Pakistan.

Yeltsin urges opponents to confirm his nominee as PM

MOSCOW, Apr 13: President Boris Yeltsin kept up the pressure on his opponents in parliament Monday, urging them to confirm his nominee for prime minister or face "further steps" such as new elections, reports AP.

Yeltsin dismissed suggestions that a new candidate be named to replace Sergei Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old former banker and fuel minister.

"I want to repeat once again: I have no other candidate. I shall not nominate another candidate," Yeltsin told reporters in the Kremlin shortly before a meeting with Kiriyenko.

Russia has been operating with an interim Cabinet since March 23, when Yeltsin dismissed Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and the rest of the Cabinet, charging them with poor performance.

Parliament's lower house. the State Duma, voted down Kiriyenko's nomination 186-143 Friday, with Communists.

nationalists and some reformist groups criticising his youth and inexperience.

Yeltsin could have chosen a different candidate for the second round, but immediately renominated Kiriyenko.

He voiced hope Monday that lawmakers would "vote better" in the second round, tentatively scheduled for Friday. That would spare the president "the need to think of further steps." Yeltsin was quoted as saying by Russian news services.

Russia's constitution favours the president in disputes with parliament, allowing him to disband the legislature and call new elections if the Duma rejects his nominee for premier three times.

But asked whether he would dissolve the Duma, Yeltsin replied: "I have not spoken about this anywhere. I'm not saying this phrase now ... They should not invent things. I'm behaving in a polite and soft manner, and I'm listening to the lawmakers."

Yeltsin said he would meet Duma speaker Gennady Seleznyov, a Communist, on Tuesday. However, he stressed that he wouldn't guarantee the opposition any Cabinet seats or other concessions. The president has ruled out a coalition government as a way to break the impasse.

While Yeltsin avoided making direct threats, his Constitutional Court representative, Sergei Shakhrai, was more

"Either the State Duma will endorse the president's nominee ... or early Duma elections will be held," he said on Russian Television Sunday.

Duma members may be more willing to vote for Yeltsin's nominee in the second or third round rather than face the uncertainty of new elections.

On Friday, Kiriyenko was 83 votes short of the 226 he needed to win a simple majority in the

450-member Duma. But some of Yeltsin's foes said they would not bend.

165 die of Dengue

fever in Indonesia

Thirty-one victims have

The death toll in the Suma-

Eighteen people have died in

land territory of East Timor.

More than 200 people are being

by a small parasite contained

in the saliva of the Aedes Ae-

gypti mosquito. There is no

vaccine for the virus, which can

cause fever, joint pains, chills

Flood situation

worsens in

England

LONDON, Apr 13: British au-

thorities on Sunday warned of

further flooding and urged resi-

dents to evacuate their homes,

in the wake of storms which

have left up to five people dead

and caused damage estimated at

millions of pounds, reports

John Prescott on Sunday vis

ited towns deluged in the En-

glish Midlands, authorities re-

ported that river levels in the

east of the country were danger-

of Peterborough, eastern Eng-

land, should prepare to evacu-

Police said residents in parts

Heavy rains, which started

on Thursday and peaked on

Friday, had taken a heavy toll.

Iraqi newspaper

terms UN report

a 'silly lie'

BAGHDAD, Apr 13: A UN

human rights report that Iraq

executed more than 1,500 peo-

ple in the past year is a "silly

lie" that serves American pro-

paganda, an Iraqi newspaper

urged Iraq to end the execu-

The 22-page report Saturday

It was written by Max Van

Al-Qadissiya, a state-run

der Stoel, a former Dutch for-

eign minister who serves as the

UN human rights expert for

Iraqi newspaper, called Van der

"It is really funny that the

American administration can

imagine that it can mislead the

whole world by moving some of

its puppets," the newspaper said

which cannot help American

policy against Iraq," the news-

was compiled from informa-

tion provided by non-govern-

mental organisations, individ-

uals and UN monitors in neigh-

The report told a "silly lie

Van der Stoel said the report

Stoel a US puppet.

in an editorial.

bouring countries.

paper said.

said Monday, reports AP.

ously high.

