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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**German Deputy FM meets Hasina**

The visiting Deputy Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Schaefer, called on Awami League president and leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, at Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

They discussed overall political, economic and social affairs of Bangladesh with particular emphasis on recent political changeover, poverty and illiteracy, reports BSS.

**3 young Indian nationals held**

RAJSHAHI, Feb 5: Three young Indian nationals were held today (Wednesday) by BDR at Bidpur border checkpoint while they were travelling in a Dhaka-bound bus from Chapainawabganj. They speak Hindi and identified themselves as Mohammad Shammim, Abdul Gaffar and Hashmat. BDR sources said, reports UNB.

**Accused stabbed to death in court**

RAJSHAHI, Feb 5: An accused in several criminal cases was stabbed to death in front of the City Magistrate's Court this afternoon, police and witnesses said. Golam Mustafa (30) was stabbed on the left chest at the court verandah. He was declared dead at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on arrival. Witnesses said Mustafa was stabbed by his associate Alamgir who managed to flee after inflicting the fatal injury, reports UNB.

**10 hurt as youths attack 'jatra'**

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 5: At least 10 people were injured when a group of youths attacked a jatra show here Tuesday night. Among the injured, Afzal (45), an organiser of gambling and his worker Farhad (32) were admitted to a local clinic. The young people, armed with lethal weapons, attacked the jatra and gambling pandles in the late night, reports UNB.

## Indemnity body given two more months

# BNP agrees to AL request

By Mahfuz Ullah and Nurul Kabir

In a somewhat surprise move the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday extended the life of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Indemnity (Repeal) Bill by another two months.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, the chairman of the committee sought the extension from Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali for finalising the report. He also sought condonation for the delay in the submission of the report which was due on December 31.

Supporting the proposal of the Law Minister, Mohammad Nasim, the Chief Whip of the Awami League Parliamentary

Party said, "We want to pursue the politics of consensus and shun the path of conflict and confrontation."

"We want to create a history through mutual cooperation and understanding between the two main political parties of the country," said Nasim who moved the bill on August 8 last year.

The members present, amid cheers and thumbing of deaks, approved the proposal initiated by the Law Minister. The Minister, however, was apologetic about the delay in seeking condonation of time.

Earlier, the committee sat

for its 10th meeting in the morning at the Sangsad Bhavan with Law Minister in the chair. Sources close to the meeting say the meeting was called at a short notice.

The members of the 15-man committee who attended the meeting are: Mirza Golam Hafiz, Fazole Rabbi, Mohammad Nasim, Sajeda Chowdhury, Sudhansu Shekhar Halder, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Nazmul Huda, Majedul Haq, Abdus Samad Azad and Rafiqul Islam Mia.

When contacted, Fazole Rabbi, a JP MP told The Daily Star that the meeting had

opened with a request from the chairman of the committee Mirza Golam Hafiz to consider extension of the life of the committee.

Sources close to the BNP leadership say the position of the party on the bill was clearly spelled out in the ninth meeting of the committee, which frustrated the Awami League leadership.

A lawyer minister of the BNP, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star that two influential leaders of Awami League had requested BNP to defer its action on the

## US sees difficult economy during current fiscal

US Department of Commerce has predicted a difficult economy in Bangladesh for the current fiscal with indications of soaring inflation and impending problem in aid receipt, reports UNB.

The macro-economic outlook for fiscal year 1992 is not clear because the new government is yet to hold its firm grips on the economic policy," it said in its annual report.

Published in the fall this year, the report also cautioned that the inflations might jump to the level of 10 per cent as a

result of wage rises. "The large pay increases granted to government workers cast some doubts over the government's fiscal management".

Inflation was relatively low 8 per cent for 1991 fiscal, it added.

The 10-page report, which said the government's monetary policy would continue to be responsible and conservative, also contained key economic indicators, review on agriculture and industry, macro-economic trends and

## Countdown to Shaheed Day

Star Report

The success of the province-wide strikes at educational institutions on February 4 provided a tremendous organisational boost to the Language Movement.

The success of the strike and demonstrations all over East Bengal proved to be a great morale booster as well, and increased the determination of the students of Dhaka University and the All-Party State Language Action Committee (APSLAC) to press ahead with their programme of province-wide hartal on February 21.

With the movement gaining momentum, the forces of reaction both in West Pakistan and East Bengal began to work overtime. On February 5, a stinging attack was launched on the Language Movement in the Editorial column of the Karachi-based daily Dawn.

The editorial, entitled "Provincialism", did not only express the views of the paper, but those of the whole ruling class of Pakistan.

