### VP confident of forming govt

FATEHPUR (India), May 18: Former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, wrapping up his campaign for the May 20-26 Indian elections, wooed low caste Hindus and farmers today, saying he was confident of forming the next government, reports Reuter.

Stepping out of an air-conditioned car - a luxury in India - Singh was mobbed by villagers in Fatehpur, his dusty constituency along the Ganges river east of Delhi where he is again seeking election to the national parliament in elections opening on Monday.

Fatehpur is flooded with posters and banners of the rival right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that is gaining ground in campaigning for the polls to be held across India on May 20. 23 and 26.

"But I am getting the votes without putting up banners," said Singh, insisting that the left-wing National Front Alliance which includes his Janata Dal Party was confident of forming the next governwith support of the communists."

"We are going to have a comfortable majority in parliament - the National Front and the left parties." said the 59-year-old Janata Dal leader.

Asked how many seats he expected in parliament he snapped: "We are not handling data, we are handling people."

The comment was typical of a politician who identified with the low castes and outcastes of the region Hindu social hierarchy despite having been born into the rural aristocracy. "We are concerned about

(untouchables)." Singh told people at one village of the constituency, which is in Uttar Pradesh state in the electoralycrucial Hindi-speaking belt on northern India.

The untouchable are at the bottom of the traditional Hindu caste system which still divides India.

be born an untouchable. Singh said, his voice choking with the motion he displayed when stepping down as premier last November after his government lost majority support in parliament.

Singh lost the majority when the BJP withdraw its backing from his 11 month-old government in a dispute over a religious site in the Ayodhya town of Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP, widely regarded along with Rajiv Gandhi's Congress as frontrunners in the election, is campaigning in favour of building a Hindu temple at the site where an old mosque now stands in Ay-

Singh, seeking the support of the country's 120 million Muslims, attacked the BJP. saying it was dividing the nation and was in danger of becoming a fascist organisation.

Singh quit Gandhi's government in 1987 and launched an anti-corruption campaign which brought him to power in the 1989 general election on a wave of support from the common man.

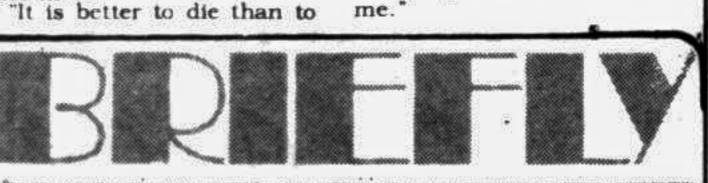
He then announced a controversial plan to set aside nearly 50 per cent of government jobs for the low castes winning the backing of that section of Indian society.

The plan alienated the upper castes, and sparked caste riots and self-immolations by upper caste Hindu boys and

But, amid applause, Singh said in Fatehpur that his party's commitment to the low castes was unchanged.

People offered garlands and at one place, a motor mechanic rushed up to Singh, who was dressed in white cotton, and clasped his hands.

Singh, ever the shrewed politician, held up his soiled hand to the public and said: "look at the grease. These are the people who will vote for



Zemin for alliance with Moscow:

Chinese Communist leader Jiang Zemin said in Moscow on Friday he wanted to see a return to the Sino-Soviet alliance that existed in the 1950s before the two countries fell into bitter political rivalry, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Jiang said after three days of talks, which included a meeting with President Mikhail Gorbachev, that China and the Soviet Union had overcome the confrontation that spilled over into border clashes 30 years ago. Relations between both states and their communist parties were now normalised.

"This means that we intend to return to the state of relations we had in the 1950s. These are relations between allies", he told a news conference.

Pretoria to crush guerilla warfare: South Africa vowed to crush any revival of urban guerilla warfare after bombers exploded two limpet mines in Johannesburg, wounding 13 people, Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

Law and Order Ministry spokesman Craig Kotze said bombers would be fought with all resources at the police's command.

"The police anti-terrorist ability will be used to track down the perpetrators of these latest bomb outrages," he said.

"Terrorism and violence can only breed counter violence." Six blacks were wounded when a mine went off in a shopping complex toilet on Friday less than 24 hours after a mine tore through a restaurant in the city centre, injuring

Preparation for Castro's fall: Cuban exile officials in Miami announced on Friday formation of a blue-ribbon panel to prepare plans to help the Caribbean Nation in the event Premier Fidel Castro should fall, Reuter reports from Miami.

