

# First Australian female PM leads party to low point

AP, Canberra

Whether or not she emerges as winner following recent elections, Australia's first woman prime minister will have led the nation's oldest political party to one of the lowest points in its 119-year history.

Julia Gillard, a sharp-witted and plain-speaking former lawyer, had been widely expected to take her centre-left Labor Party to victory with a loss of some seats at Aug. 21 elections. History was on her side since no Australian government had been denied a second three-year term since 1931.

But she failed to convince sufficient voters that her government deserved a second chance. She now needs to persuade at least two of three independent lawmakers next week to support Labor in a minority government commanding 76 or 77 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives.

Opposition leader Tony Abbott, whose Liberal Party represents the conservative spectrum in Australian politics, needs the support of all three independents to achieve a majority in parliament's lower chamber where parties form government.

The question of how Labor came to land on this knife-edge only months after the party held a seemingly unassailable lead in opinion polls for almost four years has divided analysts, as well as angry government lawmakers.

Nick Economou, a Monash University political scientist, said Friday the similarities between the single-term Labor government that fell in 1931 and Julia's extend beyond a shared background of global recession.

Economou says both administrations' fatal flaw was internal division. In 1931, the party was fractured over economic policy in response to the Great Depression.

This time the chasm was created with a sudden decision by party power-brokers to replace Prime Minister Kevin Rudd with Julia, his deputy, in an internal party mutiny in June.

"To take out your leader quite the way they did, that's really taking a very high political risk and I reckon it was going to be a struggle for whoever led Labor in those circumstances to contain the damage," said Economou.

Anger at Rudd's demise became apparent during the election campaign when apparently well-placed, unnamed government

sources leaked to the media that Julia had failed as prime minister to attend top-level national security meetings.

As a minister in Rudd's Cabinet, the leakers also accused her of callously arguing against increasing pensions because old people were more likely to vote for a conservative party rather than Labor. The retribution continued at the ballot box with Labor suffering its worst losses in Rudd's home state of Queensland.

Norman Abjorensen, an Australian National University political scientist, said Julia suffered for failing to fully explain to the public why Rudd, the elected prime minister, had been replaced.

Climate change a major election issue with the Australian public also appears to have played a role in Labor's poor showing.

Rudd declared climate change was "the greatest moral challenge of our time" when Labor swept to power at elections in 2007, and he ratified the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions as his first act as prime minister. His government drew up plans to make major Australian industrial polluters pay for the carbon gas they emit.

However, Rudd's popularity plummeted in opinion polls in April after he shelved his emission permit trading scheme until 2013.

## Muggers trade fire with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a bullet-hit mugger after a gun battle between Rab and a gang of muggers in the capital's Kellarmore area of Labagh yesterday.

The arrestee, Md Awal Bepari, sustained bullet injury to his leg and Rab rushed him to city's Midfort Hospital. After giving primary treatment, they handed him over to Labagh police station.

Rab said a gang of muggers was trying to snatch valuables from a pedestrian Rahmatullah at JN Saha Road of Labagh at around 11:30pm. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-10 appeared on the scene and chased the gang.

The gang opened fire while trying to escape and Rab retaliated with gunshots.

Rab then caught the mugger and seized two choppers from his possession.

# BP raises blow-out preventer, key evidence in probe

AP, New Orleans

BP PLC was slowly raising the 300-ton blow-out preventer that failed to stop oil from spewing into the Gulf of Mexico, careful not to damage or drop a key piece of evidence in the spill investigation.

When the blow-out preventer reaches the surface after its mile-long journey, government investigators will take possession of it and eventually examine it, hoping to gain insight into why the device failed.

BP spokesman said in an e-mail to The Associated Press that the 50-foot device was detached from the wellhead Friday afternoon. Another blow-out preventer had successfully been placed on the blown-out well, the government said later.

The April 20 explosion aboard the Deepwater Horizon killed 11 workers and led to 206 million gallons of oil spewing from BP's undersea well.

Investigators know the explosion was triggered by a bubble of methane gas that escaped from the well and shot up the drill column, expanding quickly as it burst through several seals and barriers before igniting.

But they don't know exactly how or why the gas escaped. And they don't know why the blow-out preventer didn't seal the well pipe at the sea bottom after the eruption, as it was supposed to. While the device didn't close or may have closed partially, hearings have produced no clear picture of why it didn't plug the well.

Lawyers will be watching

closely, as hundreds of lawsuits have been filed over the oil spill. Future liabilities faced by a number of corporations could be riding on what the analysis of the blow-out preventer shows.

The raising of the blow-out preventer followed Thursday's removal of a temporary cap that stopped oil from gushing into the Gulf in mid-July. No more oil was expected to leak into the sea, but crews were standing by with collection vessels just in case.

The government wanted to replace the failed blow-out preventer first to deal with any pressure that is caused when a relief well BP has been drilling intersects the blown-out well.

