

Blair resigns in June

AFP, Trimdon

Prime Minister Tony Blair announced his resignation yesterday, ending a tumultuous decade in power as one of Britain's most successful leaders but dividing the nation over the Iraq war.

Amid tributes from the rival who is almost certain to take over, and tearful applause from his constituents, Blair said he would stand down as leader of the Labour Party and prime minister from June 27.

Blair used his speech to launch a powerful defence of his record, including supporting US President George W. Bush after the September 11, 2001 attacks and the 2003 war in Iraq.

"I did what I thought was right," he said, adding: "It has been an honour to serve it (Britain). I thank the British people for the times that it went right. And I apologise for the times I have fallen short."

Blair said he had taken over a country "uncertain of its future, uncertain about the future," but insisted his government had achieved more than any other in Britain since the end of the World War II in 1945 because of the improved economy.

"I have been prime minister of this country for just over 10 years. In this job, in the world today, I think that is long enough for me ... Sometimes the only way you conquer the pull of power is to set it down."

"On 27th June, I will tender my resignation from the office of primeminister."

Finance minister Gordon Brown, the frontrunner to replace Blair despite their rivalry, hailed the prime minister's "unique



Tony Blair

leadership" at a cabinet meeting in London before Blair flew off to Trimdon in northeast England to make his announcement, a spokesman said.

"There was much thumping of the table," said the spokesman.

"Gordon paid a very full tribute to Tony in there," added Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain.

Blair, 54, will stand down after 10 years in power which started with the handover of Hong Kong to China on July 1, 1997 and guiding the royal family and the nation through the trauma of the death of Princess Diana.

He also presided over a booming British economy but for many his legacy risks being clouded by the 2003 invasion of Iraq. His premiership started amid euphoria but is ending with his popularity at record lows.

Blair won three general elections and originally promised to serve a full third term of office, which would have kept him in office to 2010, but not fight for a fourth, straight term of office.

But after a mini "coup" by some Labour lawmakers last September,

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

6 robbers killed in gunfight with cops

7 policemen wounded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Six robbers were killed and seven police personnel including an officer-in-charge (OC) injured in a gunfight between the robber gang and police early Thursday at Mandarkati village of Banaripara upazila in the district.

Two revolvers, six bullets and ten sharp weapons were recovered from the spot after the incident and a gang member was arrested later.

The dead were Milon Molla, 26, his brother Titu Molla, 17, of Mandar Bari, Kalam, 28, brother-in-law of Milon, Mohsin Sardar, 30, of Birmahol under Nalchhity upazila of Jhalakathi and two others aged between 25 and 30 years. Titu was a student of class ten of Chakhar Fazlul Huq School.

Officer-in-Charge of Banaripara Police Station Abdul Hye Sarkar, who was seriously hacked by the robbers, was admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH).

Armed robbers attacked the

house of Zinnat Ali Daktar at Khalishakota village under Banaripara upazila at about 9:15pm on Wednesday night, district Police Superintendent Tawfiq Mahbub Chowdhury and injured Officer-in-Charge of Banaripara Police Station Abdul Hye Sarkar said.

Hearing the cries of the victims, locals rushed to the spot, chased the criminals out of the village, and informed the police.

Later police learnt that the robber gang took shelter in their hideout at the house of one of their gang member Milon Molla in Mollabari of Mandarkati village, about two kilometres from the previous spot, and was planning for robbery.

As police cordoned the house and tried to enter it, the gang hacked the OC severely and started to flee.

Police nabbed gang member Mohsin and started for the police station.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Police asked to place probe report in extortion case against Hasina by June 11

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked police to submit probe report by June 11 in the case against Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina and her personal staff Manu Majumder for extortion of Tk 3 crore.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman passed the order when the general recording officer (GRO) placed the case before the court saying that Tejgaon police is yet to submit the probe report.

Another Dhaka court acquitted Bangladesh Krishak League chief Mirza Abdul Jalil and eight others yesterday in a case filed under the Speedy Trial (Law and Order Disruption) Act.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

Rejoinder, our reply

Former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Professor MA Hadi has sent a rejoinder to The Daily Star regarding the report titled "A Medical University Turns Ordinary Hospital: Politicisation in last 5 years blamed" published on May 3.

The rejoinder said it is not correct that "The country's lone medical university that was established in 1998 with a view to creating efficient doctors and bringing uniformity in medical education across the country is ruined by the corrupt administration."

It stated that FCPS, MD and MS courses are always periodically updated and modernised to maintain a nationally and internationally accepted standard and BSMMU started the residency programme without prior approval

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
May 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court raids a fake ghee factory at Jatrabari in the capital yesterday. The court sentenced its owner to three years' imprisonment and fined him Tk 2 lakh.

Barapukuria coal mine lacks safe working condition Says probe report

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The workers in Barapukuria coal mine are vulnerable to accidents due to faulty geological and hydrological designs and lack of proper working condition, said the probe body formed following the incident in which a British consultant died in the mine recently.

It blamed the mine authorities - Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Limited (BCMCL),-- for certain

lapses in the mine operation, and recommended measures to avoid recurrence of such accidents.

High temperature and excessive humidity, absence of efficient rescuers and lack of monitoring system led to the April 26 incident that claimed the life of mining consultant Albert Baner Davis, said the probe report submitted to Petrobangla on Tuesday.

Davis, 62, died 430 metres

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2