

Bangladeshi ship catches fire in Karachi

KARACHI, Apr 24: A Bangladesh cargo ship caught fire after an explosion in its engine room while waiting to be berthed at Karachi late Tuesday, port sources said, reports AFP.

Three crew members of the Samudra Samrat were injured in the fire, they said.

Fire boats rushed from the port to the outer anchorage to save the ship, which suffered extensive damage, the sources said.

Nine killed in Indian riots

NEW DELHI, Apr 24: A minor traffic accident in the western Indian city of Baroda set off riots in which nine people were killed, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, reports Reuter.

It said police imposed an indefinite curfew on the central part of the city in Gujarat state after the accident on Tuesday night in which a three-wheeled scooter taxi struck a boy.

PTI said seven people were stabbed to death in the ensuing violence and two killed by police who opened fire and used tear-gas to control the riots.

25 communists killed in Manila fierce fighting

MANILA, Apr 24: Twenty-five communist guerrillas and a government militiaman have been killed in fierce clashes in the northern and southern Philippines, the official Philippine News Agency reported here today, reports AFP.

Jyoti sets his eyes on post of premiership

CALCUTTA, Apr 24: At a time when the world is questioning the relevance of communism, the Left forces in the country, particularly in West Bengal, is dreaming of playing a greater role in Indian politics reports UNI.

Mr Jyoti Basu, who was arrested in 1962 on suspicion of being a Chinese spy, is now thought of as a prospective prime minister. Even till the other day, a 'commie' was almost an unmentionable. But now, Mr Basu seemed to have managed to project an acceptable image to this breed of politicians — at least more consistent than persons like Mr Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar and even Rajiv Gandhi.

Till recently, the CPI (M) was nothing more than a regional party, confined to fringe states like Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. The last one was recently grabbed by the Congress (I) and even now the CPI(M) is doubtful whether it would be able to recover the two parliamentary seats in the coming elections.

In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, the performance of the Left in Kerala was miserable, though after the success of the recent local elections, it has pinned its hopes in doing fairly well in Kerala this time. West Bengal is still its stronghold and it is almost sure to retain it as such.

But what is new and interesting this time, is the Left forces' attempt to reach out to other states with the help of

the National Front alliance. They are supposed to put up candidates in all the states. The CPI, CPI(M) and other Left parties have ambitions of winning 100 seats throughout the country, the bulk of course, from West Bengal and Kerala.

Together with 200 seats to be secured by the National Front, the NF-Left alliance is supposed to provide a stable government at the Centre.

In the 1989 elections, because of the alliance, CPI(M)

had won about 10 seats from states where they had no previous base. This time, CPI(M) alone has fielded 71 candidates — 30 in West Bengal, 10 in Kerala, five in Tamil Nadu, three each in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra, two each in Rajasthan, Assam and Tripura and one each in Orissa, Karnataka, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and even the Andamans.

CPI, which has some base in UP and Bihar, is expected to

fair much better this time. This acceptance of the Left forces, however, did not come so easily. Some however still tend to think that Mr Rajiv Gandhi's parleys with Mr Jyoti Basu brought the Left to the centrestage. A CPI(M) leader said that it took at least 30 years to wean away the people of West Bengal from Congress (I) "exploitation."

In the national scene, too, the Left leaders say, the people had watched them reacting to

Punjab, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and LTTE problems. The consistency and sanity shown in tough problems like mandir-masjid issue; the warning that they have always given against opening up of the economy to a stage where it did more harm to the country; constantly trying to show the imbalances in financial control that threatened the federal structure of the country and made the states hostile to the Centre — all these issues appealed to the thinking voters of the country.

Congress (I) MPs from different states often took Left MPs into confidence and gave them facts of the Centre's discrimination towards their states—things which they could not speak at the floor for obvious reasons. Since 1987, the Left parties have been organising several national movements, particularly among the peasants. These certainly had an impact of the Left forces on the national scene and helped a lot to remove the usual distrust associated with the Leftists.

During the last one-and-a-half years in Parliament, the Left MPs too had played a key role in bringing forward the problems of the country while the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal tried in vain to set their house in order. Rajiv Gandhi tried to woo Jyoti Basu — so did V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal — not always for the numerical strength of the Left parties, which is small, but to find a sense of direction in the chaotic politics of the country. Never before has the prestige of the Left politics been so high in the national scene — not even in the days of the undivided Communist Party.

They are now in the central stage, proudly proclaiming that no government at the Centre was possible without Left support.