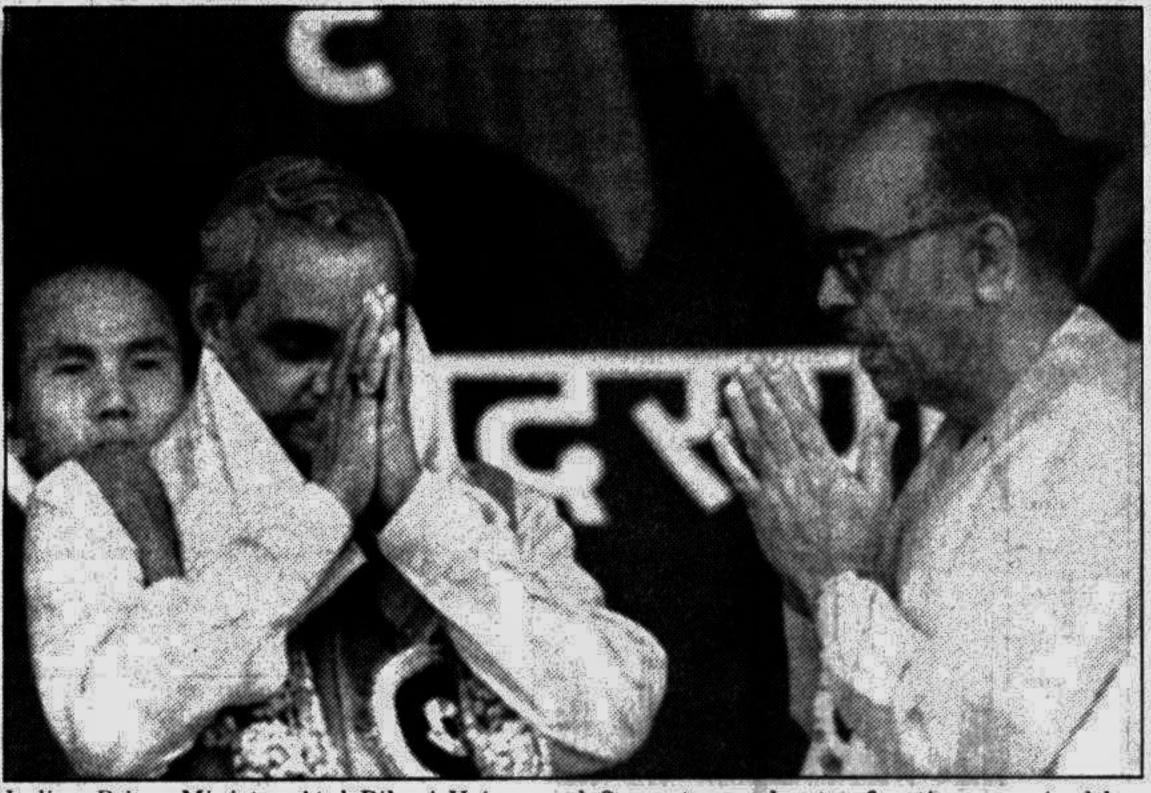
ate their homes.

As Deputy Prime Minister

The disease is transmitted

treated at local hospitals.

and hemorrhaging.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, left, greets people at a function organised by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's workers in New Delhi to felicitate him on Sunday. To the right is Kedarnath Sahni, the chief of the BJP in Delhi. - AP/UNB photo

Extremist elements may sabotage

May referendum on peace deal'

told reporters in Spain, where

Mitchell, a former US Senator.

echoed the tone of Blair's com-

ments in an interview with ABC

sides who want to disrupt this

process, who are committed to

the way of violence and I expect

they will step up their activities

between now and the date of the

referendum and thereafter." he

time and people recognise it for

what it is, so my hope is that it

governments, the crucial task

now is to ensure a "yes" vote in

the two referendums on May 22.

Prime Minister hoped US Pres-

ident Bill Clinton and his own

predecessor John Major would

visit Northern Ireland to help

the campaign.

won't destabilise the process."

"But it's been going on a long

For the British and Irish

A Blair spokesman said the

Talks Chairman George

"There are people on both

he is on a short holiday.

Television.

Missile talks may figure prominently during Richardson's India visit

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: A war of words between India and Pakistan over missile testing "may come up" when US Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson arrives here, a US embassy official said here today, reports AFP.

Richardson's visit on Tuesday and Wednesday is designed to pave the way for a visit by US. President Bill Clinton due in September.

