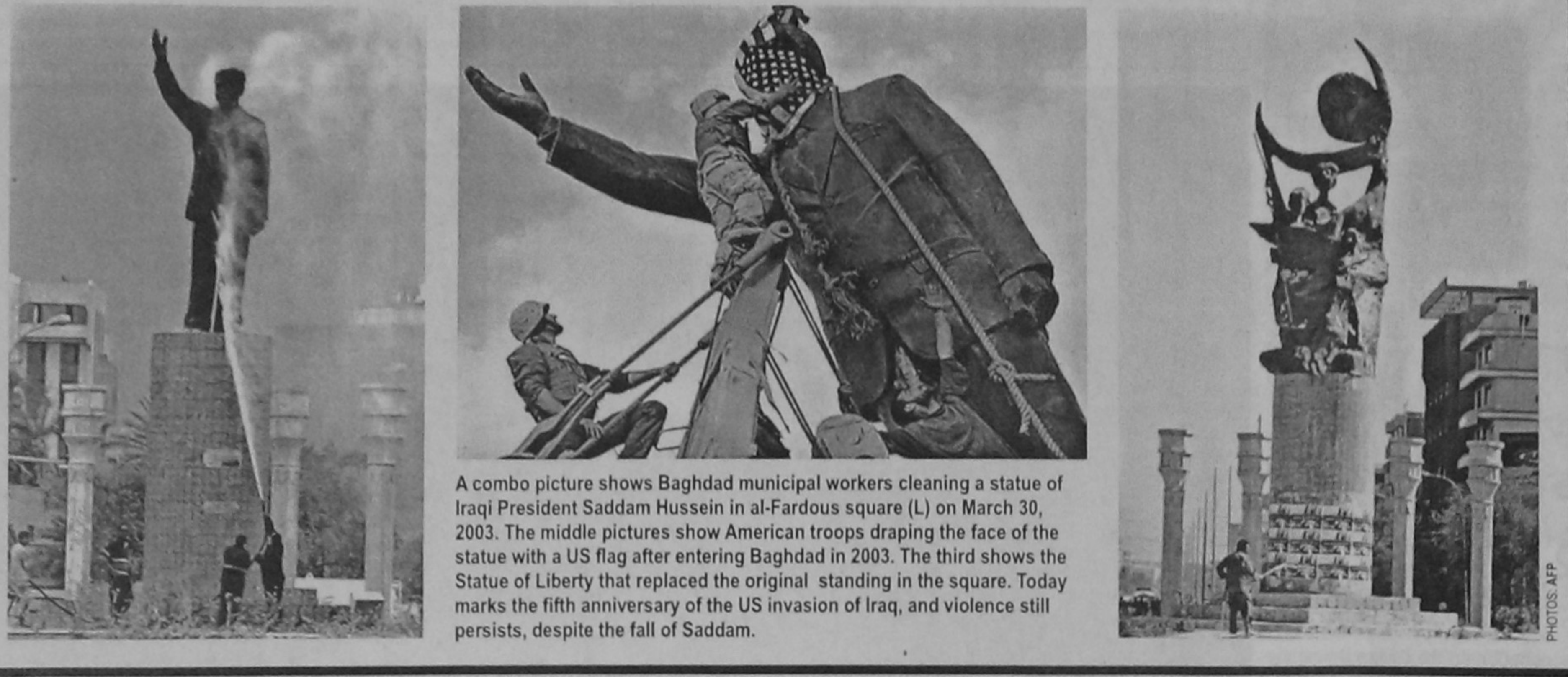


Baghdad - after Saddam



A combo picture shows Baghdad municipal workers cleaning a statue of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in al-Fardous square (L) on March 30, 2003. The middle pictures show American troops draping the face of the statue with a US flag after entering Baghdad in 2003. The third shows the Statue of Liberty that replaced the original standing in the square. Today marks the fifth anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq, and violence still persists, despite the fall of Saddam.