Rajiv files nomination from Amethi

SULTANPUR (UP), Apr 24: The Congress-I President, Rajiv Gandhi, filed his nomination for the May 20 polls from Amethi Lok Sabha constituency, Wednesday, reports PTI.

Gandhi filed four nomination papers before the returning officer and district Magistrate, Ajay Kumar Jain, at the district headquarter town.

Gandhi has been representing Amethi Lok Sabha seat since 1980. He was elected in 1989 after securing over 2.71 lakh votes.

The fight for the prestigious Amethi seat is expected to be a multi-cornered one. So far ten people including BJP's Ravindra Pratap Singh, have filed their nominations to this seat.



CALCUTTA: Live-size graffiti on the walls around the house of the WBPC(I) president Siddhartha Shankar Ray reminiscent of his brief tenure as Punjab governor, showing him with a bucketful of blood and a slogan in Bengali saying "Siddhartha ashey" (Siddhartha has come). Another one shows a dress in a wardrobe with a Bengali inscription "bahattorer rajposhak" (the kingly attire of '72), with some party leaders urging the new PCC(I) to wear it. He, however, refuses to do so, protesting: "Na, na eta dekle loko rege jabe" (no, no, people would get furious seeing me in it).

500 Kurds now dying a day

Baghdad asks UN to take over US camps in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 24: Iraq asked the United Nations on Tuesday to take over camps set up by the United States and Allied troops in the Kurdish North which it maintains violate its sovereignty, reports Reuter.

In an apparent effort to pit the Allied forces against the United Nations Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein asked Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to assume responsibility for the centres immediately.

Diplomats, however, said the letter from Hussein also might provide the legal justification needed by the United Nations to carry its relief efforts to the Allied ones.

While the United Nations last week came to an agreement with Baghdad to set up refugee camps and transit stations all over Iraq, the memorandum did not mention the Allied action and took care to respect Iraq's sovereignty over its territory.

The United Nations said on Tuesday it would send an envoy Bertt Brander of Sweden to Northern Iraq shortly.

Hussein in his letter harshly condemned the Allied camps as a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, for operating in the north without its consent.

A report from Washington says: The death rate of Kurdish refugees along the Turkish-Iraqi border appears to have stabilised at roughly 510 deaths a day, the White House said on Tuesday.

Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said that as the US-led effort to build camps in northern Iraq for the refugees gained pace about 2,500 Kurds a day were being relocated from remote mountains to lowland campsites.

He told reporters that based on accounts given by doctors and relief workers, the

death rate appears to have stabilised at six per 10,000. This works out to 510 deaths per day in a population of 580,000.

But Fitzwater said he could not vouch for the accuracy of the numbers because the refugees were almost constantly on the move. Last week, officials reported the death rate at about 1,000 a day.

Fitzwater said the United States and its Allies were urging other countries to contribute military units to what

has been dubbed Operation Provide Comfort, an effort to establish safe havens in northern Iraq for hundreds of thousands of Kurds.

The Kurds fled their homes fearing further retribution from Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein after his Army crushed their rebellion. The United States is using about 10,000 troops in the operation. Britain and France have also contributed troops.

AP adds from Bakhtaran of Iran: For the first time since

World War II, German ground troops have been deployed on other than NATO soil—in the process becoming the first Western soldiers allowed into Iran since 1979.

Their mission is to ferry supplies to Iraqi Kurdish refugees in remote snow-covered mountains. And it is not a moment too soon, say foreign doctors battling epidemics and malnutrition among the refugees.

"The need at the moment is limitless," said Sean Finn, the U.N. Development Program coordinator for Iran. "We're waiting for the big international effort to crank up. It's just barely approaching first gear."

Finn, speaking from his Tehran office, said refugees are backed up 30 miles (50 kilometers) into Iraq at some crossing points along the rugged Iran-Iraq frontier. Some officials estimate 500,000 Kurds may seek to cross the border to join the nearly 1 million who have already fled to Iran to escape Iraq's brutal suppression of a Kurdish rebellion.

Doctors and relief workers from Belgium, France, Portugal and Britain flew Tuesday into Bakhtaran, the region hardest hit by the refugee influx.

The Germans, the first Western soldiers permitted in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution, arrived in Bakhtaran on Sunday. By Monday, nine cargo planes landed carrying soldiers and supplies had landed.

On Tuesday, 87 soldiers were in a camp on the edge of Bakhtaran airport. A total of 200 soldiers are expected, said a source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

German cargo helicopters were scheduled to arrive soon, and food shipments for refugees may start later this week if weather permits, said Lt. Col Henning Holzhausen.

