

Anti-govt riots in Mali on: 35 killed

BAMAKO, Mar 24: Up to 35 people have been killed in two days of anti-government rioting in Mali's capital Bamako, where troops patrolled streets strewn with makeshift road-blocks and broken glass from looted shops, reports Reuter. Bamako was quiet but tense on Saturday night as residents drifted home before a 9.00 p.m. (2100 GMT) curfew. But many said they expected fresh violence to break out today. Hospital sources said police and soldiers killed at least five people and wounded dozens more earlier on Saturday when they opened fire on thousands of women marchers demanding an end to President Moussa Traore's one-party rule. About 30 people died on Friday after pro-democracy demonstrators ran riot in Bamako, clashing with security forces as they burned cars, looted shops and attacked government buildings, the sources said. Official sources put the total death toll for the two days at 24, including three women. Burnt-out trucks littered the main road from the international airport and a blazing barricade of cars blocked the route to the city's main industrial area, where rioters had smashed and gutted factories and offices. Traore, one of the few remaining African leaders holding out against multi-party reform, held urgent talks on Saturday with civic and religious leaders. Results of the discussions were not immediately known.

National govt in Nepal demanded

KATHMANDU, Mar 24: Six Nepali political parties Saturday demanded the formation of a broad-based national government to supervise elections scheduled for May 12, reports Reuter. Speakers at a rally in central Kathmandu accused the two-party interim coalition government, installed after an uprising against King Bireन्द्र's absolute rule last year, of harassing the other 42 parties registered for elections. The two parties presented in the interim government have violated human rights of others," Jaya Prakash of the National People's Party said. He gave no details but appeared to be referring to reports of attacks on opposition rallies during the campaign for the mountain kingdom's first multi-party elections in 30 years.

Bush, Ozal keen to see Saddam removed

WASHINGTON, Mar 24: President George Bush said on Saturday that the changes in the Iraqi Cabinet were interesting, but that as long as Saddam Hussein remained head of the government it would be difficult for the United States to normalise relations with Baghdad, reports Reuter. "I would simply say that Saddam Hussein appears to still be calling the shots and as I have said, before normal relations with the United States cannot be effective with Saddam Hussein still calling the shots, still in power, Bush said at a brief news conference following talks with Turkish President Turgut Ozal. Bush and Ozal both said they did not wish to tamper with internal Iraqi affairs but made clear they would like to see Saddam removed from power. "Normal relations with the United States cannot be affected with Saddam Hussein still calling the shots, still in power," Bush said with Ozal at his side in the White House briefing room. Bush, repeatedly praising Turkey for its support during the Gulf war, said he was prepared to provide economic and military aid to Ankara but sidestepped questions about specific amounts. The Bush administration has already provided emergency military aid worth \$2 million dollars in addition to the \$53 million dollars already in the 1991 foreign aid budget, and has proposed increasing the 1992 allocation to 703 million dollars. Congress on Friday gave final legislative approval for an additional 200 million dollars to help offset Turkey's losses in the war. A White House official said Bush was expected to sign the bill that contains the aid. The two leaders also said they discussed Cyprus, where Turkey has backed the Turkish Cypriot Community with troops since a 1974 invasion that led to a breakaway state in the island's north. The United States has been trying to promote a solution for the divided island, so far without success. UN-sponsored talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots stalled a year ago. Another report from Damascus adds: Iraqi opposition leaders in Syria scorned their country's new Cabinet on Saturday saying President Saddam Hussein should step down "before it becomes too late."

