

Saddruddin Agha Khan resigns

NEW YORK, United Nations, Mar 16: Prince Saddruddin Agha Khan has resigned from his post as special UN envoy charged with monitoring the humanitarian cost of the Gulf War, informed sources said Friday, reports AFP.

Prince Saddruddin objects to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's recent appointment of the UN Under Secretary General, Maritzi Ahtisaari, to head a humanitarian mission to Iraq and Kuwait, the sources said.

Both the prince and Mr. Ahtisaari are believed to be interested in succeeding Mr. Perez de Cuellar when his term ends in December of this year.

Late last year, the Secretary General named prince Saddruddin to study the humanitarian consequences of the Gulf crisis, with special attention to the refugee question.

The prince was never able to travel to Baghdad because Iraqi authorities denied him entry into the country.

Mr. Ahtisaari, currently in Iraq, is expected to resume his normal duties soon.

Prince Saddruddin has also led a UN mission aimed at encouraging the return of three million Afghans forced out of their country by that nation's civil war.

Indian women want 30 pc quota in jobs, politics

CUTTACK, Mar 16: The National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) has demanded 30 per cent reservation for women both in politics and jobs, according to its President Dr. (Mrs) Nirupama Rath, reports PTI.

Gen Suchinda, Marshal Kaset become MPs
148 Army officers named members of Thai Parliament

BANGKOK, Mar 16: Thailand's Military Junta has packed the new national assembly with soldiers, raising fresh questions about its plans for the country, reports Reuter.

The national assembly, announced on Friday night to replace the one dissolved after the February 23 coup, includes Army Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon and Air Force Chief Marshal Kasat Rajanani.

Eight retired officers and 140 serving military men were named to the 292-member assembly, which is charged with drawing up a constitution to return the country to civilian rule.

This doesn't seem like a step towards returning power to self-government to the people, the national newspaper said in an editorial today.

On the contrary it looks like a return to the sorry past

when those in power could impose their will on the country and its people through a legislature under their firm control.

General Suchinda said Martial Law would remain until the Junta had managed to curb the labour rights of State Enterprise Unions.

"We don't know as yet how to go about it but it is a definite policy. The right to strike must be gone and state enterprises will be considered part of the government, he was quoted by local newspapers as saying.

A series of public sector strikes had seriously damaged the country, he told a group of Thai journalists on Friday.

The unions are seen as potential force of opposition to the military if it looks like reneging on its promises.

Many of the soldiers on the assembly were colleagues in the Chulachomklao Military



General Suchinda

Academy's class five whose graduates now dominate the present military hierarchy.

The assembly includes 39 businessmen and bankers and five journalists as well as ex-parliamentarians and bureaucrats.

The military reasserted its traditional role as the ultimate power in Thai politics with the overthrow of the elected government of Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan.

The Junta said his administration was shamelessly corrupt and misusing its power, and pledged fresh elections to return the country to democratic rule by the end of the year.

Although it has deflected criticism by appointing a civilian caretaker Prime Minister and a business-orientated cabinet, it has retained wide powers to oversee the civilian appointees and suppress dissent.

Pak rallies protest US Gulf policy

ISLAMABAD, Mar 16: Thousands of Pakistanis took to the streets of Pakistan's major cities on Friday to observe American Condemnation Day's in protest at Washington's Gulf policies, reports Reuter.

The right wing Jamaat-Islami party called for mass rallies in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi but was unable to attract numbers as large as during the Gulf war.

The US is playing a shameful role in the war between right and wrong and trying to dominate world politics, Jamaat leader Khurshid Ahmad told protesters in Rawalpindi.

Vowing that Pakistan would never bow before US imperialism he said the US-led Allied forces had not fought to liberate Kuwait but to weaken Islamic military might.

Although Jamaat is part of Pakistan's ruling alliance it resisted the government's support for Saudi Arabia in the war and its decision to send 11,000 troops to the Islamic holy land.

