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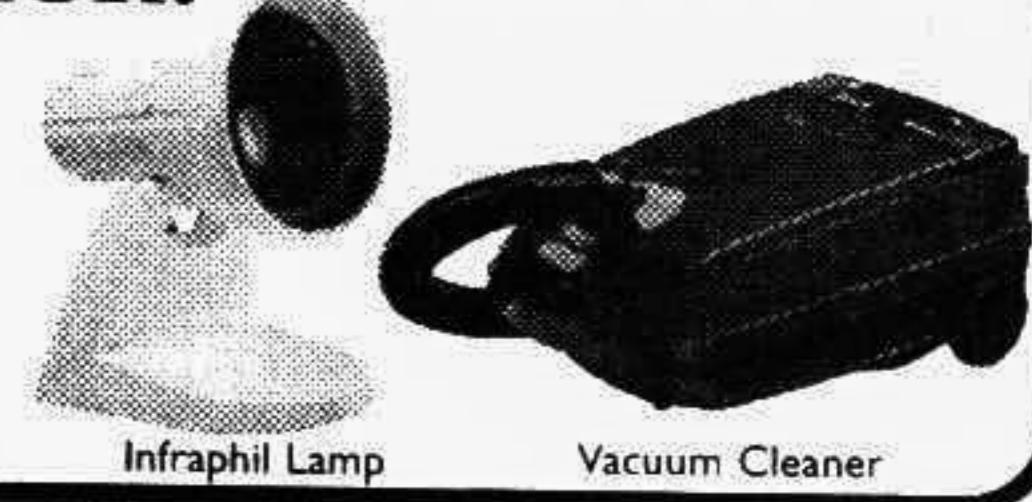
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860 raped, 80 murdered for dowry in '98

By Staff Correspondent

More than 860 women were raped, 16 of them by police and BDR personnel, and over 80 women were murdered for dowry in the country in 1998.

Besides, some 101 people were permanently disabled due to acid throwing and 78 were killed in political violence in the year, according to a survey by Odhikar, a human rights coalition.

Of the cases of rape, 417 were 'individual rapes'. Forty-three of the 'individual rape victims' were aged 1-5, 144 aged 6-11, 46 aged 16-20, 21 aged 21-25 and seven were aged 26 to 30. Twenty-one of the victims were

14 rescued Thai girls flown back home

By Staff Correspondent

The fourteen Thai girls, who were rescued from a restaurant at Uttara in the city, were flown back home yesterday.

Police rescued twelve girls Sunday night after two girls escaped from the restaurant and informed Thai embassy officials that they were forced into prostitution by the South Korean owner of the restaurant.

Police arrested Gay Hoo Young, the owner of the restaurant at Uttara Sector No 9 the same night. He was produced before the CMM's court yesterday. The court placed him on two days' remand.

Police said the fourteen girls, aged between 20 and 26, were brought to Bangladesh in the name of giving jobs about one and a half months ago.

First, they were kept at the restaurant as waitresses and then forced into sex trade.

The Thai Embassy reported the incident to the authorities concerned, police said.

Special Branch (SB) of police along with the Uttara police raided the restaurant, rescued the rest twelve and sent them to the Thai embassy.

Suranjit

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committee meetings would be affected. May be, it will inspire many of us to play to the gallery, rather than concentrate on the issues to be discussed at the meeting."

He however told the meeting that journalists could be invited to attend some "selective" meetings, not all.

Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, a BNP member on the committee, believes that the meetings of the JS bodies, especially the one dealing with the judiciary, should be open for all. On the question of the restriction as stated by the minister, Sircar said: "The rules are not mandatory. Those are rather directory."

However, the issue remained unresolved. A senior ruling party member on the committee, Advocate Rahmat Ali, suggested that the Speaker be consulted on the controversial issue.

Meanwhile, the committee members present at the meeting reached a consensus that senior lawyers having good reputation could be appointed High Court judges on temporary basis.

"It will help fight the backlog of cases pending trial in the High Court," the Law Minister told The Daily Star yesterday evening. "However, the appointments will be made if the Chief Justice agrees to the proposition. Besides, we will seek opinion of other experts."

Ticket touts active

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14 to 18 had been sold yesterday but that they were available at the black market.

The display board however showed that tickets were available at the counters.

Station Manager Zahurul Alam said the manual display board cannot show the real position. "We need computerised display board to show real time and actual status of ticket touts," he said.

"Ticket touts were also found waiting at different corners of the station to catch desperate passengers."

"You can have your ticket of any destination even before the Eid day if you agree to pay some extra money," one of the touts said, talking to this correspondent.

Zahurul Alam said some 70 per cent of tickets had already been sold till yesterday.

"We had started selling tickets a month before to avoid huge rush, but the homebound passengers failed to avail of the change," he said.

"They could easily collect tickets not only from the Kamalapur station but also from Air-

port station and City Ticket Centre at Nimtoli," the station manager added.

Sale of tickets rose by Tk 1.5 lakh a day ahead of Eid while the regular sale ranged between Tk 7 and 8 lakh, he said.

It is learnt that black marketeers are treated favourably when they return unsold tickets.

Even after departure of a train, the counter staff accepts the unsold tickets showing that those had been returned 24 hours before the train left. "This happens pretty often while many poor passengers cannot travel due to non-availability of tickets," one source said.

