

PPP to win at least 100 NA seats, predicts Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Sept 25: Former Premier Benazir Bhutto predicted her party will win at least 100 parliamentary seats in elections next month and to form Pakistan's next government with the support of allies, she said in an interview published today, reports AFP.

"We will win a minimum of 100 seats" in the 217-member National Assembly, Bhutto told the Nation newspaper.

"I am giving you the minimum, a very cautious figure, Bhutto told the English-language daily in her first public statement on how many seats her Pakistan People Party (PPP) expects to bag.

Bhutto, on a nationwide campaign trail for the elections due on October 6 and October 9, said she was confident the groups allied with her party would win a dozen more seats.

Independent observers fore saw a close contest between former Premier Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and the PPP, especially in the most populous and politically key province of Punjab, which has 115 seats in the Assembly.

Sharif, scion of a wealthy Punjab industrialist family, has said his party will inflict a crushing defeat on PPP, outper-

forming it even in Bhutto's home province of Sindh.

In the 1988 elections, Sharif retained his grip on power in Punjab while Bhutto became first woman premier. She was

dismissed 20 months later by a hostile president for alleged misuse.

Sharif's multi-party Islamic Jamhori Ittehad (IJI) alliance swept the 1990 elections,

Bhutto alleged widespread fraud and waged a relentless campaign for new polls during Sharif's 30-month term as premier.

A Punjabi, Sharif resigned in July along with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan after the army intervened to end a bitter power struggle between them.

This year presents a different electoral scene, with the polls held under a neutral government and the army playing a wider role in support of the election commission to ensure impartial and fair ballot.

Jammat-ul-Islami (JI), an influential fundamentalist party, and other groups severed links with Sharif with the breakup of IJI last year, creating what political observers said was an "unsavoury" situation for Sharif.

"IJI has jumped into the fray independently from the platform of Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) with a forceful campaign replete with strong attacks against both PPP and PML.

Jamiat Ulema Islam, another Islamist party with a sizeable following in North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, has agreed on electoral cooperation with PPP, which also found allies in a splinter PML group.



Benazir: Optimistic about forming next govt

UN arms experts to hold talks with Tarek Aziz Oct 1

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 25: The chief UN official monitoring Iraq's weapons programmes will travel next week to Baghdad to seek information on foreign suppliers of Iraq's unclear, chemical and ballistic weapons programmes, reports AP.

The largest UN inspection team of up to 100 experts will also arrive in Iraq next week to try to ensure that all the country's weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated.

Rolf Ekeus, a Swedish disarmament expert who heads the UN Special Commission, is to hold talks with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz on October 1, said commission spokesman Tim Trevan.

The meeting is expected to lead to an agreement that could open the way for an eventual lifting of the UN oil embargo imposed on Iraq three years ago when it invaded Kuwait.

Ekeus and other UN experts will seek information on foreign suppliers to Iraq's nuclear, chemical and ballistic weapons programmes, and on past production and use of weapons, especially chemical and ballistic arms.

The high-level talks were made possible by Iraq's agreement on Thursday to activate UN monitoring cameras at two rocket test sites.



MOSCOW: A deputy reads a Russian newspaper that published a picture of President Boris Yeltsin up-side-down and the headline 'Yeltsin out of law', during the opening of the second day of the Congress of Russian People's Deputies yesterday. The 10th Congress was called after the president dissolved parliament.

Nuclear test: China ignores int'l appeals

WASHINGTON, Sept 25: China, ignoring international appeals, is going ahead with preparations for an underground nuclear test, the US State Department said Friday, reports AP.

"We haven't heard anything or seen anything that would indicate that they are not continuing to make preparations for a test," department spokesman Mike McCurry said.

The US and other governments have told China that international progress toward disarmament would be set back if the test is not cancelled.

But China has responded that its nuclear testing programme was consistent with the need to make sure its warheads are safe and reliable, said a US official familiar with the contacts.

He said China had not told the United States specifically whether it plans to proceed with the test, but intelligence information indicated it was proceeding with preparations.

