

A look at preliminary results of Soviet referendum

The preliminary results of Sunday's referendum in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation about the future of the Soviet Union and the introduction of the post of President of Russia indicate an extensive turnout, according to Tass. According to unofficial data supplied by referendum committees in Soviet Republics, in Uzbekistan 95.4 per cent of eligible

voters took part in the polls, in Kazakhstan — 88.2 per cent, in Azerbaijan — more than 70 per cent, in Kirghizia — 92.8 per cent, in Tajikistan — 93.5 per cent and in Turkmenia — 97.7 per cent. In these republics and regions voters were clearly in favour of the preservation of the union. In Kazakhstan, for instance, the number of people favouring the idea of the union reached 94.1 per cent.

40m to be AIDS virus carriers by 2000

TOKYO, March 19 : Some 40 million people around the world will be carrying the AIDS virus by the end of the century, a doctor responsible for an international effort to fight the disease was quoted in today's press here as saying, reports AFP.

Michael Merson, Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) global programme on AIDS, said that 30 million adults and 10 million children will be infected by the year 2000.

Asia and Latin America are expected to see rapid growth in the number of cases, Mr Merson added.

The WHO had earlier estimated the number of adult AIDS carriers at 15 million to 20 million by the end of the century but those figures were too low, he said.

Despite the decision of authorities in the three Baltic republics — Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania — not to hold the referendum on the future of the union. Hundreds of thousands of people in those republics went to polling stations on March 17. Tass was told that in Lithuania 652,000 citizens went to the polls. Of these, 96.7 per cent voted in favour of preserving the renewed union. The republic has a population totalling 3,690,000.

The results of voting in Byelorussia proved better than the most optimistic forecasts by sociologists: 83.3 per cent of eligible voters came to polling stations. Of these 82.6 per cent favoured the preservation of the union.

According to preliminary unofficial data provided by 12 out of 88 voting districts of Russia, the largest Soviet republic, 74 per cent of those polled voted for the

preservation of the union and 23 per cent against. As regards the introduction of an executive Presidency in Russia, in 18 constituencies 68 per cent of voters expressed themselves in favour of the move and 29 per cent were against.

The results of the referendum in some regions and major cities somewhat differ from the republic's average. For instance, in Sverdlovsk region, the home of Russian Parliament leader Boris Yeltsin, only 49.36 per cent of those who went to the polls said yes to the union, with 47.89 per cent against. Of the total number of those polled in Sverdlovsk, 85.93 per cent favoured an executive presidency in the republic, clearly favouring Yeltsin for the post.

In Russia's two largest cities — Moscow and Leningrad — about 70 per cent of eligible voters went to the polls. Of these, more than a half voted for the preservation of the union and still more for the introduction of an executive presidency in Russia.

16,000 deaths reported in Najaf, Karbala

Allies won't allow Iraq to use planes against rebels

DHARAN, Saudi Arabia, Mar 19: The US led Gulf coalition has refused permission for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to reorganise his air force to fight rebels battling his troops in the North and South of the country, reports Reuter.

A US military spokeswoman said Allied officers told their defeated Iraqi counterparts at talks on Sunday that they could not fly combat aircraft and could use helicopters only to transport personnel.

The spokeswoman was giving the first details from US Central Command of the meeting. Earlier, US Secretary of State James Baker said the Allies had turned down Iraq's request to move aircraft.

Military sources said

Saddam wanted to reorganise his Air Force to counter an uprising against which he had already used attack helicopters.

The coalition and Iraqi officers also agreed to speed up the return home of some 60,000 Iraqi soldiers captured in the Gulf War, and thousands of Kuwaitis abducted from their homes by the Iraqi Army, the military sources said.

Representatives of Iraq's Army and of the US led coalition which routed it in the six-week war for Kuwait met for one hour in southern Iraq on Sunday to discuss Iraq's request to move its aircraft in

the US military has accused Iraq of violating a provisional ceasefire by flying some fixed-wing aircraft.

Western military sources said the Allies warned Iraq before the meeting that if any more planes were flown they would be shot down.