The revolt against Saddam will continue regardless of his false promises of democracy and freedom," said Hassan al-Nakib, a former Iraqi General who is now a leading opposition figure. Saddam, fighting revolt since his Gulf war defeat, carried out a government shake-up on Saturday, appointing Saddam Hammadi, a Shi'ite Muslim, as Prime Minister, a post he had till then held himself. A spokesman for the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said: "The than Saddam Hammadi is a Shi'ite does not make any difference because he is a tool in Saddam's hands. "Even if Saddam makes the whole cabinet Shi'ites we will reject it. All the people have decided to get rid of Saddam. His hour is approaching. Euzleiden Berwari of the Kurdish Democratic party said: "What is the use of any change if Saddam is not changed? He is the man who should be reshuffled — taken away." The only thing that would be accepted from Saddam is when he offers his resignation." Mohammed Hussein al-Tajer of the Shi'ite group Islamic Action described the

Cabinet appointments as "the same faces exchanging masks to implement Saddam's orders." "We reject this government as we rejected a previous offer by Saddam to share power with the Shi'ites. Everything he offers is rejected because Saddam is a crook." "We want nothing less than a removal of Saddam. He should do it now before it becomes too late," Tajer said. Nakib who leads the Saudi-based independent nationalist group said he expected the new government would commit more crime, more terrorist actions. "What Saddam did was to confirm his cousin Ali Hassan Al Majeed as Interior Minister. Majeed is a criminal who took part in destroying southern Iraq, bombing Iraqis with chemicals in Halabja and destroying Kuwait's oil wells." Bush and Baker have made no secret of the fact they would like to see Saddam toppled. In a news conference Thursday in Martinique, Bush brushed aside as unduly pessimistic the notion the Baghdad regime might be replaced by fundamentalists prominent in the rebellion in Basra and other southern cities and towns in Iraq.

Mr. Hammadi was tipped for his new post Saturday as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein named a new 24-member cabinet. Kenneth Parsons, 87, a retired University of Wisconsin Economics Professor, worked closely with Mr. Hammadi during his studies in the United States. "He's a gentle person," Mr. Parsons noted. "I feel much better for having him in that position." The retired professor recalled when a colleague in Beirut, where Mr. Hammadi studied at the American University, first wrote to him about the Iraqis. The colleague wrote to me and said, 'I'm sending you a student who seems to have potential for leadership,' Mr. Parsons said. Mr. Ross, now a journalism professor, noted most of his talks with Mr. Hammadi during their days as students dealt with achieving good grades from particular professors.

Hammadi stirs hope for Iraq's future

MADISON, Wisconsin, Mar 24: Iraq's new Prime Minister, Saddam Hammadi, has stirred hopes for the country's future among people who knew him at the University of Wisconsin, where he studied economics in the 1950's reports AP. "I look at this as a slight ray of light on the horizon with Iraq," said Professor John Ross, who was a graduate student with Mr. Hammadi. Mr. Hammadi was tipped for his new post Saturday as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein named a new 24-member cabinet. Kenneth Parsons, 87, a retired University of Wisconsin Economics Professor, worked closely with Mr. Hammadi during his studies in the United States. "He's a gentle person," Mr. Parsons noted. "I feel much better for having him in that position." The retired professor recalled when a colleague in Beirut, where Mr. Hammadi studied at the American University, first wrote to him about the Iraqis. The colleague wrote to me and said, 'I'm sending you a student who seems to have potential for leadership,' Mr. Parsons said. Mr. Ross, now a journalism professor, noted most of his talks with Mr. Hammadi during their days as students dealt with achieving good grades from particular professors.

BRIEFLY

10 killed in Indian bomb blast: A bomb exploded at a bus stop near a busy market Saturday, in India killing at least ten people and wounding more than 90 others, a news agency reported, says AP. The explosion occurred in a village in the capital's western district, United News of India said quoting police officials and hospital sources. It said most of those wounded were in a serious condition. The dead included eight men and two women, the news agency said. It said eight persons were brought dead to the hospital and two succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

Tareq Aziz in Jordan: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz arrived in Jordan in a surprise visit on Saturday and went into talks with King Hussein, official sources said, reports Reuter. They said Aziz carried a letter from President Saddam Hussein on the "latest development in Iraq." Kurdish and Shi'ite rebels have been fighting Saddam's forces since his defeat in the Gulf war. Saddam named a new cabinet on Saturday. Aziz was replaced as Foreign Minister but remained a Deputy Prime Minister.