Gorbachev faces 'a real fight'

MOSCOW, Apr 24: Mikhail S. Gorbachev going into the Communist Party's guiding Central Committee, faced what his spokesman called the conservatives' "revenge for Perestroika", reports AP.

At the meeting Wednesday of the 410-member Central Committee, Gorbachev was expected to face scathing criticism for his handling of the country's economic and social unraveling.

Gorbachev, who is party leader as well as national president, on Tuesday had to deal with a huge strike in Minsk, the second this month in the capital of the once-placid Byelorussian republic.

The strikers, like coal miners who struck March 1, called for the resignation of Gorbachev and for wage increases to offset sharp price increases that the Kremlin implemented April 2.

The price increases were part of Gorbachev's so-far ineffective attempts to stop economic disintegration.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Soviet legislature approved

Gorbachev's plan for drastic economic resuscitation measures. But many of those measures, such as privatisation and reduction of government spending, are sure to cause a further decline in living standards for many Soviets.

Calls for Gorbachev's resignation as president are coming both from reformers who believe he has abandoned them and hard-line Communists who think he has gone too far during his six years in power.

The hard-liners were likely to be his severest critics during the closed meeting.

There is a mounting challenge to President Gorbachev from what we call conservative forces in the party apparatus," said presidential spokesman Vitaly Ignatenko.

"The apparatus is about to take revenge for Perestroika," he said.

Gorbachev's reforms have included eliminating the Communist Party's constitutional monopoly on power and reducing the party's influence by ousting a stronger presidency and legislature.

US opposes trial of Saddam

WASHINGTON, Apr 23: The United States opposes the idea of a war crimes trial for Saddam Hussein because to try him in absentia might prolong his grip on power, a senior State Department official said Tuesday, reports AP.

Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs John R. Bolton said "we have no present plans to find Saddam Hussein and bring him to justice," although he conceded there was no debate over the Iraqi president's culpability.

Under questioning by Congressman Lee Hamilton, Bolton said trying Saddam without having him present might prolong his tenure. And the United States will not use military force to seize Saddam for a trial, he added.

Bolton did not elaborate, but there are fears that a conviction under the Geneva conventions of 1949 would obligate participating countries — virtually every country in the world — to turn him over to authorities.

That would make it impossible to offer Saddam a haven in exchange for stepping down from power. President George Bush said last week he might consider such an arrangement.

"The goal ought to be to have Saddam Hussein find another job sooner rather than later," Bolton said. He added that "we certainly would welcome efforts by the Iraqis themselves to deliver Saddam up for international custody."

Off the Record

'A pretty boring neighbour'

ELKHART, Indiana Forget about John Fogarty, rock legend. The groom at Saturday's wedding at the Elcona Country Club was John Fogarty, regular guy, reports AP.

"If it weren't for my musical career, we'd be just like any other couple," the founder of Creedence Clearwater Revival said after his marriage to Julie Lebedzinski. "I actually think I'd be a pretty boring neighbor."

Fogarty met Lebedzinski, a former South Bend hairdresser, while on tour several years ago.

"I was at a party at the hotel (in Indianapolis) after the show with a couple of the band members when suddenly the crowd parted, and there was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen in my life," Fogarty said. "I always tell people that — it was like this light came out of the sky."

Lebedzinski's 6-year-old daughter from a previous marriage lives with the couple in Los Angeles. Fogarty's three grown children from his first marriage attended the wedding.

Creedence Clearwater Revival had several top hits in the late 1960s and early '70s, including "Bad Moon Rising" and "Green River." More recently, Fogarty has pursued a solo career.

800 Iranian women to 74 lashes each

NICOSIA, Nicosia: Tehran police detained 800 women in two days for flouting an Islamic Dress Code which requires women appear in public covered from head to toe, the Iranian News Agency IRNA said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

It quoted Tehran Police Commander General Abbas Oqbaei as saying that 50 shops were also closed for "neglecting Islamic codes" in the campaign launched on Sunday.

Iranian law sets a maximum of 74 lashes for "Bad-Hijabi" — imperfect observation of the dress code which says women should show no more than their face and hands and their clothes should completely cover their curves.

Actress feels guilty

RADNOR, Pennsylvania Actress Ruth Warrick says she felt guilty for years over telling a reporter that the movie "Citizen Kane" was based on the life of newspaper baron William Randolph Hearst.

