

## Tamils massacre 21 Sinhalese

COLOMBO, Apr 21: Tamil rebels shot and hacked to death 21 Sinhalese children and eight adults in the endless spiral of revenge between the main ethnic groups on this one-time tourist haven, according to government reports Sunday, reports AP.

They were among 62 people reported killed Saturday in attacks that spanned nearly the entire length of the Indian Ocean island.

Thirty-eight Tamil rebels and three Tamil civilians died in a series of operations across the heartland of the Tamil minority, military officials said.

More than 16,000 people have been killed since 1983 when militants from the Tamil minority launched a separatist campaign of guerrilla warfare and massacres against the Sinhalese majority that controls the government.

Military officials said Tamil rebels carrying guns and machetes rampaged through Okkimpitaya, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) east of Colombo village Saturday night. They hacked to death seven girls and six boys, all younger than 15, and four women, the officials said, speaking on their usual condition of anonymity. Four men were shot to death, they added.

The attack came a few hours after the largest Tamil rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, accused a Sinhalese village defense force of massacring 16 Tamil civilians in Kattapachichan.

## Four suffocated to death in Bombay

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: Four men suffocated to death in an abandoned well where they were trying to immerse and offering to their goddess, the Press Trust of India said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The agency quoted police as saying the men had climbed into the well at Ichalkaranji, some 300 km (200 miles) south of Bombay, on Friday to put a bamboo basket in the water in a local ritual offering to a Hindu goddess.

# Kurdish leaders in Baghdad to talk settlement with Saddam

REBEL HEADQUARTERS (Northern Iraq), Apr 21: Leaders of four Kurdish groups are in Baghdad trying to negotiate a peaceful settlement to their rebellion against Saddam Hussein, rebel sources said Saturday, reports AP.

The talks started Friday after Saddam expressed readiness "to discuss everything with the Kurdish side except secession," said one source close to the Kurdish leadership. All of the sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Kurds had been reluctant to negotiate with Saddam, fearing he would renege on any agreement once his government recovered from its shattering defeat in Kuwait.

But a spokesman for one Kurdish group said rebel leaders were spurred to act by the plight of hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees who are struggling against cold, hunger and disease in the mountains along the borders with Turkey and Iran.

The refugees fled their homes in northern Iraq when Saddam's forces crushed the rebel uprising, which began after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf war.

The United States and other Western nations are sending troops into northern Iraq to build camps for the Kurdish refugees and protect them from the Iraqi army. But the allies made clear they would not intervene to help the Kurds' rebellion, and Kurdish leaders have conceded they could not topple Saddam without foreign help.

A rebel source said the leaders went to Baghdad after consulting with the permanent members of the UN Security Council — the United States, Britain, France, China and the Soviet Union.

"They were asked whether they would be prepared to guarantee any agreements reached with Saddam and some have already agreed to do so," the source said. The



ISIKVEREN, Turkey (Iraqi border): An Iraqi Kurdish girl pours rain water into a bottle here April 20, in the camp where more than hundred thousand Iraqi Kurds took refuge. Five hundred US Marines landed in northern Iraq Saturday to create a "Security Zone" for the Kurds as part of operation "Provide Comfort". —AFP photo

source would not give any specific details.

A US diplomat at the United Nations, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said she was unaware of any discussions with the Kurds in New York. But she said the permanent members had a regularly scheduled meeting Monday and that the Kurdish situation had been a prominent topic in the recent meetings.

The White House said Saturday it had no knowledge of the meeting in Baghdad, but did not object to talks that might lead to a peaceful return for the refugees.

"If the Kurds are able to work out an arrangement for

their safe return, than obviously we would welcome such a development," White House spokesman John Herrick said.

Falak el-Den Kakal, a spokesman for the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Damascus, Syria, said the trip followed meetings between the Kurdish groups and a delegation from the Iraqi government.