The United States will take another effort at dissuading China when Secretary of State Warren Christopher meets Thursday with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

Meetings were held at the White House and State Department Friday to devise a strategy for dealing with the Chinese testing programme.

BRIEFLY

4 executed in China: Four people were executed in south western China's Chongqing City for robbery and murder and five others were sentenced to death in Guangdong province for kidnapping for ransom, reports said Saturday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

The Guangdong death sentences were to be carried out at public rallies Saturday.

Sentencing would be announced at public rallies in the cities of Guangzhou, Foshan, Shantou and Shenzhen as part of an anti-crime campaign in the province, the Ta Kung Pao Daily said, adding that those sentenced to death would be executed immediately.

3 miners killed in S Africa: Three miners were killed by falling rock in South Africa, mine officials said Friday, AP reports from Johannesburg.

Rescuers worked all night after Thursday's accident to recover the bodies from the shaft near Boksburg, East Rand Property Mines announced.

The men had been working 3 kilometers (about 2 miles) underground when a tremor set off the rock fall, mine officials said.

Maoist rebels black out Lima: Maoist Shining Path guerrillas blacked out Lima Friday night and bombed a Chinese restaurant in an upscale neighbourhood, wounding two persons, police said, AP reports from Lima.

Power was restored after an hour. A city-wide blackout hit Lima at 7:56 pm local time (0256 GMT). One minute later a bomb exploded inside the second-floor restaurant in Miraflores, a popular nightclub district.

5 Australians die in Malaysia: Five Australian soldiers were killed when a military truck carrying 17 army personnel ploughed into a passenger bus in Malaysia's southern state of Johore, officials said Friday, AFP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Twelve other Australians were injured, four of them seriously in the mishap, which occurred Thursday outside a Malaysian armed forces combat training centre in Kota Tinggi, about 380 kms (236 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur, they said.

The 17 soldiers were training at the centre and were among those deployed in Malaysia for short-term rotational exercises under the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA), said Australian high commission spokesman Billy Williams.

Panama's oil tanker explodes: An oil tanker, believed to be Panama-registered, exploded Saturday off southeastern peninsular Malaysia in the south China Sea, Malaysian rescue officials said, AFP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Eighteen of the 21 crew members of the tanker, Altair, were rescued by a passing container ship shortly after the mishap which occurred about 100 nautical miles off the Tioman island resort at 0300 GMT, a spokesman for the Malaysian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) told AFP.

Elephant kills 2 Lankans: A wild elephant hit by a bus, retaliated by trampling two of the passengers to death and wounding 19 others in southeastern Sri Lanka, witnesses said Friday, AP reports from Colombo.

The elephant was first knocked by the van and then it flew into a violent rage and struck back killing and wounding the people," said the witnesses, who declined to give their names.

The incident took place on Wednesday, but was reported by the witnesses after they arrived in the Sri Lankan capital.

5 die in China blast: Five people died and one was injured in an explosion in a firecracker factory in China's eastern Jiangsu province, the Wen Hui Bao newspaper reported yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

The blast occurred at 10:25 AM (0225 GMT) Friday in a factory workshop in a village near Xinghua city as workers were mixing explosives to make firecrackers, killing four men and one woman, the paper said.

One of the dead was thrown 50 metres (160 feet) into the air by the explosion, landing in a nearby storehouse, it said.

LTTE guerrillas kill 4 policemen

COLOMBO, Sept 25: Tamil separatist guerrillas Saturday stormed a security forces bunker in eastern Sri Lanka, killing four policemen and wounding four others, a military spokesman said, report AFP.

Gunmen from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) made the pre-dawn attack in Katuwanwila in Polonnaruwa district, prompting a major search operation by troops for the rebels, the spokesman said.

"The army has been deployed in Katuwanwila," he said. "A search is on for the tigers. We have alerted other police posts in the area."

The bunker was among several manned by policemen to prevent LTTE infiltrations.

Dennis The Menace to aware Indian teenagers of AIDS

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: All-American comic kid Dennis The Menace will be plastered on hundreds of high school and college walls here next month preaching safe sex and warning Indian teenagers against AIDS, reports AFP.