Once that intersection occurs sometime after Labor Day, BP is expected to use mud and cement to plug the blown-out well for good from the bottom.

## 1 killed

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clashes erupted following a quarrel between the followers of AL activist Golap and BNP activist Nagua of Koilakh village at around 7:00pm.

Around 100 people from both the groups equipped with homemade weapons and brickbats fought the battle.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Mohammad Akhteruzzaman of Bajitpur police station said they rushed to the village on information and additional forces were deployed to avert further clash.

The OC said no case was filed and none was arrested in this connection.

## Blair

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that shoes and eggs were also hurled in his direction.

As Blair pulled up, protestors also surged towards him and tried to push down a security barrier but were swiftly repelled by police and some demonstrators were led away.

The protestors, who included anti-war activists angry at his role in the Iraq war and pro-Palestinian campaigners, waved placards with slogans such as "Blair lied, millions died" and "Lock him up for genocide" and chanted amid a heavy police presence.

Blair is making an appearance at a bookshop in Dublin to promote his book "A Journey", which was released earlier in the week.

Part of Dublin's main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street, where the shop is located, was sealed off and access to the bookshop was being tightly controlled.

Dozens of people braved pouring rain to queue at the back entrance to the store in the hope of getting their book signed by Blair.

In his first live television interview promoting the book on Friday he brushed off the opposition he faces from anti-war campaigners for leading Britain alongside the United States into the 2003 Iraq war.

"One of the first things that you learn in politics is that those who shout most don't deserve necessarily to be listened to most.

"Everyone should be listened to equally, irrespective of the volume of noise," he told Irish state television RTE.

Despite continuing controversy over his role in the Iraq conflict, Blair is also particularly hailed in Ireland for his role in the Northern Ireland peace process.

Blair and his then Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern negotiated the 1997 Good Friday Peace agreement that ended decades of violence in Northern Ireland and led to the creation of a power-sharing administration in Belfast.

Blair is due to hold another book signing in London next week which anti-war protestors have also said they will target.

## MPs

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allowances according to the 1973 Members of Parliament (Remunerations and Allowances) Order.

It is an old practice that lawmakers do not give income tax but this should be changed, said the AL lawmaker elected from Noakhali.

Commenting on several BNP leaders' claim that Zia "legitimised" AL before the second parliamentary election in 1979, Quader said Awami League is not a party which grew from any illegal regime.

"People gave Awami League its legitimacy, not any person," he said.

He alleged that BNP is not focusing on issues relating to people's interest, rather spreading hatred for Awami League among people.

If BNP continues to do so, it will face the consequence Muslim League had suffered, he said.

About the demand for trial of Ershad from different quarters for his illegal takeover of power, the AL leader said decisions should be taken considering the present situation.

The discussion was organised by Bangabandhu Shishu Academy, Dhaka city unit, with its president ABM Mazhar Anam in the chair.

## Passengers suffer

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The passengers were shifted to Kawrankandi ghat in trawlers and other vessels before the ferry was finally salvaged at 5:00pm yesterday.

Shaheed Barkat, another RO-RO ferry carrying 15 vehicles, cruised from Kawrankandi ghat along the old channel in the river on Friday morning and got trapped at Kawkliar Char near Mawa ghat around 8:00am, said ferry captains.

Two rescue vessels finally managed to salvage the ferry at 7:00am yesterday after 23 hours' laborious efforts.

The distance of the country's busiest ferry route Mawa-Kawrankandi has been increasing gradually due to poor navigability and shoals.

BIWTC official Sirajul said, as this channel does not have any signal lights, ferries run the risk of getting stuck in the submerged chasms.

# Mutiny trial

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Like the two, several other accused claimed that the people in the video footages and photographs were not them.

But a few accused, who were not in combat gear during the mutiny, admitted that they were in the photographs displayed before the special court.

The court took deposition of witnesses against 667 jawans of 24 Rifles Battalion charged with mutiny.

Dhaka BDR Sector Commander Col Aziz Ahmed said the accused jawans were lying. Their denial would not have any impact as other jawans from their units had already identified them, he said.

Aziz said 77 accused claimed that they hid in toilets at the Darbar Hall on the first day of the mutiny and did not see each other.

In order to find the truth behind their claim, a video footage was prepared for the court putting 77 people in the toilets at the same time. The place proved too small for them as they struggled to even stand on their feet.

Plaintiff Subedar Matuir Rahman brought specific charges against 33 BDR jawans at the court on the first day of the deposition.

He presented as evidence call lists of the mobile phones of the accused, footages and photographs captured during the mutiny that claimed the lives of 74 people including 57 army officers.

The video footages of the recovery of bodies of the slain BDR officers were also screened at the court.

The special court began proceedings at about 9:45am and continued till 1:45pm.