The official said the visit would also include a meeting with India's newly-elected Prime Minister Atal Behari Va-

Vajpayee heads the Hindu Nationalist Party, regarded as right wing by its rival but an unknown quantity in power.
The embassy official said

"insight" to understand the nationalists policies. "The issue of the missile test may come up during the talks with the prime minister but the focus will be on the visit of Bill

the US was keen for a direct

Clinton due in September." Last week Pakistan announced it had successfully tested a surface-to-surface missile capable of hitting most In-

dian cities. That led to Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes to say that India had missile capable of hitting any target in

Brazil to extradite foreign convicts

RIO DE JANEIRO, Apr 13: Brazil will extradite nine foreigners convicted of the 1989 kidnapping of a business magnate, a move announced one day before they were to start an indefinite hunger strike, Globo TV News said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The extraditions will be carried out under treaties being negotiated with the prisoners' home countries, a government official indicated.



Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiazuan, left, shakes hand with Indonesian President Suharto during a courtesy call in Jakarta on Monday at Presidential office in Jakarta. - AP/UNB photo



Italian president arrives in Tokyo: Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro arrived in Tokyo yesterday for a week-long visit to Japan aimed at strengthening economic ties between the two countries, officials said, AFP reports from Tokvo.

Scalfaro is due to meet Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko late on Monday at the Imperial Palace and will hold talks with Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Wednesday. Scalfaro will stay in Tokyo until Thursday to hold meetings with Japanese businessmen and visit Japan's parliament, offi-

China launches military drill for PLA: China has launched "comprehensive military drills" aimed at preparing the People's Liberation Army to fight hightechnology regional wars, the official Xinhua news agency said

yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing. The nationwide drills involve all branches of the Armed Forces, Xinhua quoted unnamed sources as saying.

"The training intends to acquaint PLA officers and soldiers with the means and ways to win regional wars employing hightechnology," Xinhua said.

Shanghai airport reopens: Shanghai's airport reopened today after a Thai Airways jet overshot the runway on landing on Sunday, forcing a halt to air traffic, officials said, Reuter reports from Shanghai.

The Thai Airways International MD-11 was said by local media to have been carrying about 300 passengers from Bangkok when it skidded onto the grass beside the airport runway at about 4:00 pm on Sunday. No one was hurt. As a result more than 160 flights were cancelled, stranding thousands of passen-

ANA pilots continue strike over wages: All Nippon Airways Co Ltd (ANA) said yesterday it saw no prospect of ending its pilots' strike, which has become its worst since it began flying international routes in 1986, Reuter says from Tokyo.

"No significant progress has been made on ending the strike as we have not recently had official negotiations," said an ANA spokesman. ANA, which has the country's largest domestic network and also operates on international routes, said the selective strike over wages had already forced it to cancel 50 international flights, affecting 9,700 passengers.

Mudslide claims 12 in Ecuador: Heavy rain brought tons of mud and rock sliding down a hillside, burying 12 people in the town of La Guajira on the Ecuadorian coast, a police spokesman said in the capital on Saturday, AFP reports from Quito.

Rescue workers went to work with picks and shovels immediately after the slide on Friday but were unable to rescue the 12. most of whom belonged to the same family. Unusually heavy precipitation brought by the climatic shift El Nino has caused 200 deaths in Ecuador since October.

Tourist falls into crater of Vesuvius: A 27-year-old tourist from Belgium fell into Italy's Vesuvius

volcano on Sunday, suffering a concussion and a broken foot, police in this southern port city said. Reuter reports from The tourist had ventured beyond the safety barrier at the edge of the main mouth of the Volcano, which towers above Naples, when he slipped and tumbled some 20 metres into the crater, said police, who did not name the man. Other members of his

tour group sounded the alarm and fire fighters hauled him out

people, counselors offered to meet with the wounded, widowed or simply frightened. No one was interested, reports AP. of the first deadly rebel bombings in Colombo, dozens of people came to the group therapy sessions organized by the National Council on Mental Health. But today, council director Dr. Narme F. Wick-

remesinghe said, people have

after about an hour, they said.