According to Jorge Mas Canosa, Chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation, even some officials of the Cuban government have been urging the exile community to prepare such plans for the last two years. He declined to elaborate.

The 20-member panel includes several US Senators and Congressmen, Former United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Economist Arthur Laffer and Malcolm Forbes Jr. Publisher of Forbes Magazine, as well as other businessmen, economists and experts on Cuba.

Blasts in South Lebanon: Four people were killed when two bombs exploded inside Israel's selfdeclared "Security Zone" in South Lebanon on Friday, security sources said. Reuter reports from Marjayoun.

They said the bombs, apparently aimed at militias of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) which patrols the zone, went off within minutes of each other at a crossroad in the Bint Jbeil area.

They said four civilians were killed in the two blasts. Three people, including an SLA member, were wounded. The pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) claimed

responsibility for the bomb attack.

reports from Beirut.

Self-immolation in S. Korea: A young South Korean woman killed herself and a teenage high school student was rushed to hospital Saturday in two more self-immolation protests against the government of President

Roh Tae-Woo, Reuter reports from Seoul. Witnesses said the woman, who reports said was in her 20s, leaped in flames from a railway bridge opposite a Seoul campus as a funeral march for a slain student set out beneath. A spokesman for the Enarby Yonsei University Hospital

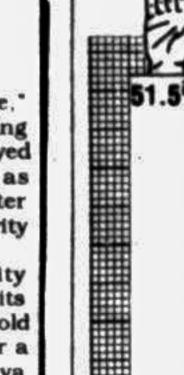
said she died shortly after admission. Libya delivers 34 tanks to Lebanon: The Libyan freighter Donna Tripoli delivered 34 Soviet-made T-55 tanks to Beirut on Friday - a gift from Colonel Muammar Gaddafi to Lebanon's reviving regular army, Reuter

Libyan Ambassador Ashour al-Firtas supervised the unloading, telling reporters the arms were "for defending Lebanon's sovereignty and borders".

Caffeine helps ward off stroke effects: Caffeine in tea, coffee and cola drinks may help ward off the crippling effects of strokes, the Canadian National Research Council said on Friday, Reuter reports from Ottawa.

A study by the council and neurosurgeons at the University of Manitoba found that a majority of rats given regular doses of caffeine did not suffer brain damage after a stroke, the

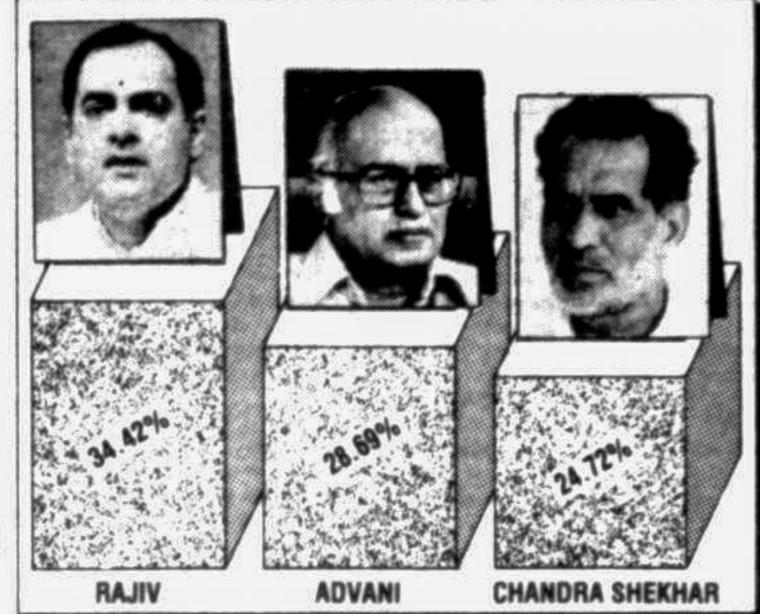
Canadian press reported. Rats not given regular doses of caffeine suffered damage after strokes, it said.



If the contest is between the Congress (I) and the BJP, what will you do:

QBack Congress (1): 51.5% **□Back BJP: 44.8%** ■No to both: 3.7%

CONGRESS



Who will be the best Prime Minister:

□Rajiv Gandhi: 34.4% QL.K.Advani: 28.7%

QChandra Shekhar: 24.7% Dyoti Basu: 5.8%

QV.P.Singh: 3.6%

Can a coalition of parties provide a stable govt at the Centre?