Allied jets dropped 88,500 ton bombs

WASHINGTON, Mar 16: Allied jets dropped 88,500 tonnes of bombs on Iraq and Kuwait and used more precision-guided "smart bombs" during the 43-day Gulf war than those dropped on Vietnam during that nine-year conflict, the US Department said Friday, reports Reuter.

"This is the first time that a field army has been defeated by air power. It was a remarkable performance by the coalition air forces," US Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak said.

He said a small number of radar-avoiding US F-117A "Stealth" fighters were the most effective weapons of the air war, smashing Iraqi air defence radars within hours after the air war began.

Giving key details of the air campaign for the first time, McPeak said at a Defence Department briefing that US jets dropped about 75 per cent of the total bombs dropped by allied attacks jets and heavy bombers on Iraqi military tar-

gets in Iraq and Kuwait. The 88,500 tonnes of bombs dropped included 6,520 tonnes of precision weapons such as laser-guided bombs used to destroy government buildings in central Baghdad, hardened concrete aircraft shelters and bridges over the Euphrates river, McPeak said.

"In 43 days we were exceeded our tonnage of precision-guided munitions in a war that lasted eight or nine years," he added, comparing the Gulf to Vietnam. While the allied ground attack took only 100 hours to drive Iraqi forces from occupied Kuwait, the General said that air power and brilliant overall command decisions by General Norman Schwarzkopf broke the Iraqi Air Force early.

"In essence, the issue was decided in the first few hours of the engagement," when more than 2,000 allied jets launched a massive six-week air campaign on January 17, he said.

Aspirin help prevent heart attack

ORLANDO (Florida), Mar 16: Low doses of Aspirin help prevent heart attacks in women as well as men, according to a new US study whose results were released Friday, reports Reuter.

"We found about a 30 per cent reduction in the risk of first heart attack among women who took one to six Aspirin tablets per week", Dr Joann Manson said.

Rajiv confident of his return to power

Parliament is a game of numbers: Shekhar

NEW DELHI, Mar 16: Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar discounted prospects Friday of a coalition government resulting from upcoming general elections, which he hoped would provide a decisive verdict, reports AFP.

Shekhar, 63, governing as a caretaker following his March 6 resignation, said a coalition bringing together two or more parties could be cobbled together only if its constituents had a common platform.

Shekhar said his People's Party-Socialist had joined hands with the Congress (I) because both felt India was not ready for elections at a time of caste turmoil and Hindu-Muslim violence.

Since November, "tempers have cooled down and there is relative peace," he said.

Mr. Shekhar blamed the Congress (I) for forcing his resignation "Parliament is a game of numbers," said the career politician and self-proclaimed socialist. "I had no option but to resign."

"A coalition government is (therefore) not possible," he told the Foreign Correspondents Association here at a press conference, during which he also downplayed the possibility of major political realignments ahead of the May elections.

"It is possible only if you have common perspectives, a consensus programme and an

agreement on national problems," the Premier said in his first regular press conference since resigning.

"Without that there can not be a coalition government", he added.

Mr. Shekhar's remarks pointed to the polarisation of political forces in India ahead of the elections necessitated by his resignation, provoked by

a legislative boycott by his ally, the Congress (I) party.

"Nobody seems to be in a mood to make political adjustments," he said.

He saw as "very remote" the possibility of a rapprochement with the 106-year-old Congress, which has drawn flak for creating the political uncertainty stemming from his resignation.

The Congress (I) boycott protest police surveillance on the residence of its President Rajiv Gandhi, left Mr. Shekhar's minority government stranded in Parliament without the number of MP's required to outnumber the opposition.

Shekhar discounted fears in some quarters that the elections would result in another hung parliament where no party would be able to form a government on its own, creating a new spell of political chaos.

"I don't think we should be pessimistic," he said.

Meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi voiced confidence Friday that his Congress (I) party would return to power with a decisive majority in the coming parliamentary elections, as a popularity poll showed voters leaning in his favour.