Eight die in Iraq violence

AFP, Baghdad

Another day of violence has seen eight dead in Baghdad and Kirkuk yesterday. US soldiers killed three Iraqi policemen and wounded another yesterday in the northern oil hub of Kirkuk, the US military said. 'I can confirm that three Iraqi policemen were killed and one injured during an incident in Kirkuk province today,' US military spokesman Major Winfield Danielson told AFP. A female suicide bomber meanwhile killed four people when she detonated her explosives-packed vest against a passing police patrol north of Baghdad, a local police officer said. One of the dead was a policeman, he said on condition of anonymity, adding that 12 more people were wounded, including three policemen. The bomber attacked the patrol near a bus terminal in the town of Bala Druz in the restive province of Diyala, he said.

Three more nations recognise Kosovo

AFP, Zagreb

Bulgaria, Croatia and Hungary recognised Kosovo's independence on yesterday in a new blow to Serbia's efforts to resist the province's split. But Serbia immediately warned its three neighbours that relations would suffer by joining the growing list of nations giving diplomatic support to Kosovo. Bulgaria, Croatia and Hungary announced their move in a joint statement. 'The decision on the recognition of Kosovo is based on thorough consideration,' the three countries said. Thirty two countries have now recognised Kosovo's independence unilaterally declared by the Serbian province's ethnic Albanian-dominated parliament on February 17. It comes two days after the worst violence in Kosovo since the proclamation, which is bitterly opposed by the Belgrade government and Kosovo Serbs, who are outnumbered by ethnic Albanians by more than nine to one. Croatia's recognition, the second by a former Yugoslav republic after Slovenia, is expected to be the most sensitive, as it threatens to harm delicate post-war ties between the two neighbours. A UN policeman was killed and more than 150 people wounded in the flashpoint northern town of Kosovska Mitrovica on Monday in clashes between international security forces and Serbs opposed to independence. Budapest and Zagreb were to formalise their recognition after cabinet meetings on Wednesday, with Sofia due to make an official announcement on Thursday. 'The declaration of independence of Kosovo came after the failure of all the efforts of the international community to find a negotiated solution between Belgrade and Pristina on the status of Kosovo,' the joint statements said.

Iraq marks five years of bloody war

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq today marks the fifth anniversary of the US-led invasion that toppled brutal dictator Saddam Hussein, but also plunged a nation of 26 million people into chaos and bloodshed. On March 20, 2003, US warplanes dropped the first bombs on Baghdad to announce an invasion that would within three weeks topple Saddam's tyrannical regime and leave US forces in charge of a resentful and rebellious people. Five years on, Iraqis and US forces still face daily attacks from insurgent gangs and Islamist militants, and fighting between armed factions from both sides of Iraq's Sunni-Shiite sectarian divide rages on.

According to pre-released extracts, Bush will acknowledge that the war has 'come at a high cost in lives and treasure,' but will defend both the decision to invade and to boost the number of US troops in Iraq last year. Anti-war activists are not impressed. 'The war was based on lies. One million Iraqis have died, five million have been made refugees, tens of thousands of US soldiers and marines have been killed or wounded,' said protest leader Brian Becker of the ANSWER Coalition. US commander General David Petraeus admits that the country has made insufficient progress towards national reconciliation. 'Scoring a military victory is easy, but a political victory is more difficult to achieve,' said Mustafa Alani, director of security studies at the Dubai-based Gulf Research Centre. He said Washington had dismantled Saddam's regime and was now 'unable to put it back together'. The day-to-day reality on the ground is grim. The war has killed more than 4,000 US and allied soldiers and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians - between 104,000 and 223,000 died between March 2003 and June 2006 alone, according to the World Health Organisation. The International Committee of the Red Cross, in its latest report, said the plight of millions of Iraqis who still have little or no access to clean water, sanitation or health care was the 'most critical in the world'. The economy, the main concern of Iraqis after security, is also a wreck. Unemployment is running at between 25 and 50 percent of the workforce, according to government figures. Oil exports are the country's main money-earner and a key source of contention between rival political factions. Public services like water and electricity have yet to be fully restored. Government calls for Iraqi refugees to return to help rebuild the country have been largely ignored. Fewer than 50,000 have returned from neighbouring Jordan and Syria, while more than two million have fled. Iraq's parliament has been paralysed by competition between parties driven by sectarian interests. The war is estimated to have already cost Washington more than 400 billion dollars - making it the most expensive conflict in history. And what have Americans got for their money? US credibility in the Middle East has been eroded; the influence of Iran, Washington's enemy, has grown; and the price of oil has spiked to record levels, with catastrophic repercussions on the global economy.