The question of language, which has a special appeal to the youth, is being used as a weapon against the central government. Those who did not have the guts to lift their heads during the lifetime of Quaid-e-Azam, are now being urged to disobey the advice of the father of the nation," the Dawn wrote Feb. 5, according to Badruddin Umar's three-volume "East Bengal's Language Movement". "Is it not clear under whose influence the stu-

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## Increased German assistance figures in talks with Schaefer

Bangladesh and Germany Wednesday agreed to further cementing the existing bond of friendship and cooperation between the two countries through greater exchanges at all levels, reports UNB.

The agreement came during formal talks between Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and the visiting German Deputy Foreign Minister Helmut Schaefer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka Wednesday morning.

A wide-range of subjects covering bilateral matters and international issues of common interest were discussed at the talks lasting about an hour, a senior official said.

The necessity for increased German assistance and cooperation to Bangladesh following democratic changes in the country featured prominently at the meeting held in a cordial atmosphere.

Exchanging views on major international issues, the two sides focussed on the changed scenario in Europe, particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The meeting also dealt with the Middle-East situation and Bangladesh's relation with neighbouring countries, including India and Pakistan, the official said.

It reviewed the progress towards realisation of the SAARC objectives.

The two sides also discussed Bangladesh's present problems with Myanmar.

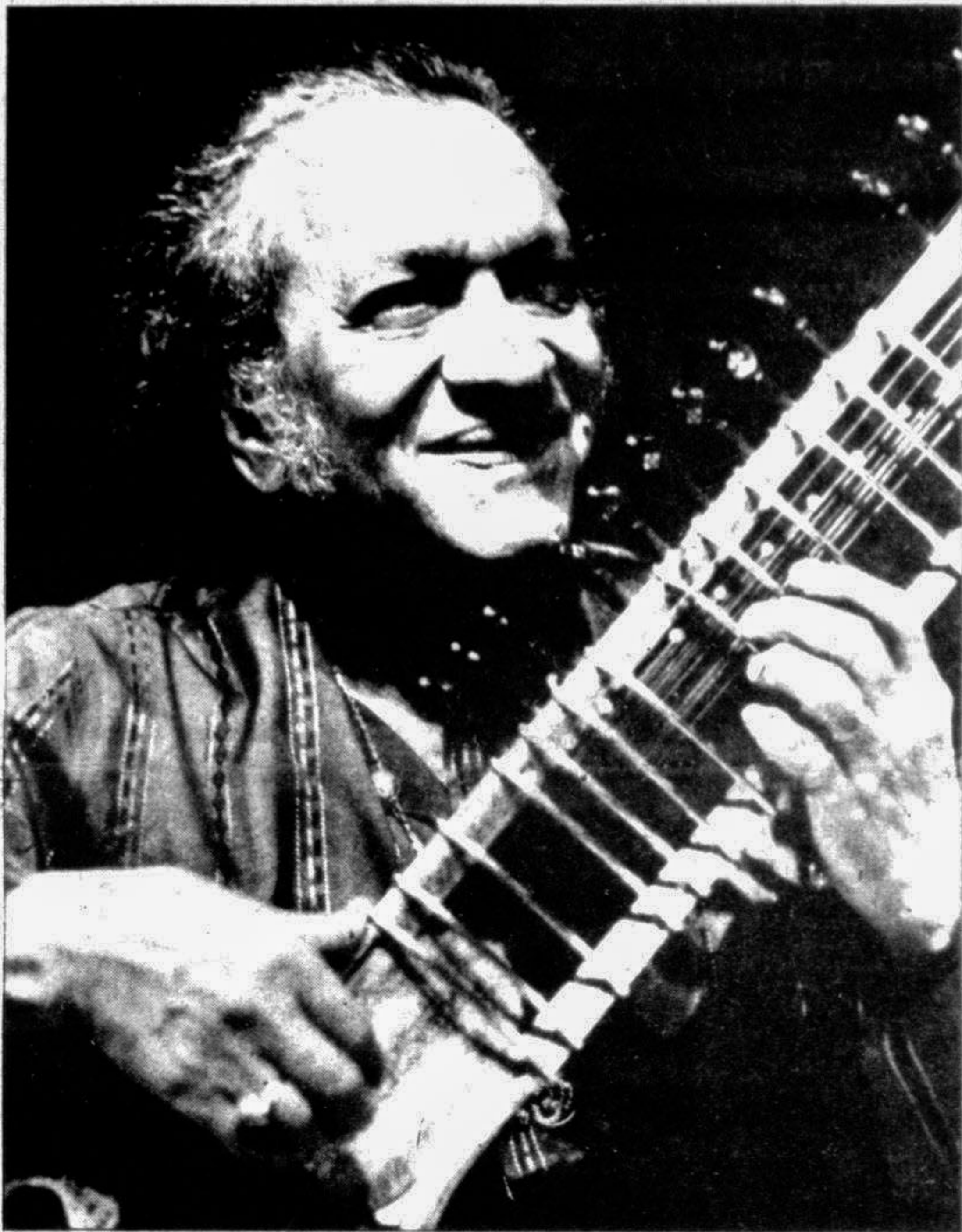
## Myanmar envoy rules out possibility of war

The Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh Wednesday ruled out the possibility of any confrontation or war between the two countries.

