

International

# Indonesia pays \$2.3m compensation to Dewi Sukarno

JAKARTA, Nov 19: Indonesia has paid 2.3 million dollars in compensation to Dewi Sukarno, the Japanese-born widow of its first president, for a house it took from her and now uses as a museum, news reports said today, reports AFP.

Another house she owned in the mountain resort of Cipuyung, outside the capital and which the government also uses, will be handed back to her soon, state secretary Mardiono was quoted as saying in Seattle where he is attending a meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

After discussions between the government and Dewi's lawyers it was agreed to pay her 6.11 billion rupiah (2.90 million dollars) for the property in Jakarta's Gatot Subroto road, said the Kompas Daily quoting Mardiono.

After tax payments she got 2.3 million dollars, he said. The government paid the compensation last week, several days before President Suharto left for Seattle to attend this weekend's APEC summit.

Dewi, who has not had the use of her house for 20 years, said she was still the owner and called on the government to use it for public use only and not for commercial purposes. The army confiscated the two houses in 1970 following the death of President Sukarno, founder of the Indonesian Republic.

Dewi, one of Sukarno's two surviving widows, arrived in Jakarta last week to try to recover the homes. She arrived amid a storm of controversy over a book of mostly nude photographs of herself she published in Japan. Indonesia banned the book and issued an indirect warning that Dewi risked losing her nationality.

# Jordan valley to remain a security zone, says Peres

JERUSALEM, Nov 19: The Jordan valley will still be a "security zone" between Israel and Jordan under a permanent settlement in the Middle East, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Thursday, reports AFP.

The Jordan valley will remain a Security Zone between Israel and Jordan, Peres told state radio on a tour of Israeli settlements near Jericho. The army is due to start withdrawing from Jericho on December 13.

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# Military ruler dissolves democratic institutions US considers punitive steps against Nigeria

WASHINGTON, Nov 19: The United States condemned Thursday the military's return to power in Nigeria and said it is considering taking some punitive steps against the African country, reports Reuter.

Head of state Ernest Shonekan resigned abruptly Wednesday and General Sani Abacha, Nigeria's most powerful military officer, assumed his office. Shonekan, a lawyer and industrialist, quit 82 days after previous military ruler General Ibrahim Babangida installed him and his government.

Babangida precipitated the crisis when he annulled an election in June, which business tycoon Moshood Abiola appeared poised to win. Babangida stepped down in August after eight years in power but Abiola supporters and democracy campaigners strongly opposed Shonekan's appointment. A high court last week ruled the administration illegal.

Token sanctions were imposed by the United States and European Community nations after the June election. AP adds: Nigeria's new military leader has abolished nearly all the country's democratic institutions, promising real democracy later but setting no timetable.

Gen. Sani Abacha, who took over in a coup Wednesday, banned the two national political parties, the federal assembly, all political associations, the National Electoral Commission and state and local governments.

"This government is a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability to our country," Abacha said Thursday, in his first nationally broadcast speech since the coup.

He promised to hold a constitutional convention to establish a democratic government, but did not say when. In the meantime, he said he would rule as head of a "provisional ruling council" made up of mostly military officers.

"We must lay a very solid foundation for the growth of true democracy," Abacha said. "We must avoid any ad hoc or temporary solutions."

Abacha spoke to the nation of 90 million one day after ousting the civilian government of Ernest Shonekan, who was named by outgoing dictator Gen. Ibrahim Babangida as his successor.

"This regime will be firm, humane and decisive," he said. "Any attempt to test our will will be decisively dealt with."

Babangida resigned under pressure on Aug. 26 after annulling the results of the June 12 presidential election, which was to end a decade of military rule. The annulment led to civil unrest and political turmoil that Abacha said had seriously damaged the economy.

Abacha was a key figure in the military coup that ousted the last elected government in 1983, and the subsequent coup that put Babangida in power two years later. He was believed to have forced Babangida to step down and remained the real power in Shonekan's government.

Though some Nigerians believe Abacha would like to see the military end its history of dominating the government, his promises of democracy were reminiscent of empty pronouncements made by previous military dictators.

Some Nigerians hoped Abacha would immediately install the man who apparently won the June ballot, business tycoon Moshood K.O. Abiola, as president. But Abacha did not say if he would do that.

NEW DELHI, Nov 19: India's Supreme Court today acquitted a key political rival of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of electoral misconduct, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports Reuter.

It said the Court had cleared Sharad Pawar, 53-year-old Chief Minister of India's Maharashtra state, of charges related to 1991 parliamentary elections. Pawar, who was elected to India's Lok Sabha (lower house) that year but gave up his seat to assume state power, was found guilty by the Bombay High Court last March.

A member of Rao's ruling Congress party, Pawar is widely seen as a key rival of the 72-year-old Prime Minister. If he had lost his appeal to the Supreme Court, he would have been barred from contesting further parliamentary elections.

An independent candidate had accused Pawar of engaging in character assassination

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Belgium, France and Sweden, which together provide about 2,000 troops, have announced their intention to pull out even sooner and other countries may well follow suit.

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