Prosecutor Lt Col Shamsur Rahman requested the court to allow the plaintiff and number one witness to give deposition. All the accused were produced before the court.

The court adjourned pro-

ceedings until 9:00am today.

On June 26, the court pressed mutiny charges against all the accused.

Twenty-nine of the 667 accused had confessed before the court to their involvement in the mutiny but the prime accused, Subedar Major Gofran Mallick, denied the charges against him.

## Saarc delegates

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Democracy' began at Hotel Sheraton in the morning.

Representatives including parliamentarians, high commissioners, high officials from the eight member countries--Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives--are attending the meeting.

Leaders of the Saarc at the 16th Summit in Thimphu, appreciating that all member states had evolved into multi-party democracies, underlined the challenges faced by them in ensuring effective, efficient, transparent and accountable governance.

In this regard, they emphasised on regional cooperation to strengthen good governance.

As per a decision of the Summit, Bangladesh circulated the Concept Paper on Charter of Democracy and convened the inter-governmental meeting in Dhaka.

Recognising the inherent link between democracy and development, the member states expressed their commitment to have a Saarc Charter of Democracy, which will strengthen democratic institutions and process, promote practice of democracy at all levels of government and society, and promote rule of law.

The ongoing meeting is examining the broad principles on democracy for inclusion in a regionally agreed document and also how the Saarc member states, people's representatives and civil society can work towards strengthening democracy and democratic practices in South Asia.

## Unrest feared

FROM PAGE 1

organisations where unpleasantness might occur, though the figures may change," said Hassan Mahmood Khandker, inspector general of police (IGP).

According to sources, police high-ups, including the IGP, have spoken to the leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) after the meeting to seek their cooperation in this regard.

"We don't want any unpleasant incident to take place over wages and won't spare those who don't pay before Eid," warned the IGP adding, "Everyone should follow the directives from the labour ministry and pay the workers by September."

The meeting also discussed the issue regarding the safety of homebound people from extortionists as well as other kinds of harassers.

Police forces across the country have been instructed to take adequate measures to ensure safety of the travelers, said the IGP.

The home minister also visited a number of market places and found the security to be satisfactory as police was present to prevent crimes like extortion or mugging from occurring, he added.

Chaired by the IGP, the meeting was attended by Zaved Patwary, additional IGP and chief of SB, Shamsuddoha Khandaker, additional IGP (Finance); Muhammad Aminul Islam, additional IGP (Training); AKM Shahidul Hoque, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner and Md Mukhlesur Rahman director general of Rapid Action Battalion, among others.

## Most schools

FROM PAGE 1

before the education minister. "We need to listen to the children how they think of the solution."

WORRYING FACTS

The surveys found walls and roofs at 86 percent of targeted institutions damaged. Compounds of 81 percent schools are waterlogged when it rains and floodwater enters into 89 percent of schools.

Around two thirds of the schools are located by bustling streets and students are exposed to severe sound and air pollution. Noise from roads distracts kids' attention from lessons.

Over 27 percent schools have no boundaries and 21 percent schools are without gates, the report mentions.

Around seven percent schools are located close to cinemas. The vulgar images on movie posters corrupt adolescent mind.

There are video shops near almost 27 percent schools, it says.

Around 68 percent students said they are often tortured by schoolteachers.

Around 62 percent female students say they face or remain at risk of stalking while around 54 percent female students fall victim to pestering on the roads and near the schools.

Three fourths of the students in those schools take lessons from private tutors and coaching centres, the report says.

Around 46 percent respondents say teachers encourage them to buy guidebooks.

The report shows around 74 percent teachers use mobile phones during class hours.

Only 50 percent schools have first aid measures and 14 percent institutions have health check-up facility.

The report also shows children of sex workers suffer mental torture by teachers while the children from tea garden experience 0therness.

The report also came up with recommendations including taking immediate measures about the schools located by busy roads and moving the video shops, cinemas.

## Dhaka metro rail

FROM PAGE 1

and Hotel Sonargaon crossing between 2013 and 2015. In the second stage the route between Sonargaon crossing and Sayedabad, and in the third stage the Pallabi to Uttara route will be built.

The study noted that the construction cost of the elevated part will be around 12 million dollars per km, while the underground structure will cost 48 million dollars per km.

The communications ministry also decided to shelve an idea of building a mono rail. The minister said initially it was thought that a mono rail could be built along with the ongoing bid for the 21 km Dhaka Expressway. But a primary study found that to be technically impossible.

# Obama to meet Asean leaders in New York

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama will meet Southeast Asian leaders this month in New York, the White House said Friday, as the United States tries to bolster its role in a region faced with a rising China.

The White House said that Obama would hold talks with leaders of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in New York on September 24, at the time of the annual United Nations General Assembly.