Belgian vessel detained in Lanka: Sri Lankan customs detained a Belgian vessel carrying a large quantity of explosives which docked at Colombo port for refuelling, police sources said Saturday, reports Reuter. They said the 156-ton freighter Marathalina was on its way from Belgium to Taiwan. The sources said the ship had not made a declaration it was carrying the explosives. The crew is being questioned by police who will end their investigation on Sunday.

Ethiopia expels 4 Libyan diplomats: Ethiopia has expelled Libya's ambassador and three other diplomats from Libya and Sudan for activities, it says were incompatible with their diplomatic missions, reports AP. Ethiopian radio Friday quoted a foreign ministry spokesman as saying the four had been "instructed to leave Ethiopian territory within four days as persona non grata." The spokesman, who was not further identified, said the diplomats' activities had been found to be incompatible with their diplomatic missions but did not elaborate.

6 Filipino children buried alive: Six children, aged between four and 10, were buried alive at a quarry site in the Philippines Saturday, police said, reports Reuter. Police Chief Major Diosdado Ibanes said the five boys and a girl entered the quarry site in Antipolo, near Manila, to play despite a warning to children to stay away. "While the bulldozers were pushing a mound of Earth, the children got on top of it. They got buried," he said in a telephone interview. The children were dead by the time rescuers dug them out.

Kashmiri rally prevented: Indian Security Forces prevented a rally by Kashmiri militants in Srinagar Saturday to celebrate Pakistan's National Day, witnesses said, reports Reuter. Several militant groups among dozens fighting Indian rule favour merger with Pakistan while others want a reunited and independent Kashmir. The witnesses said the security forces cleared a normally crowded section around a Muslim Shrine of the warren-like old city where the militants had planned to stage the rally. Before the security forces arrived, militants had raised the Pakistani flag and fired volleys into the air from automatic rifles, the witnesses said.

80 pc Kuwaiti oil wells destroyed: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Rashid al-Amira told reporters Saturday that more than 80 per cent of the oil wells in Kuwait had been destroyed either by bombs or fire, and about 600 wells are still burning, reports Xinhua. The Minister said that Iraqi troops had blown up almost all of the oil ports, pipelines and other installations before they left Kuwait. Oil refineries in the ports of Ahmadi, Abuduleh and Shuaiba have been thoroughly destroyed, Amira said, stressing that the tiny Gulf country's oil industry is now totally paralysed. With the efforts by some departments concerned, the Minister said 18 of 35 mined oil wells have been saved.

Steps to quell riots in Ossetia: Leaders of the Russian and Georgian republics have agreed to form joint police units to quell a "mini civil war" in South Ossetia, where clashes have claimed at least 44 lives, Soviet media reported, says AP. The agreement was signed Saturday by the Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and Boris N. Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation, according to the Independent Interfax news agency. "A mini civil war is taking place" in mostly Muslim South Ossetia, Interfax quoted Yeltsin as saying. "We both are convinced that order must be restored there." Tens of thousands of people have fled the fighting in the region, which declared independence from Georgia last year shortly after Georgia declared sovereignty from the Soviet Union.

Kuwaiti Emir for new govt: The Emir of Kuwait Saturday asked his Crown Prince, Sheikh Saad al-Abdula al-Sabah, to form a new government, outgoing Planning Minister Suleiman al-Mutawa told Reuter. Sheikh Saad's previous cabinet resigned last Tuesday amid charges of incompetence as it struggled to run a country still in turmoil.

Tamils capture army camp: Tamil Separatists said Sunday they had captured an important army camp in Sri Lanka's northwest after fierce fighting and were about to take a second, reports Reuter. "Yesterday, we took over the camp at Kokupadayam. The one at Silavathurai is about to fall," said Lawrence Thilakar, a spokesman for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam who are fighting for a homeland for Sri Lanka's Tamil community. A military spokesman said on Saturday the army had repulsed attacks on the camps in Mannar district and that at least 300 rebels and 23 soldiers had been killed in the four-day battle.

Soviet plane crashes: 31 killed

MOSCOW, Mar 24: A Soviet aircraft overshoot a runway and struck concrete blocks in the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan on Saturday, killing 31 passengers and crew, Tass news agency reported, reports Reuter. The agency, quoting officials from the Civil Aviation Ministry, said the Antonov-24 aircraft hit blocks being used for airport construction work in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. Fifty six people had been aboard the flight Tashkent from the Uzbek city Navoi. The crew members and 28 passengers died in the crash. An investigation had been launched into the accident, Tass said.



