

Hopes, fears frame choices as India goes to polls

By Kenneth J. Cooper=(c) 1998, The Washington Post

PATNA, India -- Millions massed at polling places Monday to participate in the most competitive election in independent India's 50-year history and the second parliamentary vote in the world's largest democracy in less than two years.

The last published opinion polls indicated that the vote -- to be held on four days between now and March 7 -- will yield an indecisive result, leading to another coalition government. During Monday's first phase, with 40 percent of Parliament's 545 seats at stake, voter turnout dipped below the historical average of 60 percent.

Preliminary reports said at least 17 people were killed in election-related violence, 15 of them in the impoverished and sometimes lawless eastern state of Bihar.

India's 600 million eligible voters face a choice among a long-ruling but now declining Congress party, the emergent Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the United Front, a secularist coalition of 14 centrist, leftist and regional parties formed after the 1996 election to keep the BJP out of power. In 11 previous elections, no more than two blocs competed at the national level.

The collapse last December of the coalition government of Prime Minister I.K. Gujral forced an election three years ahead of schedule. It was the second United Front government to fall since June 1996, both times because the Congress party withdrew its support.

Voters have appeared torn between a wish for an honest, stable govern-

ment -- a trend that works against the scandal-plagued Congress party, among others -- and a fear of communal tensions if the BJP, the largest party in the last parliament, is given a clear mandate.

That central conflict could be heard in the voices of anxious voters here in the drab provincial capital of Bihar state, where the BJP is likely to make its largest gains because of divisions among its opponents.

The BJP has declared India, one of the most socially diverse countries in the world, to be "one nation, one people and one culture" based on the traditions of its Hindu majority. The party's election platform, for instance, asserts that the Hindu god Ram -- who is not even central in the worship of all Hindus -- "lies at the core of Indian consciousness."

In Bihar, politics have been dominated in recent years by the state's former chief minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, who was jailed last year on corruption charges and kicked out of the Janata Dal, Gujral's left-leaning party. But Yadav, a rustic low-caste leader, rebounded by inserting his wife as chief minister, winning his release on bail and forming a new party to compete with his old one, the BJP and its regional ally in one of India's poorest states.

Mandrika Singh Yadav, a farmer, said he had abandoned loyalty to his landholding Yadav caste and voted for the BJP candidate in the rural fringes of Patna, where winter crops of potatoes and onions were being harvested in the morning sun.

"We have stayed poor for so long, so I want a change," Yadav said. "People are saying Laloo is a thief. When we know about it, how can I

vote for him?"

Despite the corruption charges, Raza Imam, 77, described himself as a loyal supporter of Laloo Prasad Yadav and said he voted for the new party because its leader has helped to protect Muslims, who make up about 12 percent of India's 950 million people.

"Who isn't corrupt? The interests of (religious) minorities is more important to us," Imam said. "Nobody is totally clean, but the BJP is dangerous."

The birth of independent India was accompanied by communal clashes that killed hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims, and such violence has recurred periodically in the five decades since then.

The worst violence of the current election campaign, in which nearly 100 have been killed so far, was communal in nature. Over the weekend, Islamic militants were blamed for detonating more than a dozen bombs in Coimbatore, a city of 1 million in southern Tamil Nadu state.

The first bomb exploded near the site of a BJP rally where the party's president, L.K. Advani, was late appearing. About 50 were killed in the bomb blasts, subsequent communal riots and police encounters with suspects.

The deadliest communal clashes in recent years occurred in December 1992, when about 2,500 were killed in riots across the country after the demolition of an unused mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya by Hindu nationalists who claim the site as the birthplace of their god, Ram.

Several BJP leaders, including Advani, were present during the demolition and have been charged

with criminal offenses.

The mosque's destruction represented the only major instance of communal violence in a half-dozen states that the Hindu nationalist party has ruled. But it brought down a BJP government in northern Uttar Pradesh state and cost the Congress party dearly, as well. Muslims, who had been an important part of the party's broad coalition, accused Congress leaders of pandering to Hindu nationalist sentiments and of not mobilizing enough central government forces to prevent the demolition. Many Muslim voters abandoned Congress and turned to regional parties.