US raid kills six Afghans

AP, Kabul

US forces searching for bomb makers raided Afghan homes near the border with Pakistan early yesterday killing six people - including two children and a woman, Afghan officials said. The US-led coalition said its forces were searching compounds in Khost province for a militant named Bismullah who organized roadside bomb attacks and smuggled weapons. Militants shot at the troops, who returned fire and killed 'several militants,' including Bismullah and Rahim Jan, another man suspected of making bombs, the coalition said. A woman and two children were among six people killed, said Khobar Pashtun, a spokesman for the Khost governor.

Kuwait's Emir starts talks to resolve crisis

AFP, Kuwait City

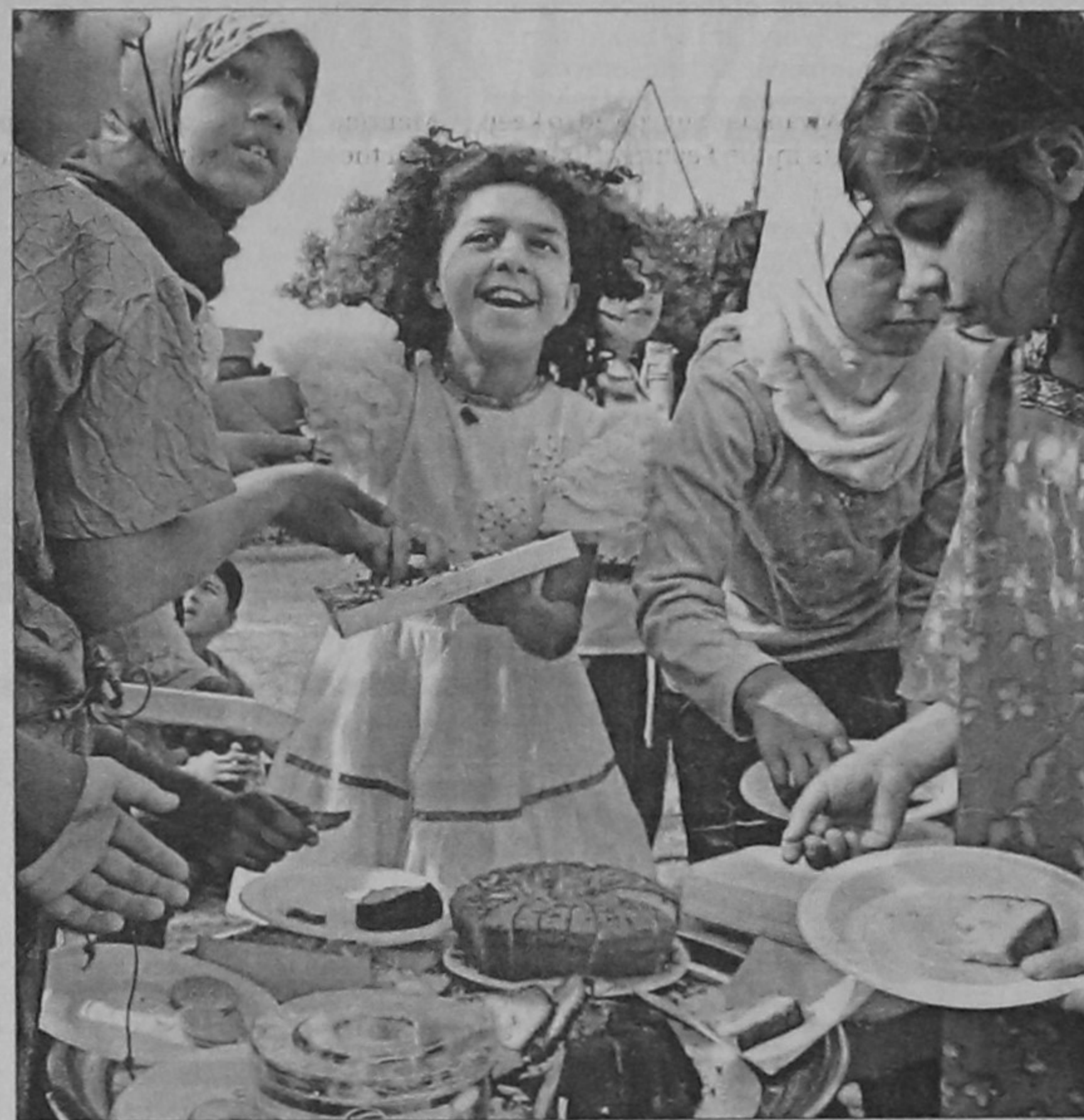
Kuwait's ruler, who cut short a foreign visit to settle a standoff between MPs and the government, started consultations with the emirate's leaders yesterday Wednesday that may lead to dissolving parliament. The crisis in OPEC's fourth-largest producer was triggered by the cabinet's resignation on Monday, with the opposition-dominated parliament accused of not cooperating. Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, being the head of all authorities in the Gulf state, can either accept the government resignation or issue a decree dissolving parliament and calling for early polls. If he accepts the cabinet's resignation, the emir could ask Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammed al-Ahmad al-Sabah to form a new government or ask someone else to become premier. However, a number of MPs expressed fear parliament could be suspended altogether and warned that if this happens they 'will go to the street to oppose it'. The emirate embraced parliamentary democracy in 1962. Parliament has been suspended twice before - for five years in 1976 and for six years in 1986. A number of lawmakers on Tuesday said they expected parliament to be dissolved and fresh elections to be held in May.

