwarul Islam said there is no alternative to road extension, but the authorities should have thought about its impact on the environment.

"They had earlier felled trees to widen the same road without thinking much about the future. Had they thought of today's scenario, they would not have to cut down trees again."

"The authorities should compensate the removal of trees by fresh plantation."

DUTP sources said the project will widen the airport road by 3.5 meters on both sides.

Twelve government and autonomous bodies including Biman, army, nave, tourism, civil aviation, Desa, Wasa, T&T, Roads and Highway Department have allocated roadside land for the project.

Admission trade

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from the BNP high command, said his family members and the college unit leaders of JCD. He then started lobbying for the candidacy for the post of general secretary of the next Titumir College Committee of JCD.

Terming the murder as pre-planned, the family members said Saidur had many opponents, as he was an upcoming leader, a fact many of the BNP leaders could not tolerate for his strong stand against sharing the admission quota with them. He was a student of BA second year. He also got his Higher Secondary Certificate from the same college.

Saidur had been put in jail in connection with a pending fabricated murder case before the admissions in February this year and was released after the admission process was over, his family claimed. Later they learned from the police sources that an influential BNP leader in the cabinet had put Saidur in jail to stop him from creating difficulties for the BNP leaders in including their own people in the list of admission quota.

Dhaka should seek

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the parliamentary human rights group, expressed grave concern about the religious extremist organisation Khatme Nabuwat for threatening violence against the Ahmadiyyas, and also for calling upon the government to ban the minority sect, a press release of the House of Lords said.

The recent developments and the bomb attacks against the judiciary and Udichi by self-claimed extremists Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) shows the danger that Bangladesh could be sliding towards anarchy, and the extremists would exploit any opportunity to turn the country into a Taliban-like state, Avebury said at a meeting of the IBF in East London on December 20.

The government of Bangladesh should consider seeking help from the UK, he said. The UN's Counter Terrorism Committee should inform the Security Council of specific additional steps that Bangladesh could take to implement the measures according to the council's resolutions, he added.

The government should also address the causes of the problems and identify and prosecute the terrorist masterminds, instead of blaming others, Avebury said.

He also urged the opposition and civil society to play a constructive role in overcoming the volatile situation.

The IBF meeting was also addressed by Abbas Faiz of

Meanwhile, sources in Titumir College said the JCD committee charges Tk 20,000 to Tk 30,000 from each student for admitting them to the college illegally. The BNP leaders who force the committee to include their own people or relatives in the quota also charge exorbitant amounts of money from each of them, the sources said.

"This special admissions quota for students is a source of a good amount of money for both the JCD committee leaders and BNP leaders which is the reason behind the conflict between Saidur and some of the BNP leaders," a source said.

The college began selling its honours course admission forms in the beginning of this week. Saidur Rahman in a recent meeting of the JCD committee strongly protested against the pressure from the BNP leaders or any others and said such interventions would not be tolerated. Other members of the committee also supported him, sources said.

Dhaka should seek

Amnesty International, Sultan Shariff, Nora Shariff and Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury of Jatiya Samanayya Committee, freedom fighter Luqman Hussain, MA Hadi and Feroz Alam of Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, Sujit Sen of Bangladesh Hindu- Buddhist-Christian Unity Council and Ansar Ahmed Ullah of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee.

The speakers vowed to do everything to protect human rights and democracy in Bangladesh and said the continued threats to the stability of Bangladesh have to be stopped to safeguard the country's secular political process and democratic institutions.

14-party

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Badsha said Motor Sramik Union leaders complained of police requisition of some 150 vehicles that the 14-party leaders had already hired for the rally-goers.

As part of beefed up security measures in the city, Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) has already imposed restriction on all vehicular movement inside the city.

AL and its left allies spent a hectic day taking some last-minute preparations yesterday while their senior leaders from Dhaka were busy working for several days as the organisers are expecting a large number of people at the rally.

Cabinet may approve

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current scenario of energy sector in Bangladesh arranged by Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI).

Rahman, also the chairman of Board of Investment (BOI), however said the energy ministry did not want to explore all the reserves simultaneously as it might expose the country to pressures of foreign explorers or IOCs for exporting gas.

He also said unlike the onshore exploration, the deep-sea exploration would require some extra studies and exercises under a separate set of policies, which was now being finalised. British company Cairn Energy is currently the lone offshore explorer in the country under a previous bidding.

Dispelling growing speculations about the dwindling energy resources from traditional fossil fuels, the energy adviser said he believed Bangladesh did not need to worry about energy security for several decades. The country has a total reserve of 100 tcf (trillion cubic feet) gas equivalent reserves, of which 30 tcf come from gas and the rest from coal, he added.

Former chairman of Power

Development Board (PDB) Nuruddin M Kamal, however, disagreed with the adviser saying that the coals would add as high as 10 tcf to the total reserve, which he said was suggested by contemporary studies.

Mahmudur Rahman also said like India and China, Bangladesh should use coal instead of gas for producing power and keep the precious resource for more important uses.

Joining the discussion Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hassanul Haque Inu echoed with several other speakers saying the foreign firms were being benefitted in the exploration process at the cost of the local ones, including the state-run Petrobangla and Bapex.

Former foreign secretary and BOI chairman Farooq Sobhan said if efficiently handled under a pro-Bangladesh and investment friendly policy, the energy sector could lead the country to prosperity doubling the export, especially in the light of free trade arrangements like Safta.

BCI President AK Azad chaired the function, which was addressed by members of the chamber.

JMB 'linked' lawyer

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the goods "until the situation of the country returns to normal."

The police said the recovered bombs are powerful and similar to those found at different dens of the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

Suspecting Enayetullah a top leader of the outfit's Barisal region, the police raided his house in Hizla but could not arrest him.

Hemayet has claimed to be innocent.

LAWYER DETAINED IN CTG

The lawyers detained and handed Abdul Halim Fakir, 35, an advocate from the Dhaka Judge's Court, over to Kotwali police yesterday, reports our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong.

Following information squeezed out of Fakir, the police arrested the uncle of the JMB cadre at a residential hotel in Lalldigharipar.

Court sources said Fakir came to the Chittagong Court Building yesterday noon and moved the bail petition for JMB activist Syed Farhad Nasim alias Bappi at the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Monwarul Islam at 3:00pm.

As the lawyers of the court challenged Fakir, he failed to show valid documents for moving the petition. The angry lawyers rebuked and handed him over to police.

The police in the afternoon

arrested Abdur Rouf, 45, Bappi's, at Hotel Sugandha, but could not net two other relatives who were present there, sources said.

Fakir has been handed over to Detective Branch (DB) of police for interrogation.

The DB of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) arrested Bappi along with four more JMB activists at Pallabi in Mirpur in the capital on December 11.

Jahiruddin Jeetu, Bappi's brother and Dhaka district JMB commander, is one of the 21 JMB men who were arrested after a gunfight with police in Joypurhat on August 14, 2003, police said.

Kidnapped

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him to pay Tk 5 lakh as ransom, failing which he would be killed.

The vehicle reached near Moglabazar and they got down from the car at a lonely place in a haor area in the evening.

As panicked Shayesta through mobile phone asked his relative at the city's Pathantola for payment of Tk 50,000 and 5 tolas of ornament, a group went to the house and took the money and ornament.

Then the gang allowed him to go back to the city by an auto-rickshaw at about 9:00pm.