In this election campaign, both the BJP and Congress have tried to win over Muslims. The BJP has played down its Hindu nationalist positions, made open appeals to Muslims and projected a party moderate, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as its prospective prime minister.

On behalf of the Congress party, Sonia Gandhi, widow of assassinated prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, apologized for its role in the mosque's destruction. More broadly, her move into active politics to recapture the legacy of India's most famous political family has re-energized the Congress party and, according to some polls, make it most likely to lead a new coalition government. Neither party's appeal may have been enough to reconcile with Muslims.

"Nobody really sympathizes with Muslims," Abdullah Bukhari, chief minister of New Delhi's largest mosque, said in a pessimistic pre-election sermon that did not endorse any of the three major political blocs.

Difference in secret service jobs may play role in Clinton probe

By Michael Dorman=(c) 1998, Newsday

A Secret Service uniformed officer is not a Secret Service agent.

It is a distinction with a major difference -- one that figures significantly in investigations of whether President Clinton had a sexual relationship with a former White House intern, then lied about it under oath and encouraged her to lie and otherwise cover up their relationship.

Secret Service agents -- highly trained, athletic, college-educated plainclothes investigators -- have close daily access to the president and protect him wherever he goes throughout the world. Uniformed officers supervised by the Secret Service have far less training than agents and rarely have close access to the president. Their chief duties involve providing security for buildings, including not only the White House but also foreign embassies in Washington.

For those reasons, White House press secretary Mike McCurry and other sources have downplayed the significance of any testimony current and retired uniformed officers might give to a grand jury. They contend such officers usually are not in positions giving them access to potentially compromising situations involving the president.

Lewis Fox, a retired uniformed officer, caused a stir last week when he reportedly said he had seen Clinton and former intern Monica Lewinsky alone together at the White House.

Fox and a current uniformed Secret Service officer have been subpoenaed by independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr to testify before a grand jury. Late Friday, the Justice and Treasury Departments agreed with Starr to limited questioning of Lewis but added that negotiations would continue on any other Secret Service officers or agents Starr seeks to question.

Initially, Fox was quoted as saying they had been together for 40 minutes. But by Friday, an attorney representing Fox, Mike Leibig, backed away from that account. "He saw them together, but he could not tell whether they were alone," Leibig said. "He knows they were in the Oval Office,

but he does not know whether there were other people in the room."

Fox's account was challenged from the outset by former Secret Service agents who said a uniformed officer would not have had the access to the president that Fox claimed.

Despite their limited access to the president, uniformed officers could provide information on the White House comings and goings of Lewinsky. Under the supervision of Secret Service agents, uniformed officers guard the White House gates and keep logs on when individuals enter and leave the grounds, who clears them for entry and escorts them, if necessary, and whom they visit.

After leaving her White House intern's job to work at the Pentagon, Lewinsky presumably needed clearance and an escort.

The uniformed branch of the Secret Service -- with 1,200 officers, compared with the Secret Service's 2,100 agents -- began more than a half-century ago as the White House Police Force, a separate unit under Secret Service supervision. Its members were initially drawn from Washington's Metropolitan Police Department and the U.S. Park Police, but now come from all over the country. The White House Police Force, with the Secret Service, have included some of the world's finest marksmen.

In 1950, when two Puerto Rican nationalists tried to assassinate President Truman, White House Police officers helped Secret Service agents put down the assault. A White House officer, Leslie Coffelt, was fatally wounded but shot one of the attackers to death just before he died.

After President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, partly as a result of the Warren Commission report, the White House Police Force was succeeded by an enlarged organization called the Executive Protective Service -- taking on such duties as protection of the embassies. That organization later became the uniformed branch of the Secret Service. It is supervised by Brian Stafford, an assistant Secret Service director who also oversees the Secret Service White House detail and other protective details.

Whether or not Rudolph was also involved in two bombings in Atlanta last year, which injured a total of 12 people, or in the bombing that killed one woman and shattered the tranquility of the 1996 Summer Olympics, Jones and other investigators wouldn't say.