In the April 27 issue of TV Guide, Warrick, of ABC's "All My Children," describes how she inadvertently held up the premiere of Orson Welles' 1941 movie — which was, indeed, a thinly fictionalized account of Hearst's life. She played Hearst's — make that Kane's — wife in the film.

"Citizen Kane," which premiered at New York's Palace Theatre 50 years ago, is being re-released in theaters nationwide by Turner Entertainment Co. In honor of the movie's golden anniversary.

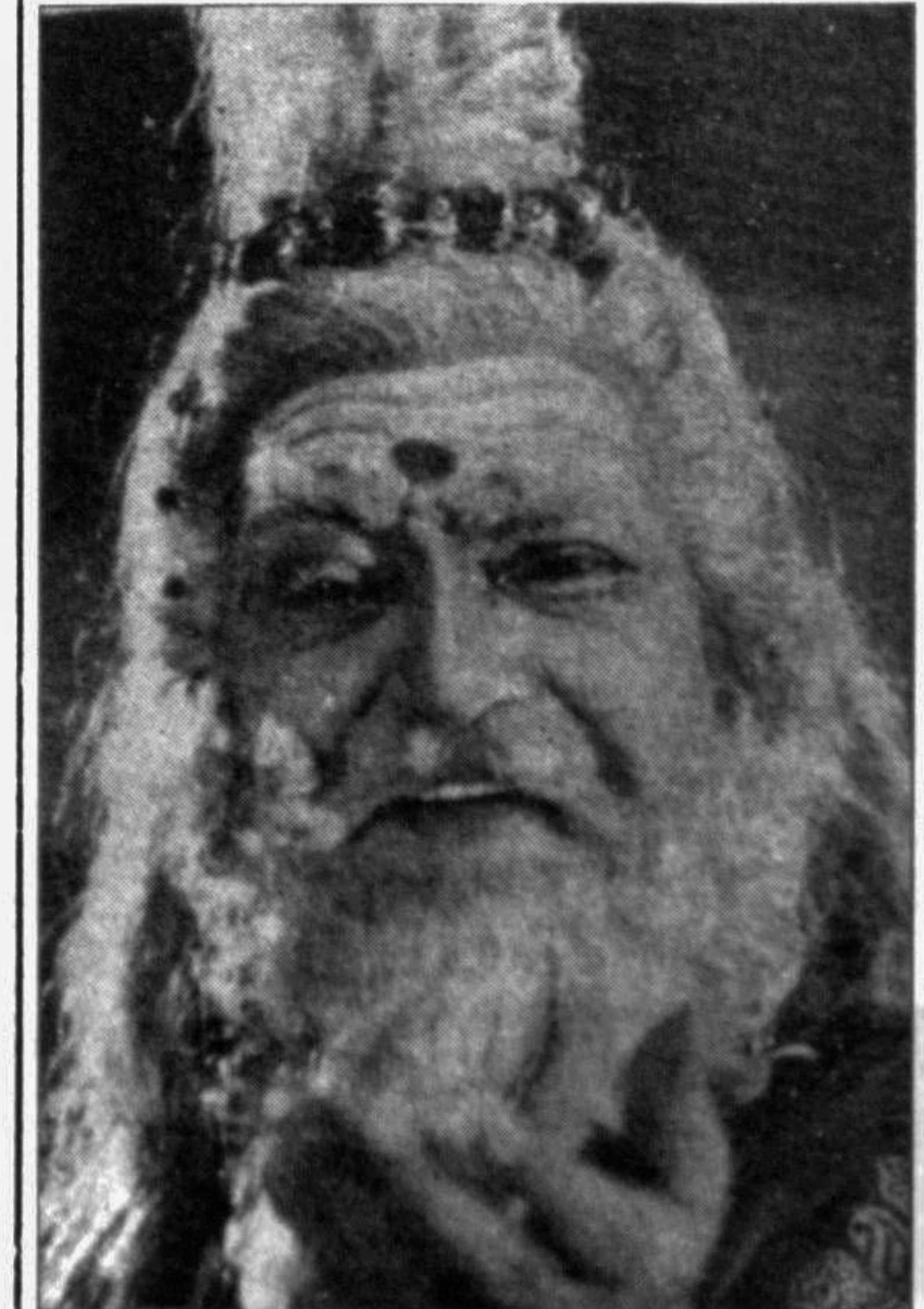
Warrick says the movie was to premiere on Feb. 14, 1941, at Radio City Music Hall, but was postponed when Hearst learned of the topic and threatened to never run another advertisement for the hall if the film wasn't pulled.