The campaign, a brainchild of New Delhi's Deputy Director of Health Ram Pal Vashisht, is a turnaround from previous boring campaigns which resorted to euphemisms and skirted the delicate issue of teenage sex.

Dennis The Menace, the comic strip character created by Hank Ketcham, will tell Indian adolescents that "love is... leading an AIDS-free

life." But critics say the character is too alien for the majority of school and college students studying in the capital's Indian language institutions. "Why Dennis?" said educator Chandra Bose. "He is as clean as they come. It is a ludicrous choice. Most Indian children do not relate to him."

But Vashisht remains unfazed, saying the 100,000 dollar annual Anti-acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) programme involving the free distribution of 20,000 stickers and 4,000 wall posters will be effective. "Our team hit upon Dennis be-

cause he is both precocious and careful and everybody reads comic books," he said. "Besides, 80 per cent of the material is in local languages."

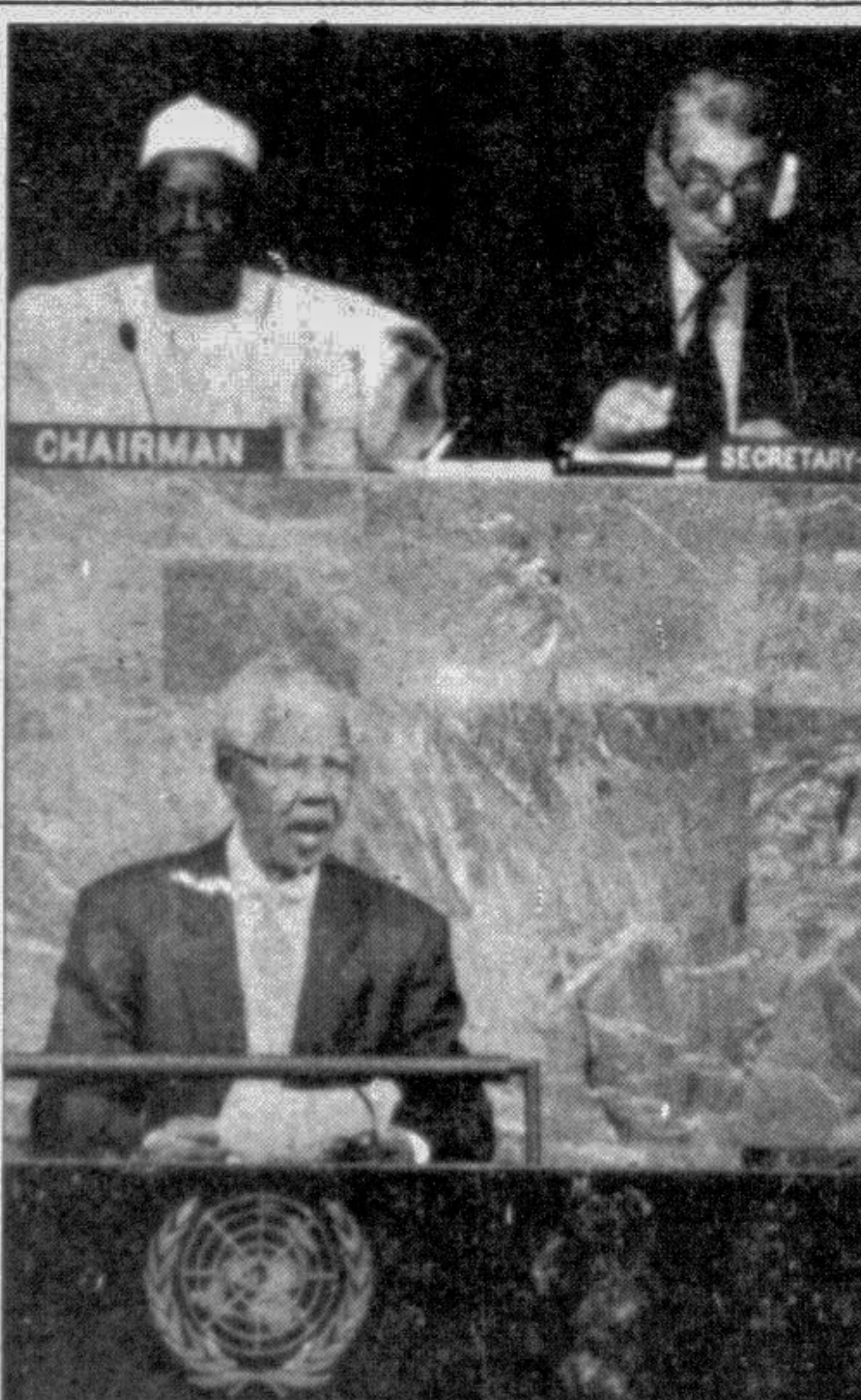
Teenage sex is no more an unknown phenomenon and we want to promote awareness," Vashisht added. The other publicity materials, laced with graphic messages pitching the use of condoms, are a far cry from the slogans and posters conjured up by the government two years ago.