Fighting on
AP reports from Nicosia that: Shi'ite and Kurdish rebels say they are repulsing ferocious government attempts to regain control of cities throughout Iraq.

Refugees spoke of desperate and growing hunger in embattled Basra. And all sides agreed that the casualty toll was high.

Refugees told reporters with US forces on Monday that rebels still held parts of the ravaged southern port city, which was being pounded by loyalist tanks and artillery. "Basra is full of bodies," said

refugee Sahid Shaban. "Dogs are eating them everywhere. There's no food, no water".

Tehran radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp in London, said 12,000 to 16,000 people were reported killed on the highway between the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in the south. It gave no source for the figure.

Iraqi government newspapers reported that rioters had devastated cities in the south, killing innocent men, women and children.

Salam Al-Shama, writing in the official newspaper Al-Jumhuriyah, said when he toured Karbala, he saw bodies stacked in hospitals and blood everywhere.

"Blood was painted on the streets and the walls of the city. It was all blood, blood, blood," he wrote.

Kuwait Crown Prince Saad Abdullah Al-Sabah told visiting US Congressmen that intelligence reports showed Iraqi forces "have not been able to control the situation, especially in the northern part of Iraq".

"In the southern part of Iraq, especially the areas that are in the borderline between Iran and Iraq, this is some sort of no-man's land. It is not under control of either the Iraqis or the Iranians," he said.

The Iraqi army newspaper Al-Qadisiyah reported Monday that anti-government riots had been crushed in the southern cities of Najaf, Karbala, Hilla, Amarra and in Dhi Qar province.

But Bayan Jabr, spokesman for the Shi'ite Supreme Assembly for the Islamic

Revolution in Iraq, said battle

seesawed back and forth.

Kurdish rebel officials claimed they continue to control a vast swath of the north. Sami Abdul Rahman of the Kurdistan Peoples Democratic Party said in Syria that Kurdish rebels hold all or part of the districts of Kirkuk, Suleimaniyah, Erbil, Dehok, Jalalawa and Khanaqin.

Iraqi regime forces are using tanks, helicopters, heavy guns, rockets and napalm and phosphorus bombs," said the communique issued in London by the umbrella group for Kurdish rebels.

Both the Shi'ite and Kurdish rebels accused the army of using napalm and phosphorus bombs to smother the revolts against Saddam Hussein.

Iraq's government newspapers confirmed that widespread fighting had devastated cities throughout the country.

But they blamed most of the damage and deaths on 'mobs of Saboteurs' and agents of foreign governments.

Western reporters have not been able to reach the battle grounds and neither rebel nor government claims could be verified.

But the refugees who crossed US military lines on Monday put the death toll in Basra at more than 5,000. They said food was so short they were eating animal feed mixed with sea water.

But they also reported that white-painted helicopters, apparently from Iran, were dropping supplies into rebel-held parts of the city.

Gorbachev fails to get absolute mandate to preserve unity

MOSCOW, Mar 19 : President Mikhail Gorbachev has failed to win overwhelming support in Sunday's referendum on preserving the Soviet Union and early results gave little hope of harmony between the Kremlin and Republics, reports Reuter.