grown used to living with violence, fear and distrust. After 15 years of ethnic fighting, attitudes as well as emotions are so hardened that many find it difficult to see ahead to a time without war. Yet people who can imagine peace are needed perhaps nowhere as desperately as in Colombo where the national newspapers that shape the debate and where politicians rise in parliament to fan hatred between Sinhalese and Tamils.

remesinghe, who is Sinhalese, "The amount of trust I have in my Tamil friends, I know the next generation won't have. How are you going to overcome it? I have no idea. It's gone on

to the north, what is universally known as simply "this situation" is part of the rhythm of daily life in Colombo. Doctors and nurses at the main hospital have perfected a bomb response drill. The view from the city's luxurious beach front hotels sweeps in a fleet of warships off the coast at the spot where a team of guerilla divers with bombs strapped to their chests once tried to sneak ashore.

It's an early rising town, even on Sundays, when matrons in white saris troop to their weekly Buddhist religious classes. On weekdays, seamstresses start their shifts at clothing factories before the

est. Office workers coping with rush hour can never be sure which roads on their route will

be closed for a security check. Every time 21-year-old Tamil business student Sanjitha Satyamurthy approaches one of the police checkpoints that dot downtown, she braces

Her Sinhalese friends are waved on after producing national identity cards. But once officers see her Tamil name -Sinhalese names are more sibilant, but equally treacherous for Western tongues — she's usually asked for proof she has a reason to be in Colombo, in the form of an affidavit from her local police station.

"Okay, fine, I carry my police report everywhere. Asked to produce it, I produce it," she said, her words clipped and bare of emotion. She has grown used to the constant suspicion, she said.

Extremists say the Tamil

majority can't live together on this tropical Indian Ocean island of 18 million people, though the two ethnic groups have done just that for centuries. They speak different languages and pray to different gods Tamils are Hindu and most Sinhalese are Buddhist, a religion that grew out of Hinduism. The two peoples are so similar even most Sri Lankans can't tell a Tamil from a Sin-

Seeds of division were best prepared to step into lead-

Politicians exploited resentment among Sinhalese, especially the poor, by promoting the Sinhala language over the

An unidentified girl from the Biblical town of Nazareth is held high above the crowd of Easter Sunday worshippers by her father to enable her to view the proceedings on Sunday at the Church of the Annunciation, where according to Christian tradition, the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary the incarnation of Christ. - AP/UNB photo

Sexual harassment case

Paula to decide on possible appeal this week

WASHINGTON, Apr 13: Paula Jones, who's been in seclusion since a federal judge dismissed her sexual harassment lawsuit against President Bill Clinton on April 1, is planning to emerge this week to announce whether she will appeal the decision, reports AP.

Mrs Jones will likely reveal her decision on Thursday. spokeswoman Susan Carpenter McMillan said Sunday.

Carpenter McMillan declined to say whether she would appeal. Mrs Jones was expected to announce the decision herself, either in the Los Angeles area, where she lives, or in Dallas, where her attorneys are located.

This would be Mrs Jones' first public comments on the case since Judge Susan Webber Wright threw out all three sexual harassment charges against Clinton.

Mrs Jones, claimed that

Clinton propositioned her in a Arkansas hotel room in 1991 when she was a state worker. Clinton maintains he doesn't recall ever meeting her and has firmly denied anything improper happened.

in her ruling, Wright said that whatever went on in the Arkansas hotel room between Mrs Jones and Clinton, who was then governor, she had failed to prove she was harmed emotionally or in her career as she contended.

Mrs Jones' legal team and advisers described her as disappointed, shocked and tearful after the dismissal, which halted the lawsuit she set in motion four years ago and which prompted similar allegations against Clinton from other women.

But Mrs Jones has remained silent, pent up in the Long Beach, California, apartment she shares with her husband.

Foreign missions start to evacuate staff to escape haze in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN. Brunet. Apr 13: The US Embassy in Brunei has requested permission from Washington to evacuate its staff from the smog-choked capital to temporarily escape hazardous air pollution, the US Ambassador

LONDON, Apr 13: British

Prime Minister Tony Blair and

the Chairman of Northern Ire-

land's peace talks on Sunday

expressed concern that extrem-

ist elements could try to sabo-

tage a May referendum on Fri-

to end three decades of sectarian

strife by altering constitutional

arrangements for the British-

ruled province, must be

approved by separate referen-

dums in northern Ireland and

catholic groups oppose the deal

and elements from both sides

detonated bombs in the run-up

to the talks, which ended on

don't want to make the changes

necessary, who are going to try

to do everything they can to try

to stop this agreement, and

we've got to have the people of

vision triumph over that," Blair

"There will be people who

But extremist Protestant and

The agreement, which seeks

day's peace deal.