A Hindi language poster shows religious heads of different faiths marching behind a prophylactic, which, with an impish smile, pushes back

an octopus signifying the fatal disease. Promotional AIDS include an "educational" snakes — and — ladders game with serpents pulling down players for promiscuity while ladders elevate participants in single-partner sex. The new-look campaign replaces stark posters and billboards depicting a couple with a one-line warning stating: "Stay away from AIDS." Sexual activity among pre-teens and teens has not been researched properly here... but AIDS poses a threat for the young too," said doctor J R Van Dam of the World Health Organisation's India chapter.

"Our statistics show that about 1.2 million Indians will be hit by the year-end, so it is vital that something be done fast." The campaign will supplement an experimental programme launched in colleges in 1991. No one campaign can address itself to everybody so the Dennis poster will work for its target audience — English speaking students," he added.

Lalage Prabhu, principal of a school run by the British High Commission, echoed Van Dam, saying she would have no second thoughts using the Dennis posters which would serve their pur-



African National Congress President Nelson Mandela (front) addresses the United Nations General Assembly on Friday. At top left is the General Assembly President Samuel Insanally, from Guyana, and at right is the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. — AFP photo

Arafat's brief stopover at Calcutta airport

CALCUTTA, Sept 25: The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman, Yasser Arafat today said that a new world order of peace would usher in following the signing of the PLO-Israeli accord, which, he claimed, was accepted by eighty four per cent of the Palestinians, reports PTI.

Talking to newsmen at the Calcutta airport during a brief stopover en route to Turkey, Arafat hoped the people of Palestine would be in a position to form a stable, separate state with the Holy place of Jerusalem as its capital.

He, however, denied that there was opposition to the accord from a section of the people there. Most of the people had hailed the agreement, the PLO leader added. Have you not noticed that waves of people had celebrated the accord?

Contras free 2 Frenchmen

MANAGUA, Sept 25: Former Contra rebels took the military attaché at the French Embassy and his assistant as hostages, but released them after negotiation, officials said Friday, reports AP.

The men — Lt. Col. Andre Solana and Sgt. Maj. Augustin Ferrer — were seized Thursday by re-armed former Contras under command of Jose Angel 'The Jackal' Talavera, reported Jose Antonio Pallais, the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs. Talavera led a group whose abduction of officials in northern Nicaragua last month set off a week-long dual hostage crisis.

Deputy Foreign Minister Frank Cesar told a news conference the two Frenchmen "were released without condition."

Cesar said Sergio Caramagna, head of an Organisation of American States mission in Nicaragua, travelled to the rugged mountain area on Friday and negotiated the release with Talavera and his rebels.

Cesar said Caramagna convinced them that "the act had very serious implications, a crime of international significance because it involved diplomatic officials."

The motive for their abduction was not clear. The two had gone to investigate a complaint in the area, Pallais said. They were traveling to Quilali, about 170 miles (270 kms) north of Managua, when they were abducted.