KUWAIT: British and American soldiers use a mine detector to check Doris's wound March 23. The allied troops detected an Ak-47 bullet wound suffered when Iraqi troops occupied the Kuwait zoo. The soldiers washed her wound and gave her penicillin to prevent infection. The bullet is imbedded near the right shoulder bone but has not cause serious injury to the female Indian elephant. —AFP/UNB photo

Rajiv urged to contest from Karnataka

HANGAL (Karnataka), Mar 24: The Karnataka Pradesh Congress-I committee has urged the Congress (I) President, Rajiv Gandhi, and the former Home Minister, Buta Singh, to contest the coming elections to the Lok Sabha from Karnataka, reports PTI. The KPCC (I), in a recent meeting, had adopted a resolution to this effect, the State Law Minister, B Shivanna, told reporters here yesterday. Replying to a question, Shivanna ruled out the dissolution of the Karnataka State Assembly and denied reports of pressure from former MPs from the state to dissolve the assembly. The Chief Minister, S Bangarappa, who had gone to Delhi would have discussions with Gandhi on all matters relating to the state, he said. Meanwhile, according to Rajya Sabha Member, I G Sanadi, Rajiv Gandhi, will visit the state in two phases, first on April 10 and 11 and later on April 24 and 25. He was likely to visit all the 28 parliamentary constituencies, Sanadi added.

US won't allow any exemption from CFE

WASHINGTON, Mar 24: The United States is not prepared to compromise with the Soviet Union on any elements of a treaty to eliminate conventional weapons in Europe, US officials told Congress Wednesday, reports AP. Problems have arisen with the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, or CFE, primarily because the Soviet Union has insisted that about 5,000 pieces of Soviet equipment not be counted. The United States and 20 other signatories to the treaty, which was signed Nov 19, disagree with Moscow on their interpretation.

No conspiracy can upset democracy: Ishaq

ISLAMABAD, Mar 24: Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan warned on Saturday against any effort to sow dissent in the country and said no conspiracy could upset democracy, reports Reuter. Addressing a National Day military parade in the capital Islamabad, he said it was important to maintain the present "conducive atmosphere." "If a self-seeker wants to sow seeds of dissension through statements or speeches, or by means of hatching conspiracies to pollute the ideal state of affairs, he is doing so vainly," the President said. It was unclear whether Ishaq Khan was referring to political challenges to the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif or recent outspoken remarks by Army Chief General Mirza Aslam Beg. The Army Chief, who is due to retire in August, openly opposed government policy over the Gulf crisis after Pakistan sent about 11,000 troops to Saudi Arabia to join the U.S.-led multinational force fighting against Iraq. A senior Pakistani official said Washington had twice protested over Beg's comments, once after he accused the United States of deliberately provoking Iraq's invasion of Kuwait to justify interference in the Gulf. Beg recently defended himself, saying: "I was shouting because a Muslim country was being destroyed. I was warning against a conspiracy to destroy the economic, military and political strength of a Muslim nation." Sharif has been badly battered by his unpopular Gulf war policy. He has lost three ministers and become the target of speculation about a political or extra-constitutional challenge. However, Ishaq Khan praised Sharif and said the government was in capable hands. "The present atmosphere in the country is the result of the conscious democratic will and a constructive approach and conduct."