Ireland.

Friday.

said Monday, reports AP. As the haze in this oil-rich kingdom on northern Borneo island remains at critical levels, foreign embassies have filed travel alerts and begun to grant staff "rest and relaxation" on a rotating basis, embassy officials said.

"We're waiting for State Department approval," said US Ambassador Glen Robert Rease, to fly staff to Australia or the United States.

Rease said other embassies were doing likewise.

In mid-March, the US Embassy filed a travel alert, advising some 200 Americans in Brunei not to go outside and to wear protective masks if they must go outdoors.

The statement cautioned travelers to Brunei to be aware of the 'hazardous" air pollution

The international airport has often been forced to shut down. All incoming flights and short, outgoing flights were canceled Monday morning. Visibility at 2 PM stood at 160 metres (525 feet), down from 190 metres (620 feet) at 7 am.

Fires in Brunei and in nearby Malaysian sections of Borneo have cast blankets of smoke over the island, making daily life a painful chore. An eye-and-throat-stinging smog

has sent thousands to hospital emergency rooms, complaining of asthma-like symptoms.

Clinton is due to arrive in

Britain on May 15 and a US

Congressman said he believed

the president would visit

Belfast and Dublin. A White

House spokesman said no deci-

Koirala refuses

to be sworn in on

inauspicious day

Nepal's new Prime Minister,

Girija Prasad Koirala, refused

to be sworn into office on Mon-

day, the last day of the Nepalese

calendar, considered inauspi-

cious by astrologers, reports

Prime Minister on Sunday by

King Birendra to head a minor-

ity government after no politi-

cal party managed to form a

partnership in Nepal's split

parliament.

Koirala, 72, was appointed

KATHMANDU, Apr 13:

sion had yet been made.

Students at the Brunei International School have had no recess or outdoor sports since January, when the pollution levels climbed to hazardous levels. They strap on pollution masks when walking through the school's outdoor hallways.

"This is a vision of the future if we don't get control," said the school's principal Mark Gifford, as a line of masked thirdgraders filed past him.

Last month the government shut schools for two weeks. Schools re-opened April 9 but parents have been advised to keep children home when the pollution index exceeds healthy

Off the Record

Fergie 'amused, if a little hurt'

LONDON: Sophie Rhya-Jones, the girlfriend of Prince Edward "astonished" the Duchess of York when she asked her to make a public appearance being sprayed with water in an empty swimming pool, the Daily Telegraph reported today, says AFP.

The Duchess, who is the former wife of Prince Edward's brother, Prince Andrew, was said to be "amused, if a little hurt," according to one of her friends, quoted by The Telegraph. There is no prospect of the Duchess accepting the invitation from Rhys-Jones who has been hired to do public relations

work for a London health club, the newspaper added. In exchange for being soaked in front of the cameras, the Duchess was reportedly to have received an appearance fee and life membership of the club.

The Duchess, who notoriously has various debts to clear, has undertaken many commercial engagements, but she is said to have a policy for restricting her lucrative activities to foreign countries to minimise embarrassment to the royal family. Rhys-Jones was reported to be unavailable for comment.

Three million worshippers flock to Hardwar

HARDWAR, India, Apr 13: An estimated three million worshippers flocked to the holy Indian city of Hardwar today. forcing security to be stepped up for a Hindu pilgrimage which is expected to attract millions

more, reports AFP. Officials said 25,000 police had been deployed for the spectacular Mahakumbh festival on the bank of the river Ganges. which authorities boast is the largest of its kind in the world.