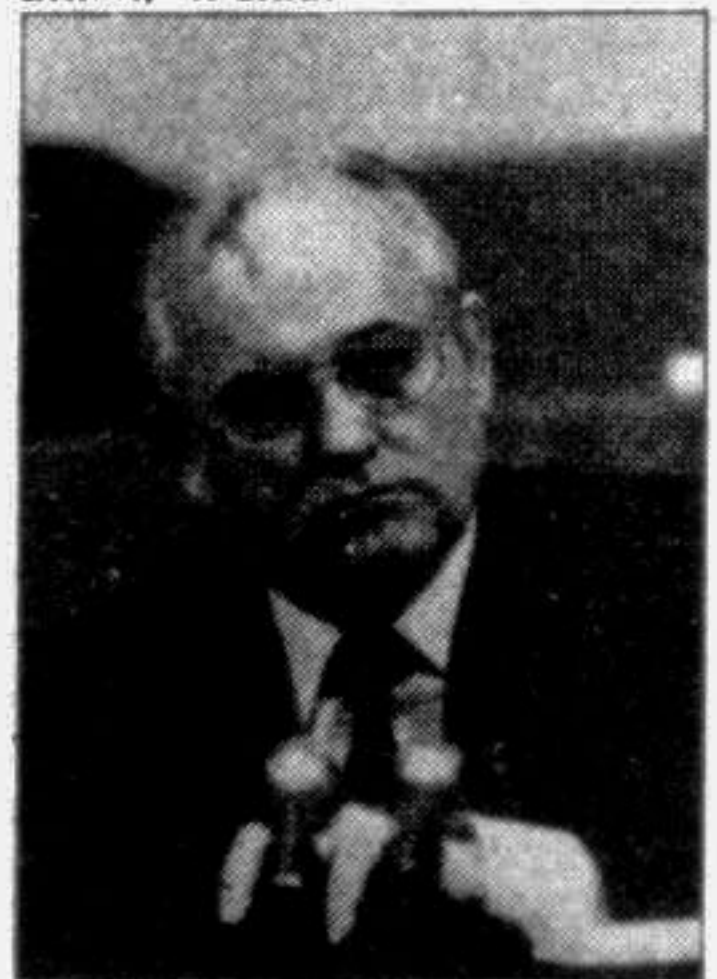
The reformist newspaper Izvestia said Monday most of the 120 million or so people who voted favoured Gorbachev's formula for "a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics". But early returns from several regions showed the Soviet leader was far from securing the strong-mandate he sought.

The official Tass news agency said that in Moscow and Leningrad, the two largest cities, where there have been recent vast anti-Gorbachev demonstrations "more than half voted for preservation of the union."

Other sources put the Moscow vote at about 50 per cent in favour, with many more voting for a second proposal on the Russian Federation ballot for establishing an executive presidency in the republic — an idea opposed by Gorbachev.

Tass said there was a high turnout. It quoted unofficial data showing solid backing for preserving the union in southern republics, especially the wheat-growing central Asian

Republic Kazakhstan. "In these republics and regions, voters were clearly in favour of preservation of the union," it said.



Gorbachev



Yeltsin

"In Kazakhstan, for instance, the number of people favouring the idea of the union reached 94.1 per cent of ballots cast.

Local officials in Kazakhstan amended the referendum question to give greater emphasis to republican sovereignty.

Tass gave less emphasis to results from the giant Russian Federation, which has been involved in a ferocious tug-of-war with the Kremlin over political and economic jurisdiction.

The official agency said returns from 12 out of 88 voting districts in Russia showed about 74 per cent backing for union.

Unofficial results from 18 Russian constituencies showed 68 per cent in favour of a directly-elected president. The post is likely to be won by the popular Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, who might then pose a greater challenge to Gorbachev as the country's first freely-elected leader.

Another challenge to the Kremlin chief could come from the powerful Ukrainian Republic where voters backed the idea of a "renewed union," but on their own radical terms, which include proposals opposed by the central authorities.

Final results from the first

referendum in Soviet history are not expected for about 10 days.

Six republics refused to cooperate in the vote, including the Baltic republics Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia who held their own polls recently and won widespread support for their independence.

Georgia, Armenia and Moldova, all ethnic trouble spots, also resisted the poll. Pro-Moscow communists and the Soviet army set up stations to allow some voting.

There was little serious violence reported on referendum day, but Georgian Radio reported fresh fighting in the south Ossetia region on Monday.

It said four Georgians had petrol poured over them and were burned alive after being ambushed by Ossetians.

After the referendum, Ossetians began firing rockets and throwing grenades at Georgian militia posts near the south Ossetian capital Tskhinvali, the radio said.

More than 40 people have been killed in fighting between Georgians and Ossetians since late last year.

Georgian nationalists leadership in seeking to impose its authority over the region, whose population largely favours staying within the Soviet Union.