QNo: 87.4% QYes: 11.9%

CALCUTTA: An opinion poll, conducted by leading English daily The Telegraph found Rajiv Gandhi's Congress as victor in ensuring polls. Only the election results will tell how true is the verdict, reflected in the opinion poll.

Janata Dal loses secular character: Vajpayee

## BJP fomenting communal violence, says Azad

JAIPUR, May 18: The Congress (I) General Secretary, Gulam Nabi Azad, today claimed that his party would win at least 300 Lok Sabha seats in the elections, report Agencies.

Speaking at a news conference here, Azad said the mood of the electorate was clearly infavour of the Congress (I) because the non-Congress government at the centre had time and again failed to honour people's mandate.

He said the common man wanted a stable government at the centre which could bring down prices of essential commodities, create employment opportunities and make an atmosphere of communal amity in the country. Only the Congress (I) was in

a position to fulfill these aspirations of the people, he said. Azad accused the BJP of fomenting communal strife in the country for its narrow political gains and said this act of BJP would disintegrate the

country. He said the last 15 months rule by non-Congress(I) governments had put the country's economy in reverse gear.

He said various development projects, initiated by the Congress (I) government, were stopped by the successive non-Congress(I) governments at the centre making the life of poor people miserable.

A Vidisha report says: The BJP leader Atal Behari Vaipayee last night alleged that the Janata Dal had lost its secular character as it 'approached' the Jama Masjid

lmam for votes. "What kind of secularism the Janata Dal is following". the BJP leaders asked at an election meeting here on the



Who will be better as chief minister of West Bengal?

☐Jyoti Basu:49.6%

Siddhartha Shankar Ray: 45.4% CALCUTTA: The Daily Telegraph rated Jyoti Basu as a better chief minister of West Bengal. last leg of his two-day

whilewind poll tour of Madhya Pradesh.

Disputing newspaper re-

aged defections like hearttransplantations. 'Dal badalte hai, badalte hai, the reference being to VC Shukla, who is Congress (I) candidate in Raipur Lok Sabha constituency. Shukla had quit the Samajwadi Janata Dal recently to join the Congress (I).

ports which said the BJP was

losing its hold in Madhya

Pradesh and Rajasthan, Vaj-

payee said he was confident

his party would improve upon

its performance in the last

Congress (I) saying it encour-

He had a dig at the

Closing in for the kill

AFP adds: Lal Krishna Advani is a veteran but unassuming parliamentarian who has brought aggressive Hindu nationalism to the centre stage of India's traditionally secular politics in his drive for power.

A family man with impeccable personal credentials, the 63-year-old multi-faceted Advani is responsible for the rapid transformation of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from a sidekick to one closing in for the kill.

The former journalist gives no apologies for using Hindu religion as a ladder to office. though it has put a question mark on India's secular standing and threatens an unprecedented Hindu-Muslim divide.

"I will not be defensive (about Hindusim). We have been defensive for too long, "

claiming that his cadre-based, right-wing party was capable of capturing office in elections next week. It is his standard answer as

Advant said recently, while

he brushes aside all criticism as "pseudo secularism" and projects the BJP (Indian People's Party) as the ultimate answer to all perennial ills of the world's second most populous

Polisters say the BJP, which put 86 MPs in Parliament in the November 1989 poll as part of a broad opposition alliance, is riding an unprecedented wave of support and can expect a major swing in its favour.

For the first time the party is seeking to from a government in New Delhi and has put up a record 479 nominees for the 545-member parliament Lower House, posing the main challenge to ex-Premier Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) Party.

The urbane-looking, medium-build politician's greatest asset is his ability to project himself differently to different audiences, all the while underlining a passionate commitment to Hinduism in the grab of secular nationalism.

At the heart of Advani's barnstorming campaign is the call for a Hindu temple at the site of a 16th century mosque in the town of Ayodhya, a festering row that brought down Vishwanath Pratap Singh's coalition government in November.

### US to move 3,700 troops from Germany to Kuwait

WASHINGTON, May 18: A brigade of 3,700 US armoured troops will be moved from Germany to Kuwait until September while the Emirate regroups its own military in the wake of the Gulf war, the US Defence Department announced on Priday, reports Reuter.

