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MAMMOTH TURN-OUT

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak waves to a large crowd that had gathered at the Hari Raya open house at Seri Perdana in Putrajaya on Sunday. In all, about 100,000 people attended the event hosted by Najib and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor in the compound of the prime minister's official residence from 10.30am to 4pm. Visitors were treated to an array of local dishes and received gift packs of Hari Raya cookies, while children received duit raya. A 120kg cake to jointly mark Hari Raya and Merdeka was later cut by Najib and served to the guests.

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China gives Gu **suspended** death sentence for murder

HEFEI (CHINA): A Chinese court yesterday handed the wife of disgraced political leader Bo Xilai a suspended death sentence for murder in a case that has rocked the Communist party ahead of a ro-yearly power handover.

Gu Kailai was found guilty of murdering British businessman Neil Heywood, a crime she had confessed to, and given the death penalty with two years' reprieve, court official Tang Yigan told reporters after a brief hearing.

Zhang Xiaojun, an employee of

the Bo family charged with helping Gu to poison Heywood, was found guilty and sentenced to nine years in jail while four police officers were convicted of attempting to cover up the murder.

Tang said the court had suspended Gu's death sentence because she suffered from psychological problems, and because Heywood had threatened her son, but he gave no indication of how long she would serve.

Suspended death sentences are typically commuted to life in

prison in China, but the actual length of time served varies.

The law states that a death sentence for murder cannot be commuted to less than 20 years in jail, but legal experts say there have been cases where the courts have ordered shorter sentences.

Gu confessed during her trial this month in the eastern Chinese city of Hefei to killing 41-year-old Heywood by pouring poison down his throat, saying that he had threatened her son after a business deal went sour.

The case brought down her husband Bo, a charismatic but divisive politician, and exposed deep divisions in the ruling Communist party before a generational handover of power due to start later this year.

Bo had been tipped for promotion to the elite group of Communist party leaders that effectively rules China until the allegations against his wife burst into the open, but is now under investigation for corruption.

Britain said it welcomed China's

move to investigate Heywood's death last November, which was initially attributed to a heart attack, although it did not explicitly comment on the verdict.

Xinhua said Gu invited Heywood to Chongqing for a meeting last November, plied him with wine until he became drunk and then poured cyanide mixed with water into his mouth.

The report said she acted after Heywood threatened the couple's son, Bo Guagua, 24, although it did not say what the threats were. — AFP



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