"It's still an open question," said James Cavanaugh, special agent in charge of Birmingham for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, at a news conference near the site of the clinic bombing.

In letters sent recently to media outlets, a mysterious 15-year-old group called the Army of God took responsibility for the Birmingham bomb.

The same group sent letters taking responsibility for last year's Atlanta bombings.

Investigators have said both sets of letters are similar but have not said definitively that they are connected.

Moments after the announcement of a new arrest warrant, which amends the previous warrant listing Rudolph as a material witness, Cavanaugh issued an almost fatherly appeal for Rudolph to surrender.

"I'm concerned for everyone involved, including Eric," he said. "This would be a whole lot easier, this whole situation, if Eric would call us and he would come in voluntarily."

Cavanaugh said Rudolph must answer for the crime of which he's ac-

Clinic bombing witness now officially a suspect

By J.R. Moehring=(c) 1998, Los Angeles Times

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- No longer a witness wanted for questioning, 31-year-old Eric Robert Rudolph is officially a hunted suspect in the nation's first fatal bombing of an abortion clinic.

After examining Rudolph's hastily vacated trailer in the remote woods of western North Carolina -- along with the storage locker he was renting and the gray pickup truck he was driving, which hunters found abandoned last weekend -- investigators said Saturday they believe Rudolph was responsible for the crude homemade bomb that went off outside the New Woman All Women Health Care Clinic here Jan. 29, leaving an off-duty police officer dead and the clinic's head nurse blinded in one eye.

Whether or not Rudolph was also involved in two bombings in Atlanta last year, which injured a total of 12 people, or in the bombing that killed one woman and shattered the tranquility of the 1996 Summer Olympics, Jones and other investigators wouldn't say.

"That's where he's home," Lewis said. "That's where he's comfortable, and we feel that's probably where he is."

If so, one investigator, who spoke off the record, said the deep woods and high mountains could make it nearly impossible for searchers to find Rudolph any time soon.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, an Alabama organization that tracks racist and extremist activity, claims to have proof that Rudolph was linked to an anti-government group called Northpoint Tactical Teams, which operates a heavily armed camp in the remote woods near Rudolph's trailer.

Investigators also announced that they are offering a \$100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Rudolph or anyone involved in the Birmingham bombing.

And they warned that anyone helping Rudolph, who is considered armed and dangerous, risks being prosecuted for federal crimes as well.

Investigators also announced that they are offering a \$100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Rudolph or anyone involved in the Birmingham bombing.

And they warned that anyone helping Rudolph, who is considered armed and dangerous, risks being prosecuted for federal crimes as well.

Cavanaugh said Rudolph must answer for the crime of which he's ac-

Twin is born 8 years after his brother

By David Colker=(c) 1998, Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES -- Billy was conceived in 1990.

He was born Monday. The reason for the delay was part modern medical science and part bookkeeping mistake.

The embryo from which Billy grew languished forgotten in a freezer for 7 years, the longest known time for an embryo that was later revived and implanted in a woman's womb.

The embryo was left over from 1990 when Billy's parents underwent a laboratory process used for couples who cannot conceive naturally, extracting eggs from the prospective mother for fertilization. The process resulted in a successful pregnancy, but there were also leftover fertilized embryos.

And until 1997, neither the parents nor their doctor knew that those embryos had been placed in deep-freeze storage.

Eight months ago these embryos were thawed and implanted. One of them survived and the result was baby Billy -- a healthy, 8-pound, 15-ounce boy delivered by Caesarean section Monday at Tarzana Regional Medical Center with an unusual tie to his older brother.

"They are actually twins," said physician Michael Vermesh, an infertility specialist who oversaw the gestation of both children. "They were conceived from different eggs, but on the same exact day."

"So, they are fraternal twins, born almost eight years apart."

The story began in 1989 when the couple first visited Vermesh, then on the faculty at the University of Southern California. (The parents wished to remain anonymous and declined to be interviewed; Billy is not the newborn's real name.)

"She could not conceive naturally," said Vermesh, whose private practice is now located on the grounds of the Tarzana hospital in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles.

The couple decided on a technology called Gamete Intrafallopian Transfer, or GIFT.