"I firmly believe the problems caused by the border tension and influx of Burmese refugees into Bangladesh will be solved bilaterally in a peaceful manner", Ambassador U Soe Myint told UNB.

The two neighbours living peacefully for centuries together cannot engage themselves in an armed conflict, he added.

The envoy confirmed that Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaaw would visit Bangladesh in near future at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart to discuss the problems for a peaceful settlement.



TOUCH OF CLASS: Pundit Ravi Shankar giving sitar recitals at Osmany Memorial Hall in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Ravi Shankar enthral audience

Internationally acclaimed Sitar Maestro Pundit Ravi Shankar enthralled a capacity audience at the Osmany Memorial Hall in city by his delightful presentation Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

During his two and a half hour performance the Maestro presented two Raga compositions in Yaman Kalyan and Raga Desh and a Thumri piece in the Raga Mactika style based on Raga Pancham-Se-Gara.

Swapan Chowdhury accompanied him on the tabla while Parthasarathi Chowdhury supported him with sarod.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof. Jahannara Begum later presented bouquets to Pundit Ravi Shankar, his wife and companions.

Pundit Ravi Shankar, arrived here Tuesday on a five-day visit. He will give a recital today at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

## Bank employees observe token hunger-strike

By Staff Correspondent

The officers and employees of four nationalised banks went on a mass hunger-strike all over the country to realise their five-point charter of demands Wednesday.

Following the programmes, transactions in Sonali, Agrani, Rupali and Janata banks were disrupted during banking hours yesterday.

The demands include separate pay scale, incentive bonus for 1990, reintroduction of fringe benefits, reinstatement of all terminated employees of

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## Pak diplomat made ESCAP chief

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: The top Pakistani in the UN Secretariat, Under-Secretary-General Rafeuddin Ahmed, was appointed on Tuesday as the Executive Secretary of the Bangkok-based UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), reports Reuter.

He will take over his new duties on April 1, succeeding Shah A M S Kibria, a Bangladeshi.

Ahmed has headed the UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs since January 1987. Before that, he was Under-Secretary-General for political affairs, trusteeship and decolonisation.

## Top priority to peasants: PM

BOGRA, Feb 5: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today attached top priority to changing the lot of the peasantry and spent out the means, including boost in farm production, reports UNB.

"No development programme of the government will be successful unless we can increase food production and improve the condition of the farmers who constitute 85 per cent of the country's population," she said addressing a huge rally after inaugurating the re-excavation of Nengratala-Girail canal at Durgahat in Kahalu upazila this morning.

The five-kilometre canal connecting greater Kehalu with Nagorendi canal will be re-excavated by 36 voluntary organisations and under food for works programme to bring an additional 525 acres of land under irrigation facility and increase food production by an estimated 3,088 metric tons per year.

"People expect high of the present government, and our aim is to improve the lot of commonmen," she said.

She urged the people to help the government in its development activities, efforts for maintaining peace, curbing violence and assisting production-oriented programmes.

She also assured necessary steps in fulfilling three commitments made by her husband late President Ziaur Rahman. These are: setting up of a medical college in the district, a diabetic centre and involving women in development activities by assisting them in establishment of small

cottage industries. Referring to certain steps taken for women, she mentioned the compulsory primary education and free schooling for girls and urged the parents to monitor dropout of girl students in schools.

She also urged the audience to set up small cottage industries in large number, saying the government will assist in small schemes aimed at changing the socio-economic condition of the rural mass.

The government has already allocated Tk 2 crore for assisting poultry projects, she mentioned.

Begum Zia stressed rapid industrialisation of the country, saying use of local products would discourage smuggling, paving the way of flourishing indigenous industries.

The Prime Minister later visited the site of a heavy industrial complex where the Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation is expected to set up a bicycle manufacturing plant, agricultural machinery manufacturing plant and foundry, and general engineering project covering about 15.42 acres of land.

The decision for establishing the complex was taken at the outside-capital cabinet meeting at Natore on January 21.