Initial reports said three Frenchmen were seized, but Pallais later said only two were.

Off the Record

King's wife but not queen

PHNOM PENH: Monique, the part-Italian commoner wife of King Norodom Sihanouk, has been married to Cambodia's senior-most royal for 38 years, but when Norodom Sihanouk re-ascended the throne Friday she did not necessarily become queen, reports AFP.

Monique's title in the Khmer language makes it clear she cannot and does not hold power and leaves the choice of English translation between "queen" and "princess" unclear. The Khmer language has two words to describe the wife of a monarch, one if she has royal blood and the power to go with it — *preah mohaksat* (royal) or *preah royal* (queen) — and another to signify a powerless position as the wife of the reigning monarch — *preah mohayay* or *preah royal* wife.

Monique Izzi, with a French father of Italian origin and a mother of mixed Asian origins, was given the latter title in Cambodia's constitutional monarchy which was reinstated Friday.

King Sihanouk, in the traditionally polygamist Cambodian culture, had five wives before Monique. At least one was a member of royalty. He has not divorced them, but has not taken another wife since he married Monique in 1955.

King Sihanouk invited Monique to sit next to him on the throne during his coronation but the gesture did not clarify the issue of her title.

A royal palace statement said she is, in English, "Her Majesty Queen Norodom Monique Sihanouk of Cambodia," but not the queen of Cambodia, and that her full title should be used in all references.

\$2.3m shelter for strays

MISSION VIEJO: A dog's life will be pretty luxurious for strays living in the city's new 2.3 million dollar animal shelter, reports AP.

The shelter includes skylights, heated floors, paneled walls, showers, private water lines for each cage and a get-acquainted park. The 329,000 dollar yearly operating cost — 129,000 dollar more than the city spends on a senior citizens community center — is drawing fire.

"This is not an animal shelter. This is a very palatial, heated facility with fancy things it doesn't need," said Gary Manley, who ran unsuccessfully for city council last year.

Council woman Sharon Cody said the shelter should lead to more pet adoptions, helping save some of the 200-300 dogs and cats put to sleep each year in Mission Viejo.

"We have to get people over that stereotypical image of the dog pound," Cody said. "I wanted a parklike setting because I thought it would be a place that families would come and sit and visit."

The shelter had 36 kennels and space for 64 cats. It is scheduled to open October 11.

Luxurious burglary

ROCK ISLAND: A burglar settled in for a week after breaking into a doctor's house. He soaked in the Jacuzzi, sipped wine, raided the refrigerator and outfitted himself in new clothes, police said, reports AP.

He got caught after neighbours saw him taking the vacationing homeowner's Rolls-Royce for a spin on Wednesday and notified police.

Peter Angus Hicks, 33, of Detroit was charged with burglary and unlawful possession of a vehicle, police said. He was being held on 30,000 dollar bond.

"Hicks had broken into the House and was living in style," said Capt. Richard Fisher of the Rock Island County Sheriff's Department.

"He'd been living in their house, eating their food, wearing their clothes and taking items out of the house to sell. We won't know what all is missing until the family returns."

"The House is secluded enough that nobody saw him coming or going until Wednesday. Neighbours had noticed the suspect in the area, and when someone saw him driving the Rolls-Royce, that was a good tip he was living there," Fisher said.

Police aren't sure Hicks is the suspects real name. He had no identification. "For a while, he told us he was Eddie Murphy," Fisher said.

Dewi Sukarno may drop Indonesian citizenship

JAKARTA, Sept 25: Dewi Sukarno, the Japanese-born widow of Indonesia's first president, has reportedly said she may renounce her Indonesian citizenship because she is deeply upset by the government's treatment of her over the last 23 years, reports AP.

"I am considering becoming a Japanese citizen again. I'm very disappointed with the Indonesian government. They have forgotten me," she was quoted as saying by The Editor, a weekly news magazine.

Dewi Sukarno, now 53 years old, was Sukarno's fourth and youngest wife. She was with him for the last few months of his presidency in 1967.