He said the Kurdish leaders included Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Matcheervan Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party, Sami Abdul-Rahman of the People's Party of Kurdistan and Rasoul Mamand of the Kurdish Socialist Party.

Talabani, who negotiated a ceasefire with Saddam to end

unrest in 1984, was the only man the Iraqi President did not grant amnesty to following Saddam's 1988 campaign against the Kurds.

The Kurds' main demand is full respect for a 1970 agreement granting them full autonomy in northern Iraq. The leaders also want a truly democratic and pluralistic political system in Iraq and an end to the dictatorship of Saddam's Arab Socialist Baath Party, sources said.

The Kurds also are seeking hefty compensation from Iraq's oil revenues for the thousands of Kurdish towns razed in recent years to depopulate the border regions, the sources said.

## Seven Muslim militants shot dead in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: Security Forces shot dead seven Muslim separatists in India's Kashmir state, where two Swedish kidnapped late last month by rebels remained missing Sunday, reports AFP.

Paramilitary forces killed the seven after coming under attack from Muslim militants during a house to house sweep for guerrillas and arms at Milagam town in the Kashmir valley late Saturday, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. No further details were available.

Muslim guerrillas also fired a rocket at a security post elsewhere in Kashmir before dawn Sunday, but missed the target, the news agency said. No one was wounded in the attack.

The Guerrillas also bombed and damaged a bridge in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, where more than 2,200 people have been killed since January 1990 in a bloody separatist campaign.

Meanwhile, Indian Security Forces continued searching Sunday for two Swedish engineers seized by Muslim guerrillas March 31, and for six Kashmiri civilians also abducted by suspected separatists, PTI said.

The Muslim Janbaz Force (MJF), which has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of Swedish Olle Loman and John Jansson, has said the two could be freed if New Delhi permitted international human rights groups to visit Kashmir.

The MJF has rejected international appeals demanding the unconditional release of the Swedish engineers, who were employed at a hydroelectric project in Kashmir's Uri district.

## Off the Record

### What's in a name?

APIA: Nobody in western Samoa would ask the question "what's in a name?" Because the answer here is obvious — everything, reports AFP.

Names were a very important factor when this Pacific island state 3,000 kilometres (1,800 miles) north of New Zealand went to the polls in its first elections held under universal suffrage.

Since independence in 1962 only family heads known as Matai have been able to vote and only Matai can stand as candidates in this election.

But there are Matai and there are Matai. First there is the simple division between the Ali'i or high chiefs and the Tulafale or talking chiefs.

The Ali'i get all the honours, but for the politically conscious it's more fund being a Tulafale, especially in a culture in which oratory is a fine art.

Each title is the property of a family in a village and it comes with a block of land and a place on the village council. The titles have a status and at village occasions, the rankings, which never change, are ritually recited.

Everything in people's names flows from their relationship to a Matai, with untitled people normally taking the name of their Matai's title.

Thus the son of Samoa's first Prime Minister Tupua Tamasese Me'olewas is known as a Seli Tamasese.

When his father died, Efi Tamasese acquired other titles and decided to run for Parliament.

## Wanted help for zoo animals

LONDON: The London Zoo is asking the public to donate 17 million Dollars to allow the 165-year-old menagerie to stay open and keep its 8,000 animals in Regent's Park, reports AP.

Zoo director David Jones said in a statement Monday night announcing the Save Our Zoo appeal: "Without public support and financing assistance, the zoo cannot be retained."

The London newspaper The Sunday Times reported the zoo needs 22 million Dollars in emergency funding from the government to remain open beyond next September.

The Department of the Environment said in a statement that in 1988 the department gave the zoo — which is run by a private charity, the Royal Zoological Society — a one-time allotment of 17 million Dollars.

The statement said David Trippier, minister for the environment and countryside, told zoo officials at a meeting last month that there would be no additional government funds.

"There has been a decision in principle to close the zoo," the department statement added, referring to a decision it said was made by the zoological society.