The 47-year-old former Indian Premier ruled out suggestions that the polls at the end of May would produce an indecisive result which would allow

no party to form a government on its own.

Gandhi said he visualised a "Very clear majority" for the Congress (I), which bowed out of power following the unclear verdict form the November 1989 general elections which produced India's first hung parliament.

The five-party National Front alliance which assumed power fell after its right-wing ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), (Indian People's Party), cut off its legislative support following differences.

The Congress (I) then propped up a small party of rebels who broke away from the Front's main constituent, the Janata Dal (People's Party), and staked claim for power under the leadership of veteran politician Chandra Shekhar.

Mr. Gandhi denied again Friday that his party had topped the break away government, calling Shekhar's decision to quit a "Unilateral Decision."

Rajiv said BJP would be the Congress-I's principal rival in the next election Gandhi's remarks came as an opinion poll conducted by a media organisation showed that 53 per cent of Indian voters would like him to be India's next Prime Minister.



There is no major difference with the Congress-I —Chandra Shekhar

Absence from home after liberation under fire

Kuwaiti Emir faces mounting criticism

KUWAIT CITY, Mar 16: Much-married and fabulously rich, Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah was a low-key ruler of a small, stable nation until the Iraqi invasion left the emirate in a shambles, reports AP.

Though generally popular and widely respected, Sheik Jaber, 64, faces mounting criticism.

The euphoria of liberation has passed, and Kuwaitis have grown impatient with the government's failure to restore basic services since the Iraqi forces were driven out February 24. Also, pro-democracy advocates are demanding a freer press and the return of the Parliament that the Emir suspended in 1986.

Some Kuwaitis say the Emir's popularity is at or near its lowest since he assumed power in 1978 as part of a hereditary dynasty that has ruled Kuwait since 1759.

A devout Muslim who wears the traditional Arab robe and headdress, Sheik Jaber has a reputation of being taciturn and aloof, choosing to delegate day-to-day decisions to subordinates and speaking little in meetings.

By all accounts, he preferred the quiet, orderly hum of Kuwait's pre-war prosperity to the international spotlight.

One of his favourite pastimes before the invasion forced him into exile was to rise early and tend his rose garden.

Sheik Jaber is known as the most-married man in the Gulf region, having had some 40 wives. He keeps four wives simultaneously as permitted in the Muslim tradition, changing at least one a year. He has fa-

thered about 70 children.

Prior to Iraq's invasion, Saddam Hussein called Sheik Jaber a 'womaniser' and criticised his luxurious lifestyle in an attempt to discredit the ruling Al-Sabah family.

The Emir escaped from Kuwait on the morning of August 2 1990, leaving by car minutes before the first Iraqi

soldiers entered the grounds of Dasman Palace.

Most senior members of the Al-Sabah family, including the Crown Prince, Sheik Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, escaped with him. Many relatives avoided capture because they were abroad on holiday.

The Emir set up a government-in-exile in the western

Saudi resort city of Taif.

His continued absence after liberation puzzled some Kuwaitis, but most accepted the government's statement that security was inadequate in the post-war chaos. He kissed the ground Thursday upon return from exile.

The Crown Prince returned more than a week ago and has been heading the government in the absence of Sheik Jaber.

Sheik Jaber became ruler in 1978 and presided over the tiny country as it grew increasingly wealthy from oil and investments.