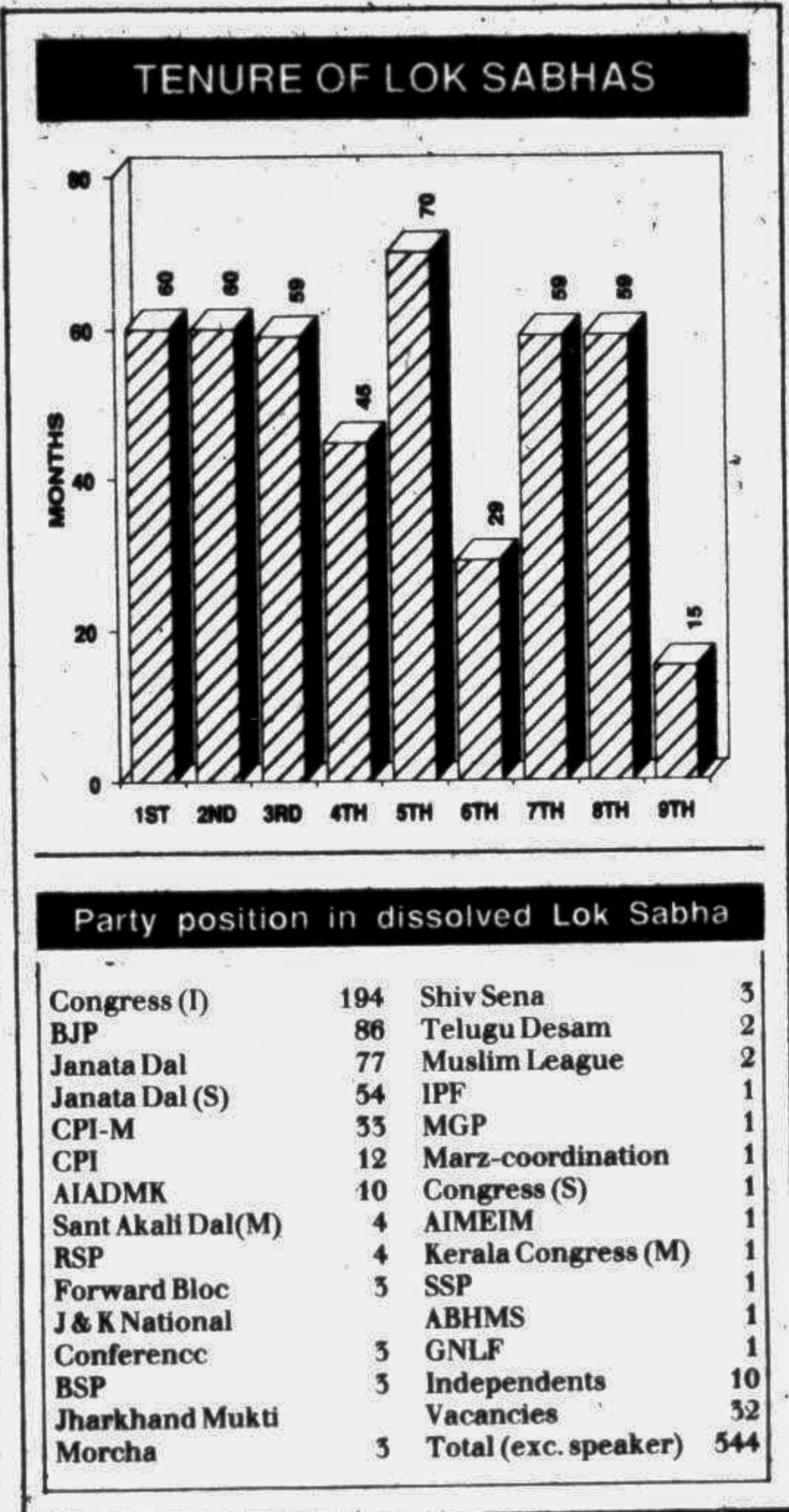
Off the Record

Reagan the most mysterious man

WASHINGTON: Ronald Reagan's official biographer says the former president is "the most mysterious man I have ever confronted," and even Nancy Reagan is bewildered by him, reports AP. The remarks by prize-winning historian Edmund Morris were made at a closed meeting last October at the White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs of the University of Virginia. They were published, apparently prematurely, in the organizations current newsletter. "He is the most mysterious man I have ever confronted. It is impossible to understand him," Morris was quoted as saying. Morris won the Pulitzer Prize in 1980 for "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt," the first volume in a projected three-volume biography of the 26th president. He has been working on the Reagan biography since 1985, and it is expected to be published next year. "I went through a period of a year or so of depression because I felt that with all my research, how come I can't understand the first thing about him?" Morris said of Reagan. "He grew more puzzling the more I tried to study him. I only came out of this despair when I found out that everybody else who had ever known him, including his wife, is equally bewildered." Kenneth W. Thompson, director of the Miller Center, said the writer took part in two sessions, one off the record and one on the record. "I am afraid our people jumped the gun a little bit, because he was supposed to see both versions before there was any release of them," Thompson said. Robin Kuzen, editor of the newsletter, said the quoted remarks were made in the on-the-record session. Morris' telephone in Washington was answered by a recording. Bill Garber, Reagan's spokesman in Los Angeles, said the former president and his wife were out of town but he did not believe they would have any comment. Morris is quoted as finding Reagan's personality "irresistible" and saying world leaders were "seduced by (his) extraordinary personal sweetness."

Girls' craze

LONDON: A British soldier photographed from behind while taking a shower has returned from the Gulf war to a hero's welcome. But not the normal sort, reports Reuter. Warren Thompson, 21, was photographed while showering in the Saudi desert and the picture appeared around the world. His mother, Andrea Thompson, said dozens of girls impressed with what they saw called to leave their telephone numbers. "I have had loads of calls from girls all over the place, wanting to know all about him" she said. "I don't know who I'll ever live it down," Thompson said. "I'm so embarrassed."



Election campaign strikes nerves of every Indian