Jones said that after meeting with Trippier, the zoo's governing council made provisional plans to close the zoo and transfer most of the 8,000 animals to its wildlife park at Whipsnade, 30 miles (50 kilometers) from the capital.

## Kim's son may take on diplomatic activities

TOKYO, Apr 21: Kim Jong-Il, son of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung, may take on diplomatic activities, a leading newspaper reported today, reports AFP.

The Aminichi Shinbun quoted Kim Yong-Sun, Director of the International Department of Pyongyang's ruling Korean Workers' Party, as telling Aminichi reporters in the North Korean capital Saturday that Kim Jong-Il, heir apparent to his father, would step up his direct diplomatic activities.

The paper said Kim Yong-Sun's remark indicated that the younger Kim would visit foreign countries or meet foreign dignitaries in Pyongyang on his father's behalf.

## Nine killed in South African violence

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 21: Police today reported nine people killed in South African political violence, pushing the weekend toll to 16, including a black Soweto Mayor and a man who was beheaded and burned, reports Reuters.

Police said they found the burned torso of a man in Vosloorus, one of the Johannesburg black townships worst hit by political violence this year.

The victim had been decapitated and his hands and feet had been cut off, the police reported said.

He was found near a mainly-Zulu hostel for migrant workers and police said he appeared to have been dragged from there towards the homes of rivals mostly loyal to the African National Congress (ANC).

## Saudis to be excluded from ME peace talks

CAIRO, Apr 21: U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III flies to Saudi Arabia on Sunday, to talk with king Fahd on supporting a U.S. proposal for peace in the Middle East, reports AP.

Failure of Saudis to participate in peace talks would undercut the impression that Baker and his senior aides have tried to project: that Saudi Arabia has strengthened its ties with the United States and is ready to play a moderating role in the region's affairs.

Baker will also be meeting with Prince Saud, the Saudi foreign minister.

"But I don't think they are banging on the door to get in and being denied entrance," Baker said Saturday. He added, however, that he did not want to speak for the Saudi government.

The likelihood that Saudi

Arabia and several other Arab states would not participate surfaced Saturday despite the Saudis' prominent role in the U.S.-led coalition to liberate Kuwait from Iraq.

The Arabs negotiating with Israel are likely to be limited to "front-line" states and the Palestinians, Baker said Saturday.

After Bush sent 540,000 troops to Saudi Arabia to defend its oilfields from a threat of Iraqi aggression, it was widely assumed the Saudis would be at the negotiating table in any post-war peace negotiations with Israel.

But a U.S. administration official, insisting on anonymity, said Saturday: "It would be likely, in my view, that they would not be participants with Israel in the conference. It would be the neighboring states instead."

## Sababs still dominate Kuwaiti Cabinet

KUWAIT, Apr 21: Kuwait's new cabinet, shorn on some ministers from the ruling Al-Sabah family but retaining others, looked set for a hostile opposition reaction today, reports Reuters.

Pro-democracy activists, who wanted a broad-based national unity government to nurse Kuwait through the aftermath of the Iraqi occupation and the Gulf war, welcomed the departure of the veteran Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah. But they objected to his re-

placement by the former Interior Minister, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, whom they regard as responsible for government crackdowns on the opposition before the Iraqi invasion last August.

"There is going to be a very strong statement by the opposition tomorrow," one activist said after the new 20-man cabinet was announced on Saturday night.

"You might even see demonstrations protesting at the promotion of the Interior Minister to Deputy Prime Minister. He's a very hated man."

## BRIEFLY

### SAARC summit in Lanka in Nov:

The sixth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be held in Colombo in early November this year, according to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Harold Herat, says Xinhua from Colombo.

Herat told Xinhua when he attended a reception in the Chinese Embassy here Friday evening that the exact date for the summit can only be decided after the general election in India in May.

However, government sources said that the sixth SAARC summit is scheduled to be held from November 7 to 9 at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Congress Hall here.