"And no one connected with the picture, including Orson, knew it was me who accidentally spilled the beans," Warrick remembers.

She said she had casually mentioned the film's basis to a reporter, who told his editor, who told gossip columnist Louella Parsons, who told the world.

Bowing to pressure from Hearst, Radio City agreed to not show the movie, and the studio, RKO, was forced to convert the Palace, an old vaudeville house, into a movie theater for the premiere.

"Believe me," says Warrick, "I suffered guilt over that one for years."



HYDERABAD, India: An undated publicity shot shows aging Indian film star and former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh N.T. Rama Rao in the newly released film "Brahmarishi Viswamitra" which he hopes will help him to win in next month's election. Rama Rao is chairman of the leading national election contender, the National Front. Rama Rao, 63, wrote, scripted, edited, directed and produced the three-hour film in which he stars as a mythical, short tempered champion of the poor. —AFP photo

BRIEFLY

University to reopen in Burma: Burmese military authorities are to reopen a university in Mandalay next month more than three years after the country's universities were closed in a crackdown on student led protests, Radio Rangoon said Tuesday, reports AFP from Bang Kok.

The official radio said in a report monitored here that the Mandalay Arts and Science University (MASU) would reopen on May 14 in Burma's second largest city.

MASU would be the first university to reopen since all of the country's educational institutions were shut down in 1988 prior to the bloody military coup that brought the present regime to power.

Students enrolling at the university must sign an agreement not to participate in any student unrest, the radio said.

Elizabeth welcomes Walesa: Queen Elizabeth rolled out a red carpet welcome for Polish President Lech Walesa and promised him Britain's support in his task of building a prosperous democracy out of the ashes of communism, reports Reuter from London.

The former shipyard electrician who led Poland's overthrow of communist rule was greeted with British pomp and pageantry when he arrived on Tuesday for the first state visit to Britain by a Polish leader since World War Two.

Walesa is seeking to use his high-profile trip to gain foreign help for Poland's economy, which is struggling under the burden of debts to the West, and to involve Britain more closely in the transformation of eastern Europe.

UN to aid Cambodian refugees: The United Nations will soon set up a coordinating agency for aid to displaced people in Cambodia, a UN aid worker said Tuesday, reports AFP from Phnom Penh.

Meanwhile the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for assistance to Cambodia is due to formally ask donor countries for several million dollars late this week, the UN source added.

S A M Kibria's appeal follows a meeting in Bangkok of donor nations at which a report with a full breakdown of the requested amount was presented.

The donor nations are due to respond at a meeting in May, when they will have had time to examine the report, the source said, adding that he was confident at least half the amount would be pledged.

Quake hits northern Japan: A strong earthquake with a preliminary reading of 5.5 on the Richter scale hit northern Japan, Wednesday, the central Meteorological Agency said, reports AP from Tokyo.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties from the 9:32 a.m. (0032 GMT) tremor near Kushiro, a coastal city on the northern island of Hokkaido, the agency said. It said there was no danger of the quake generating a tsunami, or huge sea wave.

The agency said the quake's epicenter was located 60 kilometers (38 miles) below the sea floor some 65 kilometers (40 miles) southeast of Kushiro, which is about 890 kilometers (560 miles) north of Tokyo.

One million die of malaria each year: Malaria kills between one and two million people throughout the world every year and the parasite which spreads the disease is resisting drugs used to combat it, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday, reports Reuter from Geneva.

"Malaria remains one of the most serious and widely-spread tropical diseases in the world today," the United Nations agency said in the 1990 edition of its annual report on world health statistics.

More than two billion people — over 40 per cent of the world's population — were exposed in varying degrees to malaria risk in about 100 countries, it said.

The disease, spread mainly by mosquitoes, had increased dramatically in the Americas but China and Thailand in 1988 reported either a decrease in the number of cases or in deaths.

Property tax to be revived in London: Dumping an unpopular tax supported by former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the government said Tuesday that it will revive property taxes to support local government, reports AP from London.

Local taxation had been the dominant issue in special elections in which the governing Conservative Party lost two formerly safe seats. Tuesday's announcement came nine days before local elections.

As her major policy initiative after winning a third term in 1987, Mrs. Thatcher had pushed through a local tax that was assessed against all adults, regardless of income.

For many voters, the result was a sharply higher tax bill and the resulting dissatisfaction contributed to the fall of Mrs. Thatcher in November 1990.