The Prime Minister, during her day-long tour of the district, also laid foundation of the new building of National Training and Research Academy for Multi-Lingual Shorthand in the town in afternoon.

She said the government

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## UP elections end today

## Dozens hurt, voting in 6 centres postponed

Union Parishad votings were postponed in six centres Wednesday on charges of rigging and violence that left dozens injured.

UNB correspondents reported poll postponement in four centres of four unions in Brahmanbaria sadar upazila and in two centres of Bohora and Choumohani unions in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj district.

Election Commission confirmed poll holdup in four centres while police control room informed of postponement in five centres.

Elections were held in 222 unions of 27 upazilas in 25 districts Wednesday the 13th day of current UP polling that will conclude today (Thursday).

Pollings were reported postponed in one each centre of Bohora and Choumohani unions of Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj district and one each of Talshahar East, Bashudeb, Natat South and Sharifpur East unions of sadar upazila in Brahmanbaria district.

At least 15 people were injured in Brahmanbaria in violent clashes.

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## 'Nothing unconstitutional in not appointing Hasib judge'

By Staff Correspondent

There was nothing unconstitutional in not regularising Justice Hasib's job as a Judge of the High Court, the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz told the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) Wednesday.

The minister was making a statement in parliament on why Justice Hasib was not made a permanent jurist of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court and whether there was anything wrong in it.

Former President Ershad appointed five Additional Judges including Justice Hasib on January 28, 1990 for a

two-year term. Of them one Additional Judge resigned to join the then cabinet as a minister.

The two-year terms of the remaining four expired on January 28, 1992 and the President Abdur Rahman Biswas regularised all of them except Justice Hasib.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, however, reportedly recommended that all the four Judges be confirmed.

The Opposition MPs, especially those belonging to the Awami League (AL) and the Jatiya Party (JP) in this case

accused the government of misuse of power and demanded that the Law Minister make a clear statement on this issue on Tuesday.

The Law Minister while making a statement on the issue yesterday told the House that the matter of appointment of a Judge was within the purview of the President under Article 95 of the Constitution.

The specific Article in the Constitution does not mention anything about the recommendation of the Chief Justice in this regard.

The Minister said, that in

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## Thai army chief may be chosen for PM's office

From Chapal Bashar

BANGKOK: As Thailand prepares for next month's general election, speculations are growing that the military rulers may choose one of their colleagues for the office of the prime minister.

The speculations are centred on General Suchinda Kraprayoon, the Supreme Commander and Army Chief of Thailand who will not even be a candidate in the parliament elections scheduled for March 22.

The National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC), the military-dominated supreme authority reserves the right to select a prime minister from outside parliament.

The Thai military toppled

the government of Gen Chatchai Choonhavan in February last year in a coup. Thailand witnessed 19 coups in the past 60 years.

General Suchinda, meanwhile denies the suggestion that he will be the next prime minister.

Political observers believe that Gen Suchinda, a close friend of NPKC chief Gen Sunthorn Kongsompong, is under pressure from his military colleagues to become the 19th Prime Minister of coup-ridden Thailand.

Under the Thai constitution, a military General cannot contest the general election.

Gen Sunthorn is the man who has the authority to pro-

pose the name of the future prime minister either from the parliament or from outside it. The NPKC chief also enjoys the right to nominate members for the 270-seat Senate (Upper House) which has enormous power.

The 360-seat House of Representatives (Lower House) is directly elected by the people, but it has about the same power as the Senate.

The provision of choosing the prime minister from outside the parliament has fuelled the speculations centering the army chief, who, however, will have to quit his job to become the prime minister.

The junta, according to analysts, is interested in Gen.

Suchinda because this will ensure its total control on the government and the parliament.

That political parties, apparently undaunted by the possibility of having a military man as the prime minister, are going ahead with the preparation for the election to the Lower House.

Election fever has already gripped the Thai capital and posters of some parties started appearing on the city walls. Filing of nomination papers by the candidates from as many as 14 political parties begins February 10.

Major parties, expected to field candidates for all the constituencies in the upcoming

elections are: Chat Thai Party, Samakkhittam Party, Social Action Party, and the newly-formed New Aspiration Party. Other parties that have potential candidates to win the election are: Democrat, Palang Dharma, Solidarity and Prachakorn Thai Party.

Whatever be the results of the elections, the functions of the lower house will be heavily undermined as the parliament will be virtually under control of the NPKC and the Senate appointed by it.

Observers predict that none of the parties has the chance to get an absolute majority in the elections, so the new Prime Minister might have to

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Gen Suchinda