Herat said that his government has commenced intensive preparations for the summit of the SAARC which groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Several subcommittees have been formed to look into various aspects such as roads, buildings and hotel bookings. A cabinet subcommittee has also been appointed to look into various aspects of the conference and the Foreign Ministry is coordinating all the work government sources said.

### Iraqi amnesty for Kurds:

Iraq on Saturday extended a 15-day-old amnesty for Kurds to all rebels including Shi'ite Muslims who took part in a failed rebellion against President Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi news agency (INA) reported, says Reuters from Nicosia.

The amnesty was first announced on April 5 for Kurdish rebels except those found guilty of premeditated murder, rape and looting. It was dismissed as a sick joke by rebel leaders.

INA said Saturday's decision by the Revolution Command Council (RCC), chaired by Saddam, affected "all Iraqis whether in the north, south or central Iraq."

The Armed Forces crushed the post-war uprisings by Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south, triggering a massive influx of refugees to Iran and Turkey and prompting western steps to set up havens for them in northern Iraq.

### Thatcher to visit S. Africa:

The African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) plan to disrupt the visit to South Africa of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher next month, the Sunday Times newspaper reported, says AFP from Johannesburg.

Mrs. Thatcher, a long-time opponent of sanctions is expected to arrive in mid-May at the invitation of the government.

### Black rain in Bahrain:

Black rain fell over scattered parts of the Gulf island of Bahrain on Saturday as black smoke from burning Kuwait oil wells drifted southward, officials at the Bahrain Meteorological Department reported, says AP from Manama (Bahrain).

Meteorologist Salah al-Manai said "thick smoke was up to 13,000 feet (476 meters) and could mingle with the cloud patches, causing black rain."

Manai said lighter drops of acid rain fell in recent days but Saturday's was "the thickest concentration of oil in raindrops" to date.

The rain fell on parts of the small island state 325 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Kuwait.

The black rain caused panic in Bahrain. One person telephoned a local newspaper office to shout: "It's raining oil outside."

One Arab man was seen moving around in circles to check the black stains left on his dishdasha, the traditional white robe Gulf Arab men wear.

Manai said dense smoke had been blowing in from Kuwait for the last few days.

### Rightists set to win Iceland poll:

An opposition right-wing party made the biggest gains on Saturday in Iceland's Parliamentary elections which focused on concern about ties with the European Community and a weak economy, reports Reuters from Reykjavik.

First unofficial television projections, based on a count of about 15 per cent of votes cast, showed the Independence Party would win 40.6 per cent of the vote.

The result would make the party favourite to lead the next government, replacing a five-party centre-left coalition.

# Janata Dal, BJP threaten vote-banks of Congress

From Ruth Pitchford

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party, scrambling for power in India's May general election, is looking a little happier as its opponents fail to rouse emotions on issues it wants to duck, political analysts say.

Congress for decades India's natural party of government, lost power in inconclusive 1989 polls and has displayed unease at facing the elections now set for May 20, 23 and 26.

But there is no sign so far that its opponents on the left, bidding to destabilise India's caste hierarchy, or on the right,

banking on Hindu revivalism, have tapped the emotions needed to swing polls in the World's most populous democracy.

"The stupefying panic that had so visibly gripped the Congress even a month ago is a thing of the past," said the current affairs magazine 'India Today'.

Journalists, across the country say Congress politicians look cautiously confident that voters, their emotions drained by 16 months of riots and political instability, their pockets drained by inflation, will drift back into

the familiar fold.

Political analysts say it is still too soon to predict whether Congress can scrape together a majority, with its monopoly under threat of erosion by both the left-leaning Janata Dal and the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

But the bookmakers in the commercial capital, Bombay and the elite of the political capital, New Delhi, agree that the odds against Gandhi are narrowing.

Elections in India where individualism is an alien value to many of the 521 million voters, are decided when a party hits a

nerve which motivates electoral blocks across the country.