BRIEFLY

Foreigners leaving Ethiopia :

European countries and Canada, following the United States, have encouraged non-essential embassy personnel and dependants to leave Ethiopia following major victories by powerful northern rebels, reports AP.

An official at the Soviet Embassy in the capital, Addis Ababa, denied that the Soviets also had issued a similar directive. But the official, Vasily Yunak, said several embassy staff had decided to take their vacations early.

The 12 European Community countries and Canada issued advisories late last week urging all embassy dependants and non-essential staff to leave the Horn of Africa nation on commercial flights, according to diplomats interviewed by telephone.

Editor charged with rebellion :

A Filipino newspaper editor and 29 other civilians believed to be members of a separatist group have been charged with rebellion for joining a mutiny last year, a state prosecutor said in Manila Tuesday, reports AP.

Lorenzo Dela Serna, Secretary-General of the Mindanao Independence Movement and Publisher-Editor of the Mindanao Post newspaper, topped the list of those charged for aiming a short-lived rebellion last October, prosecutor Aurelio Trampe told Agency France — Presse.

They were accused of helping Former Army Colonel Alexander Nobel take over a military camp in Butuan city, on the southern island of Mindanao.

March to Bulgarian parliament :

Some 2,500 Vietnamese guest workers enraged by a bloody police raid on their homes at the weekend attempted to march to the Bulgarian parliament with the corpse of a worker killed in the violence, reports Reuter.

The March was prevented by hundreds of police and anti-terrorist forces who ringed the shabby prefabricated hostels which are home to thousands of guest workers.

The worker was shot dead on Sunday as Bulgarian police stormed the hostels in an attempt to break up Vietnamese-controlled black market. Police say they were shot at and attacked by Vietnamese with clubs and knives.

Seven killed in Colombo :

Three policemen and four leftist rebels were killed Monday and two police were missing when some 30 guerrillas attacked government buildings and robbed a bank in a southwestern Colombian town, police in Bogota said, reports Reuter.

Rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) raided the town of Candelaria 300 kms southwest of Bogota, where they fired on municipal offices and the police station and stole 2,500 Dollars from a bank, said the police spokesman who asked not to be identified.

Nazi war crimes trial stopped :

Germany's longest trial of a Nazi war crime suspect has been thrown out after more than nine years without a decision in the case, a court spokeswoman said Monday, reports AP.

Justice officials decided to break off the trial after it was determined the jury selection had not met all legal technicalities, said state court spokeswoman Dorothea Wevel von Kuger.

She did not elaborate. Heinrich Niemeyer, a former Nazi guard at the Auschwitz death camp in occupied Poland, was charged with killing Polish and Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz and another camp at nearby Gleiwitz during World War II. Niemeyer was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison in 1979 for allegedly murdering 10 Poles at Auschwitz.

Nixon to visit Lithuania :

Former US President Richard Nixon travels to Lithuania next weekend at the invitation of Republic's President Vytautas Landsbergis, the Lithuania information centre said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Nixon, who arrived in Moscow on Monday is due to spend Saturday and Sunday in Vilnius, the centre said. It marks the first visit by a former US President to the dissident Soviet Republic.

Nixon was visiting the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. The United States has never recognised the Soviet takeover of Lithuania or the other Baltic Republics, Estonia and Latvia.

10 Ugandan rebels surrender :

Ten officers and soldiers of the rebel National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) surrendered to the government last week, + the new vision + newspaper reported Monday, reports Xinhua.

The leader of the group, Captain Juma Kapumba, said they opted to lay down their arms because the rebel movement was collapsing and the government was practising a policy of reconciliation.

He also disclosed that before they left the Rwenzori mountains in western Uganda where they were operating, there were only 102 rebel soldiers in the region.

BJP vows to build temple in Ayodhya by October

NEW DELHI, Mar 19 : India's right-wing Hindu party has vowed to build a controversial temple to the God Rama by October whether or not it wins May's general election, party officials said on Monday, reports Reuter.

"If we come to power, then construction will begin immediately," said Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Vice President K.R. Malkani. "If we don't, construction will begin by October," he said in a telephone interview.

