



Japan's new PM wins polls backing

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's new prime minister Yoshihiko Noda and his cabinet yesterday won solid backing in opinion polls, with respondents expressing confidence in his ability to lead the post-quake recovery.

Noda on Friday unveiled a youthful cabinet lacking the usual political heavyweights, after he became Japan's sixth new leader in five years, charged with uniting a divided party and guiding reconstruction.

The Nikkei business daily said its survey showed 67 percent approval for Noda's cabinet -- a significant recovery from the dismal 19 percent rating his unpopular predecessor Naoto Kan recorded in late July.

Respondents said Noda was "reliable" and had a "clean" image, and "offers a sense of stability" as the nation recovers from the March 11 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis, the Nikkei said.

The Japanese public usually gives relatively high approval ratings to a new prime minister, and Kan's own cabinet won 68 percent support in the Nikkei poll when he came into power 15 months ago.

The mass-circulation Yomiuri newspaper said 65 percent of the public supported Noda's new leadership team, and a poll by Kyodo News agency also showed a 63 percent approval for the cabinet.

The Mainichi daily said 56 percent of respondents supported the line-up, and 64 percent said Noda should pursue Kan's policy to phase out nuclear power.



Rescue workers search for missing people after Typhoon Talas ravaged a house and parts of a road washed away, inset, by floodwaters in Tanabe, Wakayama prefecture, in western Japan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Typhoon kills 20 in Japan, 50 missing

AFP, Tokyo

A typhoon that pummelled western Japan left at least 20 people dead and more than 50 missing, reports said yesterday, after swollen rivers swept away buildings and landslides crushed houses.

One of the victims drowned after flood waters gushed into his car and streets were submerged in scenes that rekindled memories of the March 11 tsunami disaster. Thousands of people were left stranded.

Typhoon Talas, which made landfall on Saturday and is one of the deadliest in recent years, packed gusts of up to 108 kilometres per hour as it cut across the island of Shikoku and the main island of Honshu.

The government set up an emergency task force as the number of victims looked set to grow and landslides and damaged roads hampered relief efforts.

In Wakayama prefecture, 12 people were killed and 29 were missing.

One man drowned after flood waters surged into his car, and another man was killed after a landslide hit his house, the local government said.

In Nara prefecture's Totsukawa village, an overflowing river washed away apartments, leaving at least two people dead and seven missing, the local government said.

In the Kansai region and elsewhere up to 30,000 people were evacuated, according to the fire and disaster management agency.

Nepal's PM swears in cabinet

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's new Maoist prime minister yesterday swore in 13 ministers, including seven from outside his party, as he tried to form a stable coalition government after years of political crisis.

The Maoists, who fought the central government in a bloody civil war from 1996 to 2006, now rule Nepal with an alliance of regional parties from the southern plains.

Baburam Bhattarai was elected prime minister a week ago after his predecessor, who took the role in February after 17 parliamentary votes lasting seven months, stood down.

The Maoists, the largest party in parliament but without enough seats to rule alone, also ran the first post-war government until being forced out due to a clash with the president in 2009.

Undetectable blood vessel damage linked to signs of age

BBC ONLINE

Tiny clots in the brain may be the cause of some signs of old age such as stooped posture and restricted movement, say US scientists.

Researchers examining the brains of 418 deceased patients found damaged blood vessels in 29% of them which would not have been picked up by normal scans.

They said higher levels of damage were linked to more limited movement.

The researchers, writing in the journal Stroke, said declining mobility should not be accepted as normal ageing.

Mild symptoms of Parkinson's disease - such as slow movement, rigidity, tremors and posture - increase with age and are thought to affect up to half of people by the age of 85.

A team of scientists at the Rush University Medical Center, in Chicago, carried out autopsies on the brains of nuns and priests who were taking part in the Religious Order Study.

The brains were examined under a microscope for signs of damage which would be invisible to normal brain scans.

They found 29% of patients with no previously detected sign of stroke had

clotted or narrowed blood vessels.

When comparing the severity of damage with a score of Parkinson's-like symptoms, the study said there was a link.

It concluded that damage, undetectable with current scanning techniques, "may contribute to the development of what is currently considered 'normal' age-related motor symptoms such as parkinsonian signs".

However, it could not prove that the damage itself caused declining mobility, merely that there was a link between the two.

Lead researcher Prof Aron Buchman said: "This is very surprising."

"Often the mild motor symptoms are considered an expected part of aging. We shouldn't accept this as normal aging. We should try to fix it and understand it."

"If there is an underlying cause, we can intervene and perhaps lessen the impact."