This time former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh hopes his Janata Dal will strike that nerve across the thousands of castes, which make up the lower half of the Hindu social hierarchy.

Singh has pledged to reserve half of all government jobs for these castes, projecting the plan as a weapon to break an upper-caste hold over both the bureaucracy and society at large.

The BJP hopes to strike a nerve which unites Hindus throughout the hierarchy behind its pledge to reawaken national pride by building a temple to the god-king Lord Rama on the site of a 16th century mosque in the northern holy town of Ayodhya.

Congress, whose support comes traditionally from the 120 million Muslims minority and from the two extremes of the caste hierarchy, cannot afford to take a stand on either issue.

Singh and the BJP seemed to be riding competing waves of support last November, when the BJP brought down Singh's minority government amid riots over the two issues.

The conflicts seemed to have shattered the Congress, which propped up Singh's party rival, Chandra Shekhar, in power to save off polls. That alliance fell apart sooner than Gandhi intended.

But it may have lasted long enough for Gandhi, whose best hope now seems to lie in voter apathy. There is plenty of that.

"Stand in line (to vote) in the hot sun with nothing to drink and a hungry stomach, what for?" Bombay cab driver Viren Daga asked. "None of them can rule India."

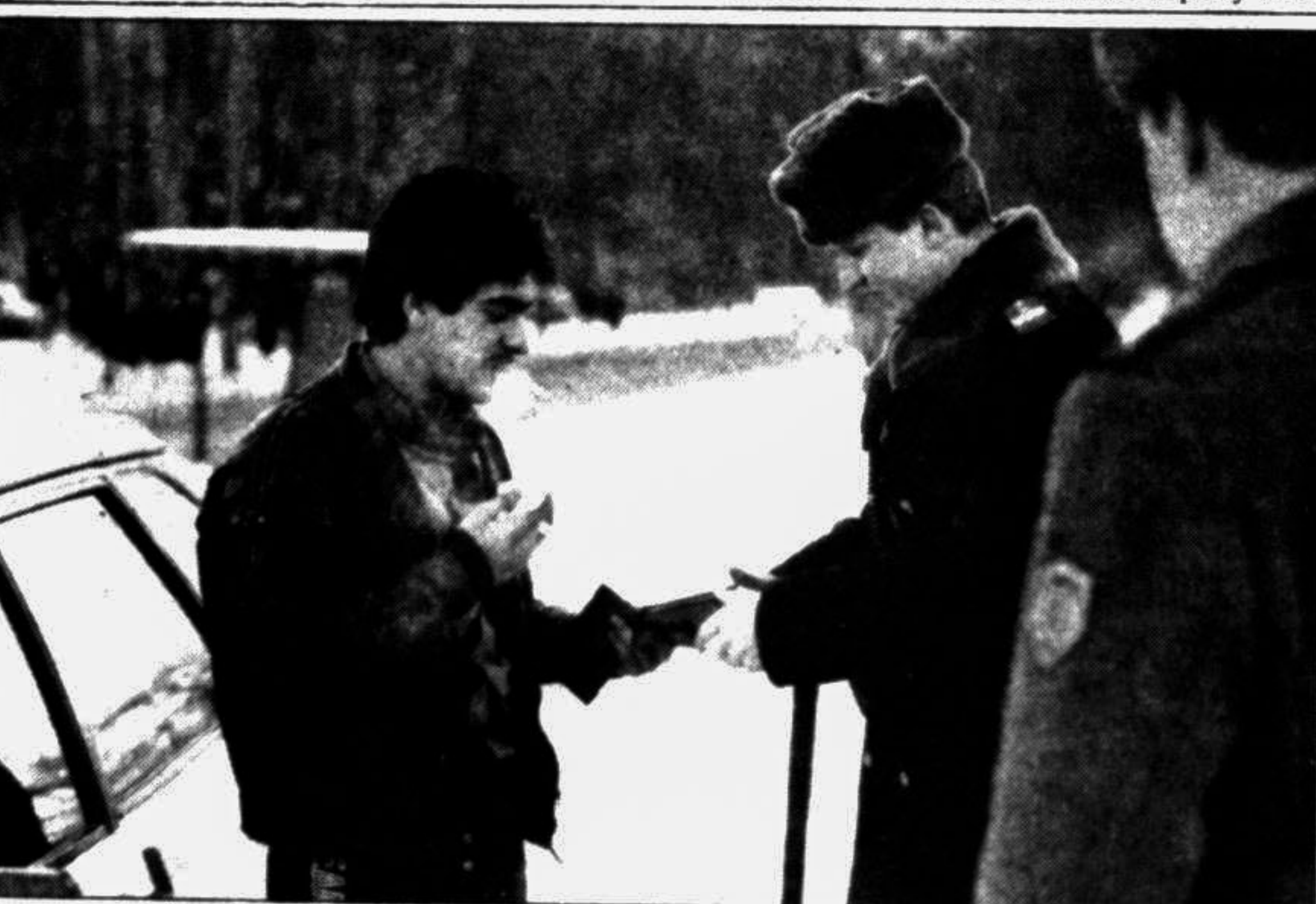
If neither lower-caste solidarity nor devotion to Lord Rama drives anti-Congress voters to the polls, Congress can fall back on India's best established nationwide party organisation.