The proposed temple in the North Indian town of Ayodhya is potentially one of the most divisive issues of the election campaign.

Nearly 700 people were killed late last year when thousands of militant Hindus marched in processions to Ayodhya intending to tear down a 16th-century mosque built by the Moghul conqueror of North India and build the Rama Temple in its place.

The campaign was stopped by tens of thousands of paramilitary police, who repelled repeated attempts by the militants to storm the mosque.

The arrest of BJP leader Lal Krishan Advani last October while he was leading one of the processions led to the fall of Vishwanath Pratap Singh's National Front Government.

About 1,000 people were killed in Hindu-Muslim rioting over the temple issue in the run-up to the 1989 general election which tumbled former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi from power.

Political analysts say Gandhi's clumsy handling of the inflammatory issue was a major reason for his defeat.

"Ayodhya has become a turning point in independent

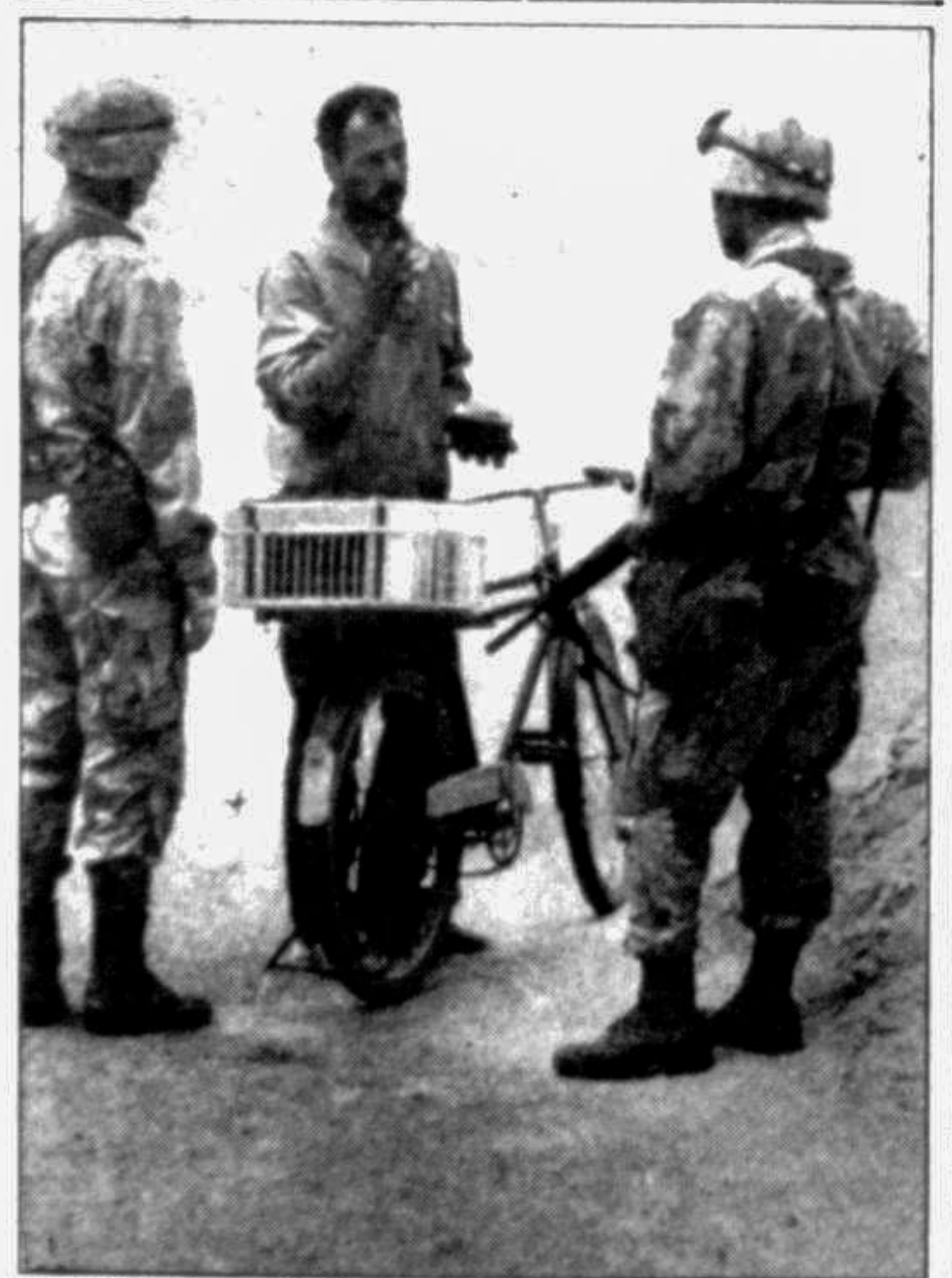
India," said a political statement issued by the BJP on Sunday.