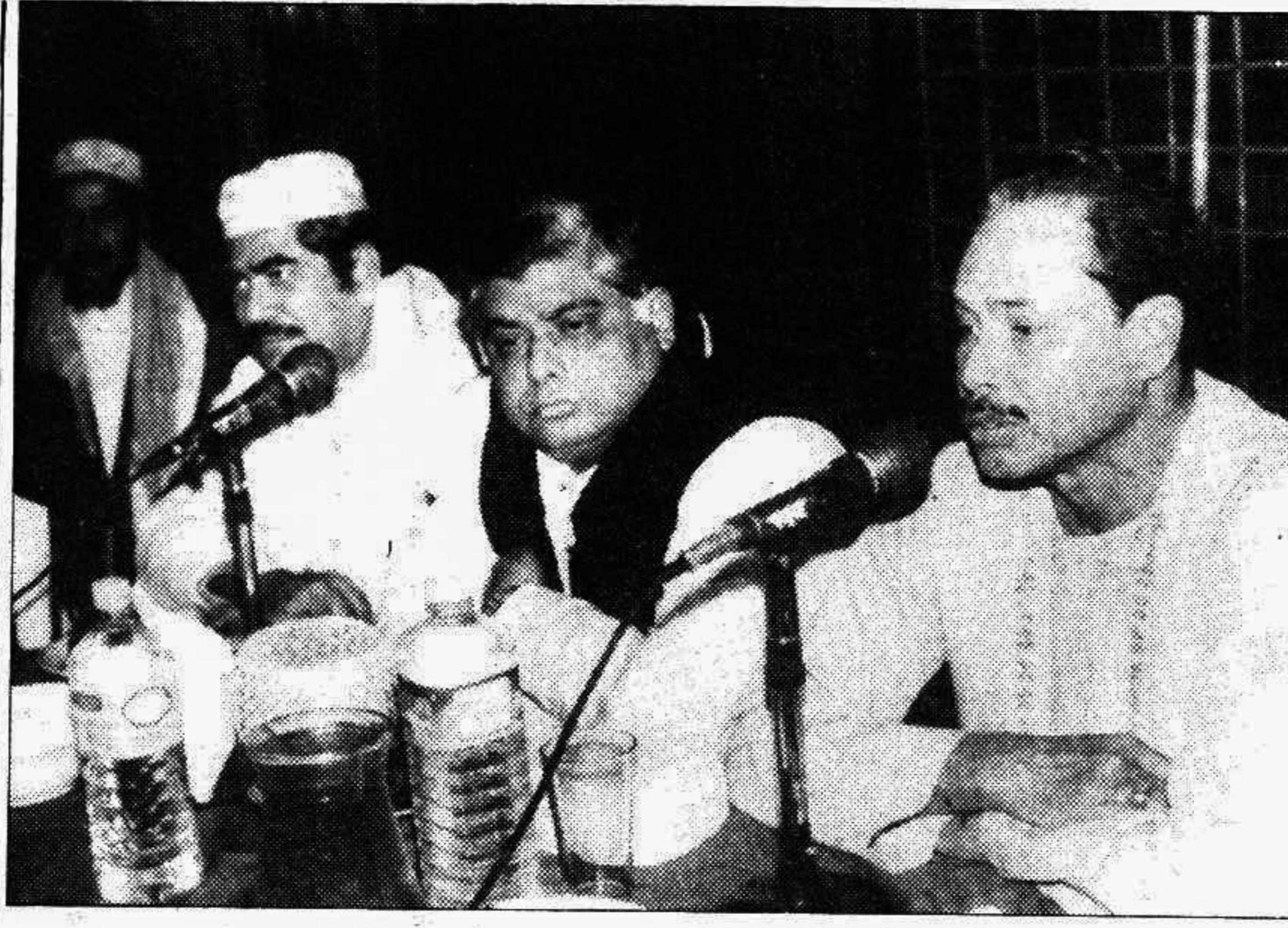
The station manager said additional security personnel along with Railway police have been deployed to "drive away the touts and maintain law and order in the railway stations."

The BR will also run special trains for Noakhali, Jamalpur and Brahmanbaria on January 16, 17 and 18.

The official said extra coaches would be arranged to accommodate more passengers.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad speaks prior to an iftar party he hosted for journalists at a city hotel yesterday.

— Star photo

All JP MPs are with me, says Ershad

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, who has expressed solidarity with the opposition movement yesterday claimed that all the party MPs were with him, reports UNB.

"All the party MPs are with me," he said replying to a query at an iftar party hosted by JP for journalists at a city restaurant.

When his attention was drawn to widespread rumour that majority of the JP MPs are supporting communication minister Anwar Hossain Manju who has been sacked from the party, Ershad said he (Manju) will gain even if he can muster support of five MPs.

Acting on a tip-off, a special team of detective police from Dhaka raided two rooms of the hotel at around 8 pm and arrested Moti, 27, and Hazrat, 29, along with the arms, police sources said.

The suspects made a stopover in the city on way to Dhaka from Chapainawabganj, they said.

Of the seized revolvers, two are Chinese while the rest Indian-made, the sources said. The accused persons were handed over to Boalia police.

B'baria incident 44 testify before judicial probe body so far

The judicial enquiry commission formed to investigate the Brahmanbaria incident yesterday heard 44 witnesses and received their written statements in the city in the past two days, reports BSS.

The hearing will also continue today at the central circuit house to record the testimony of those who could not earlier appear before the commission in Brahmanbaria due to security reasons, a press release of the Association of Development Agencies (ADAB) said in Dhaka.

Those who testified before the commission headed by Supreme Court Judge Ansaruddin included two directors of the voluntary organisation Proshika, Shahabuddin Ahmed and Shah Nawaz and several women who were assaulted in the December 7 incident, the press release added.

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