

SYDNEY • With a multi-millionaire businesswoman for a first lady and a female deputy prime minister for the first time, Australian women were yesterday hopeful of a greater voice in the running of the country.

Opposition Labor leader Kevin Rudd swept to power in national elections on Saturday, praising his deputy Julia Gillard for her dedication and talent as she sat in tears in the national tally room in Canberra.

"She has been fantastic as the deputy leader of the Australian Labor Party, she'll be fantastic as the deputy prime minister of Australia," the prime minister-elect said to raucous applause from supporters in Brisbane.

Gillard had been coy on the possibility of becoming the country's first female deputy prime minister. "It's a humbling sensation more than anything else," she told national television. Gillard, who last year was ejected from parliament for calling a government minister "a snivelling grub", was elected to parliament in 1988 after a career in law and is often tipped as a future leader of the Labor Party.



Julia Gillard

She is set to become acting prime minister early next month when Rudd travels to the Indonesian island of Bali for a global conference on combating climate change, one of the focuses on the new government.

Julia Gillard, 46, emigrated with her parents from Barry, South Glamorgan, 41 years ago. The daughter of a retired policeman, she trained as a lawyer and

of the Australian Union of Students. She is now the most powerful woman in Australian politics.

Australia's top women's lobby welcomed Gillard's rise, saying it was a long overdue moment in national politics and came in the face of intense scrutiny of unmarried Gillard's private life, including her former lovers and choice of hairstyle. Eva Cox, of the Women's Electoral Lobby, said: "I think women who want to change the face of Australia are going to be more hopeful because having a woman at that senior level is going to be a good indicator of change."

And she said Rudd's wife Therese Rein, who founded and runs a global job placement business which employs more than 1,200 people, also heralded a generational change in the role of the partner of the country's leader. "It will be the first time that we actually have a leader of a government whose wife is not just there smiling sweetly by his side," she said. "We've got a prime minister with a wife in paid employment for the first time."

AFP

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QIB to get UK bank licence in 'weeks'

DOHA • Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) expects to get a licence 'within weeks' to set up a unit in Britain and wants to list shares in the operation in London, Middle East Economic Digest (Meed) reported. QIB wants to use European Finance House to gain exposure to European markets and advise firms on Islamic financial products. The operation would get a licence from Britain's Financial Services Authority 'within weeks', Meed said.

REUTERS

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not the show is heavy-handed, there is a notion that Britons have turned their traditional concept of marriage. Alternative rates are currently at a 30-year low, and this is because many do not now choose cohabitation.

Charles of Relate, Britain's largest relationship-selling network, argues that modern dating services such as online dating and marriage websites were "arrangements" to some extent. "A blind date you could say is an arrangement. I've got this pal so let's get them together," he said.

Given lots of choice you have to make a choice for that and maybe people are looking for a relationship breakdown and thinking 'I want to get someone to make some choice

AFP

Ships ahoy!

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA • With multi-billion dollar projects underway, it is boom time for marine market in Qatar. The market gurus forecast that the country is in need of at least 150 ships of varying specifications in the immediate future. Qatar's latest announcements regarding the development of a state-of-the-art port and the expansion of shipyards have also sparked keen interest among the global names in the industry.

Market analysts have projected an estimated \$100bn future investment in the maritime industry of the region. Qatar has been identified as a major player. They have also identified at least a \$1bn annual maritime business scope in the region of which Qatar will have a sizeable share.

"Qatar needs a wide variety of vessels, including landing crafts of varying sizes, tugs, accommodation work barges. Market studies have revealed that Qatar, to cope with its projected volume of LNG exports, will need more than 150 vessels immediately. The bigger part is Qatar has ambition and money to support this," Satish Khanna, general manager, Al Fajer Information & Services, Dubai, told *The Peninsula*.

Qatar has emerged as a key hub for shipping, port and maritime industry,

offering innumerable opportunities for the development of the business in the region. "It requires large LNG carriers and wide range of other vessels, and conversion of tankers, in addition to the vessels to transport LPG, sulfur and condensate produced by gas projects offshore Qatar," he said.

There were reports that lack of sufficient vessels was hitting the smooth operations in the fertilisers and real estate sectors of Qatar.

The proposed massive expansion plan of the Port of Ras Laffan and decision to develop a world class shipyard facility there has also sparked interest for the industry. Qatar's move to develop the 43-hectre shipyard has also created ripples in the global maritime market. The new shipyard is expected to attract investments worth half a billion dollars.

Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Company, the world's No. 2 shipbuilders, had revealed its plan to win more than half of the 44 gas tanker orders from Qatar by 2010.

To make capital out of the emerging potential, the market suppliers are queuing up to showcase their products in Qatar and the first half of next year will witness two major international exhibitions on Ships and Ports.

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