About three-quarters of India's 850 million people are Hindus, Muslims from a minority of 100 million.

Diplomats and political analysts had credited Chandra Shekhar, who split Singh's party to form a precarious mi-

nority government, with successful delaying tactics over the temple before he quit this month, precipitating the election.

India has espoused a philosophy of secularism with special rights for minorities since independence from Britain in 1947, a policy that the BJP has questioned.



SAFWAN, Iraq: An Iraqi who had fled fighting during the war talks with US soldiers as he returns to Basra from Safwan March 18.

Off the Record

Family feuds on display

NEW DELHI: India's election campaign is putting family feuds on display, reports AP.

V.P. Singh's elder brother says he will challenge the former prime minister for his Parliament seat, calling him "politically unreliable and totally unfit".

In an interview with Press Trust of India published in Monday's papers, Sant Bux Singh accused his brother of dividing the country, raising prices and neglecting his constituency during his 11 months in office.

"The last time my younger brother Vishwanath came and requested me, out of love and affection I agreed not to contest" the seat, Singh was quoted as saying. V.P. Singh's government collapsed last November.

The elder son of Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal was quoted Monday as saying he wished his father had never married so that he would have been born someone else's son.

"Had Devi Lal remained a bachelor... he would have been more successful in life and I could have been born in some other family," the son, Pratap Singh, told the Hindustan Times.

He also described his younger brother, Om Prakash Chautala, as "the greatest national evil". Chautala is secretary of the Janata Dal-Socialist Party and formerly chief minister, the top elected official, of the state of Haryana.

Rajiv Gandhi, head of India's largest party and prime minister for five years until 1989, has barely on speaking terms with two of his politician relatives since they parted ways before the last election in November 1989.

Election campaigns opened this weekend for the poll in late May.

Acupuncture in 100 countries

BEIJING : China has set an international examination to test foreigners who want to practise acupuncture and moxibustion-sticking needles into the body and burning herbs to treat a variety of ailments, reports Reuter.

A spokesman for the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine told a news conference that more than 100 countries had people practising traditional Chinese medicine, but there were no recognised, common standards.

"Unfortunately, there are certain differences between the practitioners — in different countries and regions about their theoretical levels and clinical diagnostic and treatment techniques", Xing Sishao said.

The new examination, which the World Health Organisation (WHO) helped establish, will be held for the first time in October.

Applicants can take the test in either English or Chinese, but they must understand and be able to explain theories such as yin and yang (the balance of positive and negative forces) and the five elements (the relationship between water, wood, fire, earth and metal in the body), a statement said.

Future of biology

NEW DELHI: Biologists are likely to confront vital ethical issues as current research takes them into such areas as the human genome project and experiments on human embryos, Nobel laureate Sir Andrew Huxley said, reports PTI.

In a talk at the Indian National Science Academy here Sunday, Sir Huxley said some of the new advances in biology might evoke responses similar to those which followed the publication of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Professor Huxley, winner of the Nobel prize in medicine, said fears have been expressed about the human genome project, an ambitious biology programme that seeks to study the entire structure of genes in the human body.

The human genome project has great potential to prevent genetic diseases, and fears about its possible misuse is no reason to cease such a study, he said in his talk on the future of biology.



Son wishes Devi Lal could have remained a bachelor