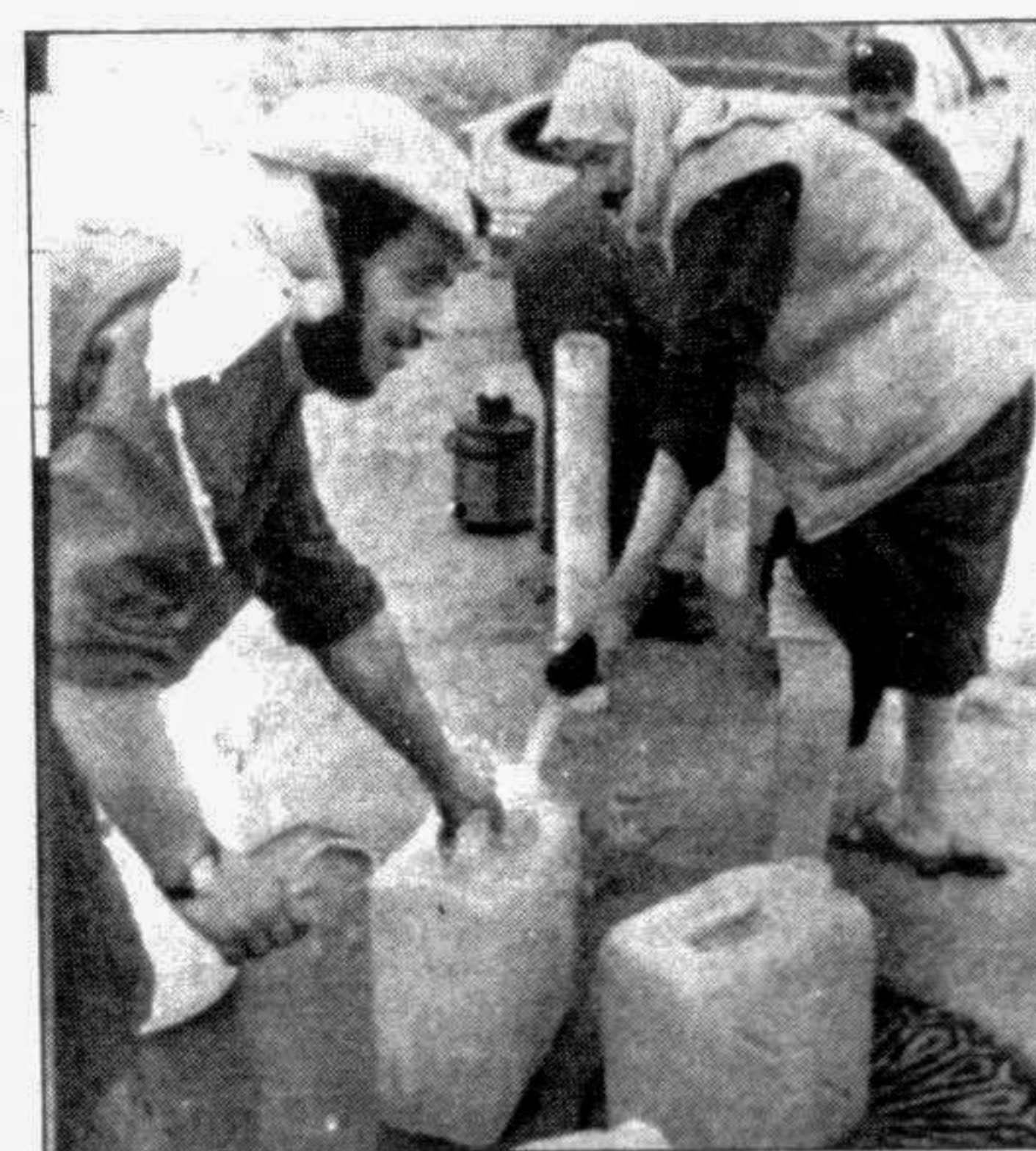
Prior to assuming power, Sheik Jaber served as Finance Minister and spearheaded the country's foreign investment program.

Now, Kuwait's overseas investments reportedly total more than 100 billion dollars, and investment income has surpassed money gained from oil.

Designated Crown Prince and Prime Minister in 1965, Sheik Jaber was the first Gulf leader to funnel all oil revenues to the state treasury instead of to the ruling family.

Reuter adds from Dammam: Kuwaitis streaming into Saudi Arabia to buy supplies for relatives inside the newly-liberated country say they are shocked by the pampered lifestyle of those who lived outside in places like Dammam.