NEW DELHI, Mar 24: For the second time in 18 months, campaign posters are going up in India for what promises to be a hard-fought and possibly bloody election for the office of Prime Minister, reports AP. The three-way contest may be one of the most evenly split ever seen in this nation, which until recently was dominated by a single family and its party. The main contestants are two former Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh, and Lal Krishna Advani, a quiet intellectual who leads a hardline Hindu revivalist party. Incumbent Chandra Shekhar vastly improved his public credibility during his brief tenure but is barely in the running because he lacks a national organisation. The issues are caste, class and stability. The campaign will touch the most sensitive nerves of every Indian: his religion and the role to which his birth has consigned him in society's hierarchy. These questions are brushing aside the more tangible issue of separatist insurrections by Sikhs in Punjab, Muslims in Kashmir and Assamese in the far east state of Assam. Nor is anyone focusing on the grim state of the economy, except for vague promises of "bread and jobs." Inflation has climbed to double digits in this vast and poor nation where price rises can spell hunger for millions more people. India also faces a balance-of-payments crisis which has cut its credit rating to the lowest rank. The Election Commission has not yet set a date for the voting, but it should be no more than two weeks before June 5, when the new Parliament is to convene. Political scientists say the election comes at a time when the voters are realising in ways that are not yet clear. "The party system has lost credibility with the voters. The electorate is now very mobile, uncertain," said Bhabani Sen Gupta, of the Center for Policy Research, an independent think tank. "The most striking feature of Indian politics has been the growing alienation and bitterness among religious communities" and among Hindu castes, said Zoya Hasan of the Center for Political Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. She predicted the upper classes which have dominated politics for India's 43 years of independence will come under unprecedented challenge. Each party in its own way is appealing to the great mass of voters who typically are faithfully Hindu, poorly educated and struggling to provide for their over-sized families. The election was precipitated by the equivocal results of the last election in November 1989 when opposition parties combined to unseat Gandhi and his Congress Party. Gandhi, grandson of India's first Premier Jawaharlal Nehru and son of assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was accused of heading a corrupt administration and growing aloof from the public during his five years in office. Singh assembled a coalition of his Janata Dal party and regional parties. Still lacking a majority, it governed with the outside support of Advani's Bharatiya Janata Party and communists. RAIKOT, 24: Matinee Idol and former Congress-I MP Amitabh Bachchan will not contest the forthcoming elections to the Lok Sabha, according to his wife, Jaya Bachchan, reports PTI. Talking to reporters here on Thursday, Jaya Bachchan said her husband was willing to join any voluntary organisation working for the uplift of the weaker sections of the society. The actress was in the city in connection with a function organised by the Rajkot voluntary blood bank and research centre.



Amitabh not to contest polls