"By default, Congress has the edge," said political commentator Nihal Singh.

Hindus no longer talk so fervently about Ayodhya, where the BJP says Muslim invaders razed a temple on Lord Rama's birthplace to build the mosque.

The BJP peaked too soon said Pran Chopra of the Independent Centre for Political Research, who still gave Singh a better chance than Gandhi of scraping back into power.

But other political scientists and some members of Janata Dal believe Singh was over-optimistic about consolidating the support of the lower castes, who have long battled each other for status.



MOSCOW: Soviet troops and militia jointly checking a driving licence. Their patrol fuels rumours about a military crackdown. —IAN photo

## Afghan troops fire Scud: 60 killed

PESHAWAR (Pakistan), Apr 21: At least 60 people were killed and more than 100 injured when the Kabul government fired a Scud missile at Mujahideen — held eastern Afghanistan, the Afghan Resistance said Sunday, reports AFP.

Dozens of shops and homes were destroyed when the long-range surface-to-surface missile slammed into the main bazaar of Asadabad, capital of Kunar province, said the Mujahideen news agencies Midia and ANA based here.

Many of the wounded were taken across the border of Pakistan, they said.

Sources here said two missiles may have fallen on Asadabad.

Saturday's missile attack was

the second in three days near the Pakistan border. On Wednesday a government missile fell on Landi Kotal, on the Pakistani side of the Frontier, killing one resident.

The attacks come three weeks after the government's defeat at Khost, the eastern garrison town captured by the Mujahideen on March 31.

Kunar, the power base of the Saudi-backed Salfi Sect of Wahabi Muslims and the fundamentalist Hezb-I-Islami faction. The Mujahideen had planned to follow up their Khost victory with more operations against several Afghan cities in the coming weeks, including a rocket attack against Gardez, not far from Khost.

Kabul has evacuated several families of government soldiers from Gardez.

## Militia, troops patrol Moscow, other cities

MOSCOW, Apr 21: The implementation of the President's decree on the Militia's and Armed Forces' joint efforts to maintain law and order and to combat crime began, and patrols consisting of militiamen and servicemen appeared in Moscow and in other Soviet cities, reports IAN.

The President's decree aroused a lot of controversy and was suspended by the supreme Soviets of Georgia and Armenia. The ministries of internal affairs of the Baltic republics also refused to implement it.

"We shall not participate in joint patrolling," Marijonas Maslukonis, the Lithuanian Minister of Internal Affairs, said on TV.