The summit, whose date was earlier confirmed to AFP by a senior official, will mark Obama's latest attempt to reinvestigate US policy towards the dynamic region that he said was neglected by ex-president George W. Bush's team.

The New York meeting will follow the inaugural summit that Obama held last year in Singapore with his counterparts from Asean.

In Singapore, "the president and the Asean leaders pledged to deepen cooperation in a number of areas of common concern including trade and investment, regional security, disaster management, food and energy security, and climate change," a White House statement said.

"The president looks forward to working with the leaders to assess the progress on these issues, identify future efforts to strengthen US-Asean relations, and discuss multilateral approaches for greater regional cooperation," it said.

But the upcoming meeting -- like many at Asean -- may risk being overshadowed by controversy over Myanmar, whose military regime is going ahead with November 7 elections despite wide concern over their credibility.

Washington-based diplomats said that the White House held prolonged negotiations with Asean leaders on where to hold the summit.

Some Southeast Asian officials preferred a summit in Washington, believing it would carry greater weight and not be seen as one of the myriad "sideline" meetings held each year on the edges of the UN General Assembly.

But the diplomats said that the White House found it was logistically more practical to meet in New York -- and worried about giving too much legitimacy to Myanmar just ahead of the controversial polls.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton first spoke of the second Asean summit when she visited Vietnam in July,

## Wife killed

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Delwar admitted he beat his wife, but claimed she committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling.

Shafiqul Islam, father of the deceased, said Laily and Delwar eloped and married six months ago.

He said Delwar had been unemployed and constantly kept pressing her daughter for money. Delwar was arrested one and a half months back on charges of stealing a computer. It cost them Tk 10,000 to bail him out, Shafiqul added.

Laily's mother Hazera Begum alleged that Delwar killed her daughter as they refused to meet his demand for Tk 50,000 in dowry.

A case has been filed with Kamrangirchar Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

## 2 staff

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Toma's father Pancham Kolu alleged Taslima pushed the doses from a broken ampoule over the objection of the babies' mothers.

Meanwhile, a high-powered team comprised of health directorate, World Health Organization and Unicef officials visited Kalikapur.

Mahmud Hassan Khan, child specialist of Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital, said the incident points out fault in the EPI and government cannot avoid its responsibility.

saying that Asean and the related Asean Regional Forum were "strong, effective architecture for security and prosperity in Asia."

In Hanoi, Hillary called for open access to the South China Sea -- an area of growing tension between China and Southeast Asian nations, particularly Vietnam. China rebuked Hillary for her remarks.

Ernie Bower, a Southeast Asia expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank, said that the second summit would further reassure Asean of US commitment.

"That's the bottom line purpose," Bower said.

"It institutionalizes the meeting, which is important both to Asean countries and to us because we can't be effective in Asian regional organizations unless we have a balanced engagement with Southeast Asia along the lines of other players like China, Japan and (South) Korea," he said.

However, he said that Myanmar would also likely be a headline issue in the talks.

At the inaugural summit in Singapore, Obama urged Myanmar's Prime Minister Thein Sein to free all political prisoners including the Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, but to no avail.

The Obama administration last year launched an engagement effort aimed at bringing Myanmar, also known as Burma, out of its isolation. But US officials have been increasingly frustrated at the lack of progress.

The administration has also moved to build relations with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, and sought to forge ahead in historically fraught relationships with communist Vietnam and Laos.

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Land broker

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His hands and legs were tied and mouth was taped, said Sub-Inspector Newaz Uddin Ahmed of Badda Police Station.

Three persons killed Jahangir, holding office assistant Dulal Miah hostage, added the SI quoting Dulal.

Dulal managed to free himself after about half an hour and found his boss dead.

He said Babu, who used to visit the office regularly, was among the three.

Security guard Mamun said the goons entered the office around 10:00am with permission of Jahangir and left the office after an hour.

Jahangir's wife Jahana Alam filed a murder case mentioning that her husband might have been killed over business dispute.

Police were yet to ascertain the cause behind the killing and arrest anybody in this connection.

## Traders

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shutting down their shops and started to gather before the court. The traders were furious with the mobile court.

Realising things were getting out of hand, the magistrate left in a hurry along with her forces soon after realising the fine.

The court had fined the store for overcharging for sugar, said Tejaagon Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman. The magistrate had to leave since the traders gathered there and the situation became tense.

Talking to newsmen, the magistrate alleged that the traders tried to attack the team. "The situation came under control after Rapid Action Battalion and the police were informed of the matter. Later, we left the place safely," she said.

Meanwhile, another mobile court in Lalkuthi of Old Dhaka fined fruit traders Tk 6 lakh for selling poor-quality fruits. The court destroyed 15,000kg of low-quality dates at Wise Ghat and realised Tk 50,000 in fines from an importer.

Magistrate Al Amin said they fined the amount as the traders were cheating people with the fruits.