Obama struggles to defuse toxic race row

AFP, Washington

Democratic front-runner Barack Obama battled to defuse the most serious threat yet to his presidential hopes after incendiary, racially tinged sermons by his former pastor triggered uproar. The mixed-race Illinois senator Tuesday condemned the sermons while standing by his black spiritual mentor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and appealing for America's divided communities to pursue a 'more perfect union.' Obama's bitter rival for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton, stood above the fray as she prepared for the release today of thousands of pages of documents - and potential embarrassments - on her activity as first lady.

New polls suggested that non-stop airings of the sermons by Reverend Jeremiah Wright on television networks and the Internet had dented Obama's support, with independent voters who had been excited by his promise of change especially put off. Obama decried Wright's 'profoundly distorted' sermons but refused to disown the 66-year-old Chicago preacher, who welcomed the young community organizer into the Christian flock 20 years ago. But Obama also said Wright 'has been like family to me.' The fiery reverend officiated at Obama's wedding and baptized his two daughters. 'I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can disown my white grandmother,' the candidate said, recalling that she had sometimes used racially tinged language. Campaigning in Philadelphia, Hillary said she had not seen or read her rival's speech, 'but I'm very glad that he gave it,' underlining the 'historic' prospect of a woman or African-American occupying the Oval Office. Hillary Clinton meanwhile readied for the release by the National Archives of 11,046 pages of her schedules from her White House days alongside husband Bill.



Iraqi Sunni children eat cake and sweets as they celebrate the birthday of Prophet Mohammed (SM) at a school in Baghdad's Al-Mansur district yesterday. Iraq today marks the fifth anniversary of the US-led war that toppled the iron-fisted rule of Saddam Hussein, but also threw the nation in a quagmire of rampant bloodshed, political deadlock and humiliation of a foreign occupation.

Advertisement for Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC) regarding a notice for change of conditions for submission. It includes details about the procurement process, submission deadlines, and contact information for the company secretary.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Milk Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd. It features an invitation for tender for various machinery and equipment, including ink jet printing machines, plastic ice cream containers, wrappers, air compressors, and aluminum foil.

Legal notice from the Supreme Court of Bangladesh High Court Division regarding Esquire Electronics Limited vs. Registrar, Joint Stock of Companies and Firms. The notice concerns a matter related to the Esquire Dyeing Industries Limited.

Another legal notice from the Supreme Court of Bangladesh High Court Division regarding Esquire Dyeing Industries Limited vs. Registrar, Joint Stock of Companies and Firms. This notice also concerns a matter related to the Esquire Dyeing Industries Limited.