Dr Kieran Breen, director of research and development at Parkinson's UK, said: "We know that as people get older they are more likely to develop mini-strokes, so tiny that they cannot be detected by normal scanning techniques."

1,000 rally for Taiwan sovereignty

AFP, Taipei

About 1,000 chanting pro-independence activists took to the streets of Taipei yesterday, accusing Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou of surrendering the island's sovereignty to China.

The rally, which comes four months ahead of the 2012 presidential election, was considered part of pro-independence groups' efforts to help the leading anti-China opposition, the Democratic Progressive Party.

"Dump Ma to safeguard Taiwan!" the crowd chanted while marching through the capital.

Pro-independence groups have accused Ma of compromising Taiwan's sovereignty in exchange for economic benefits from Beijing, a claim which has been categorically denied by Ma.

Power deal with India likely tomorrow

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The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday issued an order approving the PPA.

A top Power Development Board official said the PPA would not specify the rate for Bangladesh as the NTPC sells power at different rates from power stations in different India provinces.

The Indian power prices range between Tk 4 and Tk 5.50 per kilowatt hour. In contrast, the PDB's heavily-subsidised bulk power rate is now Tk 2.80 per kilowatt hour. In India it is not subsidised.

With the PPA signed, Bangladesh would try to get electricity from plants in India's eastern region, so that transmission cost remains low. Bangladesh would pay for the transmission from the Indian plant to the border grid substation in Bheramara, according to another agreement signed last year.

The primary design and

construction work for the Bheramara substation and trans-national transmission line is now underway. The PDB says that it would be completed by March 2013 and the Indian power can be imported then.

Besides, an understanding between the two countries allows import of another 250MW later on under a different financial arrangement yet to be fixed.

Official sources said Dhaka was not expecting to sign a joint venture agreement to set up a massive 1,322MW coal-fired power plant in Khulna.

The deal was expected to be signed last year but it has been delayed due to various reasons, including delay in completion of a feasibility study by the NTPC. The NTPC and Bangladesh Power Development Board will jointly set up the \$1.5 billion plant that would use imported coal.

Explaining the delay, a top PDB official said Bangladesh has some reservations about some sections of the draft feasibility study that was submitted recently. A Bangladeshi team will go to India in a week to discuss their reservations so that the joint venture agreement could be signed soon.

The PDB has acquired 1,800 acres of land near Mongla to set up the plant. The feasibility report finds the soil condition poor at the site and says this factor would increase the cost of civil engineering.

A group of environmentalists are also opposing setting up the coal-fired plant so close to the Sundarbans mangrove forest. The Department of Environment has, however, given the PDB its clearance on the basis of a primary environmental impact report. The detailed environment study is currently going on.

With the joint venture agreement signed, Bangladesh and India would equally share up to 30 percent equity of this mega project. The remaining equity, which may be equivalent to \$1.2 billion, would be taken as bank loan with help of the NTPC.

The ownership of this company would be 50-50. There will be a six-member management committee with three members from India and three from Bangladesh. The managing director and chairman would be represented by the two countries in rotation.

Coal power is considered one of the cheapest in the world, although it is also the worst polluter. This is why Bangladesh intends to build the plant using super-critical technology to keep the level of pollution as low as the current global technology allows.

Indian state mulls ban on black magic

AFP, Mumbai

Chanting to cure snakebites, claiming to be a reincarnated spouse to obtain sex, and charging for miracles could soon be banned by an Indian state seeking to stop charlatans preying on the vulnerable.

Many superstitions are widely held in India but a campaign group is lobbying hard for a new law in the Maharashtra to outlaw several exploitative activities, with penalties of fines or up to 7 years in jail.

But the push to pass the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil Practices and Black Magic bill has not received unanimous support.

Some Hindu nationalists fear the legislation might be used to curb cherished religious freedoms.

One right-wing association, the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, called it "a draconian law targeting faith", denounced its proponents as "atheists" and called for supporters to lobby assembly members to oppose it and demand amendments.

Taliban free four Turkish engineers

AFP, Ghazni

Four Turkish engineers kidnapped by Afghanistan's Taliban more than eight months ago were freed overnight after intervention by tribal elders.

The men, taken captive in December in eastern Paktia province, were handed to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the neighbouring province of Ghazni, an AFP reporter in the area said.

"We were kidnapped by the Taliban eight-and-a-half months ago. We're released on the occasion of Eid by Ameer-ul Momineen Mullah Mohammad Omar," one of the captives told AFP, referring to the Taliban leader.

PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD BID

US tries to stall movement at UN

REUTERS, Washington

Washington has launched an effort to avoid a clash stemming from plans by Palestinians to seek recognition as a state at the United Nations, The New York Times reported on Saturday, citing senior US officials and foreign diplomats.