'We have agreed as a temporary measure to leave forces there for now," Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said in a brief statement released by the Pentagon. He stressed the United Stater did not want a permanent troop presence in the

The troops from the 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment based in Fulda, Germany, will be in Kuwait by mid-June to replace American troops being withdrawn from there. They will remain until September 1.

the Pentagon said. Cheney told reporters on a

recent trip to the Gulf that Kuwaiti leaders had asked that American troops be left in the

country temporarily A Baghdad report adds Kurdish rebel leader Massoud Barzant said Friday talks with the Iraqi government had cleared some key obstacles but an autonomy deal had not yet been reached

There is not full agreement in all areas but the difficult things we have passed," Barzani told reporters at his hotel.

Baghdad's negotiating team, headed by President Saddam Hussein's deputy, Izzat Ibrahim, remained tightlipped about the talks, aimed at ending a dispute which has dogged Iraq for decades.

The rebel leader, dressed in khaki uniform, said he was ready to stay in Baghdad until full agreement was reached.

### Off the Record

### Long-distance love key to healthy marriage

HONG KONG: Long-distance love produces healthy marriages, according to officials in China's special economic zone of Zhuhai, reports Reuter.

Zhuhai boasts a low 1.6 per cent divorce rate among the 4,500 locals who have married foreigners in the past 12 years, the China News Service said on Friday. "On the whole these marriages are healthy and stable," a

Civil Affairs Bureau official was quoted by CNS as saying. The foreign marriages included people from neighbouring Hong Kong and Macau, fishermen and foreigners, said CNS

monitored in Hong Kong. Many only see each other at week-

Many Hong Kong men, especially construction workers and other labourers, prefer marrying women from the mainland because they say they are cheaper to support.

#### Saudi buys the largest sapphire

GENEVA: The largest sapphire ever put on auction was purchased Thursday night by a Saudi businessman for 2.3 million dollars, more than twice the presale estimate, reports

The cushion-shaped sapphire - weighing a massive 337.6 carats and set in a diamond and platinum mount in 1910 was featured at a Christie's jewelry sale in a Geneva luxury ho-

The purchaser, Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Fitahi, owner of one of the leading Jeddah department stores, was quoted by the auctioneers as saying he wanted to sell this "magnificent jewel in my country." The previous owner was not identified. Christie's spokeswoman Pauline Schaefer said that only

four larger sapphires are known to exist, all in museums. They include the 536-carat "Star of India" in the American Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. and the 548carat gem known as "Peter the Great's Nose." in the Green



BONN: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl yelling at the

egg-thrower. Egg-thrower resigns

BONN: Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who had to be restrained from attacking egg-throwing demonstrators in East Germany last week, said Friday it was fortunate that a police barrier had prevented him from getting at them. reports Reuter.

Commenting on the incident in Halle, the conservative Chancellor said he had been shaking hands with friendly bystanders when a small group of left-wing protesters started throwing eggs, one of which hit him in the face.

"As I have no intention of running away when someone stands there pelting me. I went towards them," he told a news conference.

There was a barrier in the way and that was just as well for whom, I will not say. I leave that to you", he added with a broad smile.

Security men laid hold of the burly Chancellor and moved him away from the demonstrators, who were angry at the economic collapse of former communist East Germany.

One of the egg-throwers, Deputy Leader of the local youth branch of the opposition Social Democrats (SPD), resigned from the party on Friday, the SPD said. Matthias Schipke, who faced disciplinary proceedings,

#### said he wanted to spare the SPD further embarrassment. So many shoes only to

MANILA: Former First Lady Imelda Marcos says she collected thousands of shoes to promote the Philippines' footwear industry, and now is living on friends' charity, re-

In the latest installment of an interview with a Manila television station. Mrs Marcos said only a 'very small percent-

age" of her shoes were Italian-made. Most were local products given to her by manufacturers,

More than 1,600 pairs of Mrs Marcos's shoes were put on display at the Presidential Palace Museum in Manila after she fled to the United States with her husband, deposed Dictator

Ferdinand Marcos, after a 1986 popular revolt. A fire hit the museum last weekend, but the fabled shoes were spared.

conducted in New York. She said that because her resources have been tied up in litigation, "I am on welfare from relatives and friends".

She gave special mention to US Tobacco heiress Doris Duke, who posted her five-million-dollar bail when she went on trial in New York last year for racketeering. Mrs Marcos

"She, for me, is the statue of liberty made real", Mrs Marcos said.