The woman received hormone injections to stimulate the production of several more eggs in a month than the one produced during a normal cycle. The eggs were retrieved through a surgical procedure and then mixed in a laboratory catheter with her

Ireland talks consider expulsion of Sinn Fein party

By John Burgess=(c) 1998, The Washington Post

DUBLIN -- The Northern Ireland peace talks were put on hold Monday as delegates argued without result over whether to eject Sinn Fein, the legal political wing of the outlawed Irish Republican Army.

The British government presented an "indictment" against Sinn Fein, citing two murders last week in Belfast that police concluded were the work of the IRA. That finding, the government said in its document, "raised the question" of whether Sinn Fein should be suspended from the talks.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams Monday night accused Protestant groups that want his party suspended of trying to ruin the peace process. "I am absolutely (angry) with trying to make this thing work and those who have no interest in making it work seize upon two men being killed to exploit it and bring this process down," he told reporters.

The case against his party is "rubbish," said Adams, speaking at Dublin Castle, where the talks are taking place this week. "It doesn't stand up at all. We will be rebutting it in a very definitive and clear way."

Under rules of the talks, political parties can take part only if paramilitary groups allied with them respect a cease-fire. Sinn Fein acknowledges it is in contact with members of the IRA,

husband's sperm. The mixture of eggs and sperm was then transferred directly into her Fallopian tubes so that fertilization could occur within her body.

All went well. She became pregnant and the couple's first child was born in 1990.

Normally during this procedure, leftover viable eggs are fertilized in a laboratory dish -- *in vitro* -- and resulting embryos are frozen.

"It's so that if the woman does not become pregnant, we can try again, a couple of months later," said Vermesh, "without going through the whole process of stimulating egg production and retrieving the eggs."

The frozen embryos are also commonly used two or three years after a successful pregnancy if the couple wants another child. Vermesh said the longest previous time on record that an embryo had been frozen before being used was five years.

Sometimes, however, no viable eggs are left over. Because this particular couple never heard from the lab, that is what they and Vermesh assumed -- incorrectly -- had happened.

Normally, the parents' assumption would have been corrected when they continued to receive a bill for storage fees, Vermesh said. "But they never got a bill."

The couple was interested in having a second child, but -- assuming they would have to start over -- did not have the \$7,000 that the full GIFT process costs. By contrast, using already-frozen embryos in a pregnancy attempt costs only about \$1,000.

Eventually, the woman passed the age of 40, when the success rate of these processes takes a downturn. "She gave up on the idea of ever conceiving again," Vermesh said.

Then in 1997, she got a letter from the laboratory.

"It informed her that her three frozen embryos were being relocated to a new facility," Vermesh said. "It was the first she knew of them."

The couple decided to try again, even though she was now 44. "That didn't really matter," said Vermesh. "The embryos were those of a 36-year-old woman."

Did the laboratory that froze the Billy embryo ever try to collect seven years of storage fees?

"Thank God," Vermesh said with a laugh, "they did not."

but insists it is not a part of the outlawed organization and should not be held accountable for its actions.

The decision on whether to suspend Sinn Fein is up to the British and Irish governments, which are co-sponsoring the all-party negotiations aimed at finding a peaceful solution to Northern Ireland's sectarian conflict.

By most accounts, any suspension would last only a few weeks. The Ulster Democratic Party, a Protestant party, was suspended from the talks last month after gunmen it represents admitted killing three Catholics.

Former U.S. Sen. George J. Mitchell, D-Maine, chairman of the talks, spent most of the afternoon huddling with various delegations. Talks broke off with plans for resumption Tuesday afternoon, when a full session will discuss the case and Sinn Fein will get a formal chance to respond.

The delay is due in part to murky legalities. The British government, for instance, does not want to prejudice future court proceedings and is declining to disclose the full details of the investigations into the two murders. Sinn Fein, which sees the Northern Ireland police as an arm of the Protestant majority, says it has a right to know what the evidence is.

Sinn Fein leaders also are hinting at going to court in Ireland to block any suspension. The courts' jurisdiction over the peace talks is unclear, however.