The Obama administration has introduced a plan to restart peace talks with Israel to try to convince Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to give up the bid to seek recognition at the annual meeting of leaders at the UN General Assembly, it said.

The administration has told Abbas it would veto any request made to the UN Security Council to make a Palestinian nation a new member, the Times said.

But it said Washington lacked support to block a vote by the Assembly to raise the status of the Palestinians to a nonvoter observer state from that of a nonvoting "entity," which could allow them to join many UN bodies, and pursue cases against

Israel at the International Criminal Court.

Senior US officials and foreign diplomats said the administration wanted to avoid having to cast a veto as well as a General Assembly vote that would leave only the United States and a few other nations opposed to Palestinian nationhood.

"If you put the alternative out there, then you've suddenly just changed the circumstances and changed the dynamic," the newspaper quoted a senior administration official as saying on Thursday. "And that's what we're trying very much to do."

With peace talks with Israel frozen, the Palestinians have vowed to seek full UN membership for a state in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Times said that while some Obama administration officials were hopeful a compromise could be reached to avoid a vote, there were plans to limit the consequences if it took place, including efforts to ensure that Israel and the Palestinians keep cooperating on security in the West Bank and on Israel's borders.

LATEST leaks

Ex-Blackwater guards kept working in Iraq: US cable

AFP, Baghdad

A leaked US diplomatic cable says that "hundreds" of former employees of Blackwater, which was barred from Iraq over a deadly 2007 shooting, later worked with other firms guarding US diplomats here.

Iraq announced in January 2009 that it would not renew Blackwater's operating licence due to a September 16, 2007 incident in which guards protecting a US diplomatic convoy opened fire in Baghdad's busy Nisur Square, killing at least 14 civilians.

After that announcement, the US State Department did not renew its contract with Blackwater, which has renamed itself Xe, for security services in Iraq.

But US diplomatic cables released by whistleblower website WikiLeaks confirm that ex-Blackwater employees kept working in Iraq with other security firms.

"There are many former Blackwater employees at other private security companies in Iraq, most notably Triple Canopy and DynCorp, providing security services to us," said a January 4, 2010 cable from the US embassy in Baghdad, which was released on August 30.

Another cable from January 11, 2010 also expressed concern over Iraqi efforts to oust former Blackwater employees from the country, noting that it could reduce the capacity of Triple Canopy to provide embassy security.

Support for India's scandal-hit govt collapses

AFP, New Delhi

The popularity of India's embattled Congress-led government, buffeted by corruption, high inflation and slowing economic growth, has fallen sharply among voters, a new poll said Saturday.

The poll was carried out after 74-year-old self-styled Gandhian campaigner Anna Hazare ended his anti-corruption fast last weekend that shook the government by galvanizing huge public support.

India's main Hindu nationalist opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would gain 32 percent of the votes across the country if general elections were held now, the STAR News-Nielsen opinion survey suggested.

Congress, led by 78-year-old Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would garner just 20 percent of votes in the poll of 8,926 respondents taken in 28 cities. Other voters favoured regional parties or were undecided.

VACANCY NOTICE

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces a vacancy for the position of **Capacity Building Analyst (Service Contract, SB-4 Level)** with **"Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), Phase-II"** project.

The duration of the Service Contract is one year initially, subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

For details of the Job Description and instructions to apply for the above position, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Applications should be received no later than on **Thursday, 29 September, 2011**.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Female candidates are encouraged to apply.



Bangladesh

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Memo No. APSCL/MD/Project-450MW (South)/2011/1487 Date: 03/09/2011
"Amendment of APSCL Tender Enquiry"
(Amendment No.-10)

Bid Name, Enquiry No. & Date	Subject to be Amended	Existing as	Shall be Amended as
Detailed Engineering, Design, Manufacture/Procurement, Inspection, Testing, Delivery to site, Installation, construction of related civil works, commissioning and performance test on turnkey basis of Ashuganj 450 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant(South). APSCL/MD/Project-450MW (South)/2011/808 Dated: 04/06/2011	Last Selling date of Bid Document	15 September, 2011 during Office hour	05 October, 2011 during Office hour
	Bid delivered time	On or before 12:00 noon, Bangladesh Standard Time on 17 September, 2011	On or before 12:00 noon, Bangladesh Standard Time on 08 October, 2011
	Bid Opening date & time (Technical proposal)	12:15 pm Bangladesh Standard Time 17 September, 2011	12:15 pm Bangladesh Standard Time 08 October, 2011

All other terms & Conditions shall remain unchanged.

Project Director
450 MW CCPP Project
APSCL, Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria, Bangladesh.