The Press Trust of India said up to eight million people were expected to wash away their sins in the Ganges' holy waters on Tuesday when the festival reaches its climax. The event, held every 12

years and rotated between four pilgrimage centres, has been plagued by stampedes. When it was last held in Hardwar in 1986 about 30 peo-

ple died. In 1954, hundreds were killed in a stampede at the northern town of Allahabad. Rivalries between various tres (105 miles) north of New Delhi, have been termed the most sacred, as they are the last this century. The Tribune newspaper re-

religious groups, often over who

should be granted the honour of

bathing first at the crossed

riverside, have in the past

said: "Everything is going on

thrown into focus when at least

118 Muslim pilgrims died in a

stampede last week during the

the northern Indian state of Ut-

tar Pradesh some 175 kilome-

This year's celebrations, in

But a police spokesman here

Security concerns were

sparked violence.

very smoothly."

pilgrimage to Mecca.

ported Monday that up to 100,000 foreigners would also attend.

Devotees, most campaigning in and around the town, are headed by bands of "Sadhus," or holy men, who traditionally grow their hair and beards long and go naked at the event to reflect their vow of poverty.

Pol Pot's whereabouts remains a mystery: Cambodian army

13: The Cambodian military said Monday that the whereabouts of notorious Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot remains a mystery but that pro-government forces were closing in on the last few hundred guerillas and their leadership, reports

Gen. Meas Sophea, deputy army chief of staff, said that no one had been able to confirm a rumour that he floated Sunday that Pol Pot and other leaders had been captured in neighbouring Thailand by renegade guerillas in their own faction. "We are not really clear about that," Meas Sophea said. "We've asked our network to get all information. They are not

in Anlong Veng, that is sure." The Thai military has denied the reports. Thai television stations, whom Meas Sophea cited as the source of the report, said they had broadcast no such

news. Thai army officers speculated that the Cambodian army

SIEM REAP, Cambodia, Apr was spreading disinformation to convince die-hard guerillas their cause was hopeless and to defect.

Meanwhile, a helicopter flew reporters to a site about 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) from Anlong Veng, main base of the last Khmer Rouge faction still fighting the government before a mutiny three weeks ago.

Israel may still make peace with Palestine

WASHINGTON, Apr 13: Israel may still make peace with its Palestinian neighbours, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, adding that he hoped it would come soon, reports AFP. "If (Palestinian Leader

Yasser) Arafat accepts my offer to negotiate a permanent settlement, we could have a historic breakthrough with the one government that can deliver." he told Newsweek magazine. adding that he hoped it would happen during this term.

Peace needed nowhere as desperately as in Sri Lanka COLOMBO, Apr 13: After the "What we can look forward tropical heat reaches its sticki- minority and the Sinhalese so adept, as well as over the Her peace plan appears to

last bomb to hit Sri Lanka's to, I don't know," said Wickcapital killed more than 40 Two years ago, following one

Even though the front is far

halese when they pass each other on the street. planted by the British, who appointed Tamils who had benefited from missionary education to posts in the colonial civil service at much higher rates than Sinhalese. At independence in 1948, Tamils were

English at which Tamils were

Tamil language. Civil service jobs and university slots were set aside for Sinhalese, and it was the Tamils turn for bitter-"I feel that Sri Lanka is my

country, but we are treated as third-class citizens," said 68year-old Poonampalam Panchadcharam, a retired civil servant living with his daughter and son-in-law, a Hindu astrologer, in a scruffy Tamil neighborhood in Colombo. "Ordinary Tamils and ordi-

nary Sinhalese are all right. But at the top, at the political level, there are difficulties, Panchadcharam said. "The politicians on both sides, they won't compromise. We can't blame either side, we can only blame our past sins. We Hindus, we believe we suffer for our sins committed in past lives."

President Chandrika Kumaratunga has proposed a new constitution giving more powers to all regions, including Tamil-dominated provinces.

have little chance of passing in parliament, where hard-line Sinhalese politicians accuse her of giving away too much. The main rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, want full independence. "There's no shortage of people on both sides of the divide

who see Sri Lanka's history as a series of ethnic affronts. The 1978 murder of an entire police patrol by Tamil militants. A Sinhalese mob's 1981 ransacking of a library of rare Tamil classics in Jaffna, capital of the Tamil-dominated north, by a Sinhalese mob. A bombing attack by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels in January on a temple Sinhalese Buddhists consider their most sacred. The war began in earnest

1983, following deadly anti-Tamil riots in Colombo that many believe were organized by a Sinhalese nationalist government. Some 51,000 civilians, soldiers and rebels have died since then.