Two weeks after Iraqi soldiers were driven out of the small but wealthy emirate, differences between people who chose to live through the seven-month occupation and those who stayed abroad in five-star exile are beginning to emerge.



KUWAIT CITY: People fill jerry cans with water from a hose at the sole distribution point in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Hawalli 14 Mar as water, electricity, phones and food remain very scarce two weeks after the liberation of the country from seven months of Iraqi occupation. Colour key: Red keffiyehs, green (bottom), orange and red (top) jerrycans. — AFP photo.

Off the Record

Di whips up storm

LONDON: Princess Diana raised eyebrows on Thursday with a tribute to Prime Minister John Major that may have broken a rule that British royals keep out of politics, reports Reuter.

The Princess, wife of heir to the throne Prince Charles, was touring air bases to meet families of men serving in the Gulf.

John Major has done a wonderful job as Prime Minister in his short time in Government and during the Gulf war, she told Lynda Bratton, whose Air Force husband John is in Bahrain.

It vexed opposition Labour Party Parliamentarian Bob Croyer.

Princess Diana is covered by the constitutional convention that she stays out of political affairs and keeps her private thoughts, about John Major and other political figures to herself," he said.

Princess Charles caused a stir recently when the was reported as saying he favoured a change in Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system which tends to guarantee power to its two big parties-- the Conservatives, now in office, and Labour.

The political disease is catching in the royal family.... if they want to make political comments they should resign from their feather-bedded royal offices and stand for Parliament, Croyer said.

A spokesman at Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth's official residence, said Princess Diana's remark should be seen in the context of a conversation with service families and wives on the many events of the past few months and the busy life that a modern Prime Minister leads.

Imelda no longer a security threat

MANILA: Exiled former First Lady Imelda Marcos is no longer a security threat to the Philippines, military chief Lieutenant General Rodolfo Biazon said here on Friday amid growing pressure to allow her to return, reports AFP.

"As far as our assessment is concerned... (the Marcoses) are not threats anymore directly to us and to the security of the country," he said, adding that no group was capable of mounting a coup against President Corason Aquino.

Mrs. Marcos, widow of deposed president Ferdinand Marcos, fled into exile in the United States in 1986 along with her husband and family.

Mrs. Aquino has banned them from returning, citing threats to national security, including the seven coup attempts that have been mounted against her. Mrs. Marcos has denied charges that she financed some of the plots.

Lt. Gen. Biazon said that while no group "whether in or outside of the country" could mount a serious coup attempt, he also said that "whenever there is social unrest, the economic progress is affected."

He added that the issue of allowing Mrs. Marcos to return or not was a "political question and that is beyond our province."

A Swiss court has reportedly ruled that Manila must file criminal charges against Mrs. Marcos and allow her to return to the country if it wishes to claim some 350 million dollars that the Marcoses allegedly looted from the country and stashed in Swiss banks.

Schwarzkopf advises Saddam to 'quit town'

NEW YORK: General Norman Schwarzkopf, who led the Allied forces to victory in the Gulf war, says Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's biggest mistake was his predictability, reports Reuter.

In a US television interview aired on Friday Schwarzkopf, Commander of US forces in the Gulf, said the Allies probably would have been able to stop Saddam even if he had ordered his troops to take the offensive.

But the price would have been much higher than the light casualties the Allies suffered, he told television reporter Barbara Walters on the ABC News programme "20/20".

Had the Iraqis invaded Saudi Arabia early in the Gulf war, "I think it would have been terrible," he said. Stopping Saddam would have been much more difficult.

"Not only much tougher, but at a much greater price."

When asked what Saddam Hussein's biggest mistake was, Schwarzkopf said: "His predictability." The Iraqi leader had earlier been credited with having military flexibility.

Schwarzkopf observed what he called "senseless destruction" in Kuwait when he flew there to meet with Iraqi military leaders this week.