### Birendra may call Koirala to form govt

## Nepali Congress wins absolute majority

KATHMANDU, May 18: The moderate Nepali Congress has won Nepal's first multi-party elections in 32 years. Chief Election Commissioner Surya

Prasad Shrestha said today. With eight results remaining Congress had won 104 seats in the 205-seat House of Representatives, he told

Reuters. Running a strong second was the United Marxist-Leninist (UML) Party with 68 seats. Potential UML allies on the left won 13 seats and to-

gether they appear set to form a powerful opposition. "His majesty the King has been officially informed about the majority received by the Nepali Congress, Shrestha

King Birendra, traditionally revered as the reincarnation of a Hindu god, yielded to sometimes bloody pro-democracy protests just over a year ago and gave up his absolute powers, promising open elections to replace the partyless system then in place.

Prasad Koirala, a hardline anticommunist from a prominent dissident family who once worked in a jute mill when political parties were illegal, to

He is likely to call on Giraja form a government.

Prime Minister Krishna

Prasad Bhattarai, the Congress

leader who headed an interim

coalition government with the communists after Birendra le-

galised parties, embarrassingly

UML leader in Kathmandu. Two monarchist parties, formed by powerful figures in the partyless system and both called the National Democratic Party, were virtually wiped out, they won a total of four seats.

> Parliament is to meet for the first time on Tuesday, by when the last results should be known from remote mountain constituencies where people often walked for several hours

Congress is then likely to elect Koirala as its parliamentary leader and Birendra is expected to summon him to the palace and ask him to form a government.

lost by a narrow margin to a Indian Army Chief visits border

## Pakistan claims killing 90 Indian troops

ISLAMABAD, May 18: Pakistani troops destroyed a strategically important Indian post situated on the line of actual control in Kashmir on May 2, reports Xinhua.

This was reported by local press today quoting a dispatch of a defense correspondent of Pakistan Press International The Indian post was at

Bugna village of the Karan sector of the actual control line in Kashmir. The commanding officer of a Pakistan Army unit presently deployed in the Karan sector

told the PPI Friday that the

Indian Army resorted to firing

to disrupt the smooth flow of

traffic on roads in the nearby

areas controlled by Pakistan The Pakistan Army had to

silent the guns on the Indian Post in retaliations of the Indian Army's firings on civilian targets, he said. About 90 Indian troops have

been killed in border clashes between Pakistani and Indian troops in the disputed Kashmir, according to the dispatch. No more details of the clashes and the reason of the

delayed information were

given. Meanwhile AFP reports from New Delhi, Indian Army Chief Sunith Rodriguez visited Kashmir's border with Pakistan today and asked soldiers deployed there to give "a hot

reception to any intruder."

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said General Rodriguez went to army formations in Chowkibal, Kupwara and Gurez in the northern state where Indian and Pakistani armies shelled each other for more than one week this month.

At least five Pakistani troopers, four Indian soldiers and 10 Pakistani civilians reportedly died in the shelling. which forced the two armies to order a truce.

The exchange of fire erupted May 5 after Indian troops said they gunned down 91 Muslim separatist guerillas who illegally entered Kashmir Maxico in April. from Pakistan.

#### Israel deports 4 Palestinians from Gaza

MARJAYOUN (Lebanon). May 18: Israel deported four Palestinians today after accusing them of organising Arab resistance in the Israeli-Occupied Gaza strip, security

sources said, reports Reuter. An Israeli helicopter flew the four to the Jewish state's self-declared security zone in south Lebanon two day's after the Israeli Supreme Court upheld an expulsion order and rejected defence lawyers' calls

for a further appeal. Israel has expelled 66 Palestinians during a 41 month-long uprising against Israeli rule in the occupied territories, a policy condemned internationally as a violation of the fourth Geneva

#### 18 killed in Mexican jail riot

convention.

MEXICO CITY, May 18: At least 11 people died in a riot triggered by an attempt to kill an alleged drug lord in a prison in Mexico, the government news agency Notimex said today, reports Reuter.

The riot in the prison at

Matamoros, just across the

border from Brownsville,

Texas, erupted on Friday afternoon when an unidentifled inmate tried to kill Oliverio Chavez, it said. Chavez was injured in the attack and his attack was later

lynched by fellow inmates. Notimex said. Chavez was accused late last month of running a major Mexican drug ring with ties to Colombia's Medellin cartel from his prison cell.

Police said members of his gang were caught trying to smuggle 1,5000 pounds (700KG) of cocaine into

# promote industry'

ports AFP.

"Thank God, when they opened Imelda's closet, they found shoes and not skeletons," Mrs Marcos said in the interview,

was eventually acquitted.