

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 Ci-puyung, 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 Eco-

nomie 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 from December 13.

Myanmar junta offers fresh talks with rebels

BANGKOK, Nov 19: Myanmar's military junta has made a fresh offer to talk peace with minority rebels groups but the largest of them insists opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi be freed first, state radio and rebel sources said today, reports Reuter.

safety of delegates who would take part in the peace talks. Even if the talks fail to bring about a peaceful solution, we will fly you home safely by helicopter," Khin Nyunt was quoted as saying.

Myanmar's dozen ethnic minorities, especially the largest group the Karen, have been fighting with varying degrees of intensity for independence.

Formed after the military staged a bloody coup in September 1988, SLORC last April declared a unilateral ceasefire in the fighting and offered to hold individual peace talks with each minority.

The Karen National Union (KNU) doubted the sincerity of SLORC's latest offer.

"SLORC has to show their sincerity and honesty by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. That is the first step for us to have confidence in them," said a senior Karen official.

On behalf of SLORC I would like to call on ethnic minority rebels who have been fighting fruitlessly for the past 40 years to have peace talks with the government," Khin Nyunt was quoted as saying at a gathering of Myanmar's regional armed forces in eastern Kayah state last Wednesday.

"SLORC guarantees the

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.

"The United States condemns the action by General Abacha and his Nigerian military colleagues to displace the interim government installed on July 26," State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly said.

"Additional military intervention in Nigerian politics cannot solve the crisis the military created when it annulled the June 12 election," she said.

Shelly said that the United States is considering taking some unspecified further steps against Nigeria.

Shelly said that military leaders had brought pressure on Shonekan, but she declined to call it a coup.

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.



Jim Mouth of San Diego, California, uses a fan to blow smoke from 155 cigarettes as he breaks the record of the Guinness Book of World Records for smoking the cigarettes Thursday. Mouth attempts to break this record annually on the 'Great American Smoke Out' a day when various organisations encourage smokers to give up their habit for one day.

Pawar acquitted of electoral misconduct

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

Off the Record



A model of William Tang wears a translucent copper-colored dress Thursday at the Grand Hotel in Paris during presentation of nine Hong Kong designers' collections. — AFP photo

Swami jumps from 19-storey building

NEW DELHI: Hindu mystic Swami Vidyandand plunged to his death from the top of a 19-storey building in Bombay after telling his followers he intends to "shed his body," the Indian Express reported Friday, says AFP.

Vidyandand, 75, drove to the administration building Thursday in an ambulance and went up to the roof telling security personnel he wanted to pray to the sun — he was accompanied by three of his closest disciples.

The eccentric guru, who had recently taken to wearing vests and shorts made of jute, died instantly in the fall, the Indian Express said.

His disciples said the mystic had told them of his intention to "shed his body and leave for a heavenly abode." The Indian Express said he distributed to followers a pamphlet on his "last voyage" before committing suicide.

The guru was close to several Indian politicians. He charted the horoscopes of many leaders including the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Mountain peaks resemble Mao's head

HONG KONG: Two more mountain peaks which resemble the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong have been discovered in north-eastern China, the semi-official Hong Kong China News Service (CNS) said Friday, reports AFP.

The two peaks, resembling Mao's head, were found in a mountain range in Xiuyan in southeastern Liaoning province, CNS said.

Other mountains in China's northwestern Xinjiang province and near the southern city of Huizhou, near Hong Kong, also show a likeness to Mao.

In Huizhou, local authorities and an armed police troop stationed in the area have tried to profit from the natural wonder by building facilities for visitors.

China is preparing to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the former Communist Party chairman who died December 29, 1976.

"Improved nutrition, health care precipitate puberty"

WASHINGTON: Eating and learning better — and putting off marriage — has led to more adolescent sexual activity in most countries, a new study says, reports AP.

"Improved nutrition and health care mean that puberty now begins earlier," said the International Planned Parenthood Federation report.

"The report said more youths in developing countries are going to school, staying in school longer and getting married later. These are all positive developments, but the longer period between maturity and marriage leads to more unwanted pregnancies, the report said.

In Latin America, it found teenage girls accounting for nearly one birth in five. In some part of Africa the figure is almost one in four.

"A study in rural Uganda found that the mean age for first sex was 15 years for both boys and girls," it said.

The finding means that when Ugandan youngsters were asked at what age they first had sex, just as many named ages below 15 as above it.

"In Algeria and Morocco 2,000 unwanted babies are abandoned every year by young unmarried women," the study reported.

BRIEFLY

6 die in Kazakh coal mine blast:

An explosion of methane gas in a coal mine in northern Kazakhstan killed six workers Thursday, a news agency reported, AP says from Moscow.

Bus mishap claims 17 in Brazil:

Seventeen people were killed and 12 badly injured when a bus carrying 46 passengers plunged off a mountain road and into a ravine east of Sao Paulo, police said yesterday, Reuter reports from Sao Paulo.

Gunmen kill six in S Africa:

Gunmen shot dead six members of a family in a township east of Johannesburg on Thursday night, South African police said on Friday, Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

Ex-ROK minister jailed for 3 yrs:

Former Defence Minister Lee Jong-ko was sentenced to three years in prison Friday and fined 225,000 dollars for accepting bribes from arms dealers while in office from 1990 to 1991, AP reports from Seoul.

Tuberculosis to kill 3m:

Tuberculosis will kill 3 million people worldwide this year — more than any other infectious disease — the World Health Organisation said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Atlanta.

Russia, Lithuania sign 9 accords:

Russia and Lithuania signed nine cooperation agreements Thursday that Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin called "a breakthrough" in relations, Reuter says from Moscow.

UN extends mandate for troops in Somalia

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 19: The UN Security Council has extended by six months the mandate for troops in Somalia, but delayed until February a decision on what will happen after US forces withdraw, reports Reuter.

In a resolution, drafted by the United States and adopted by all 15 members Thursday, the council renewed the life of the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) until the end of May.

But the resolution says that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali must present a detailed report on UNOSOM's future as soon as possible and that the council would review the substance of the mandate by February.

The debate reflected fears that turmoil would break out in Somalia once President Clinton, as promised, pulled out American troops March 31.

There were also apprehen-

sions that Somali factions would rearm. But, there was general recognition that UN troops in future would not be ordered to disarm groups by force except in self-defence.

US ambassador Madeleine Albright told the council that the United Nations would not abandon efforts to bring peace and political reconciliation to the people of Somalia.

But she warned that if factions could not work together, "they cannot expect the United Nations to do it for them."

Djibouti's ambassador, Roble Olhaye, said Somali factions were rearming in advance of the American withdrawal.

As a neighbour of Somalia, he said the "bottom line is that Somalia must disarm and that the United Nations must make an effort to bring this about."

Ethiopia's ambassador, Mulugeta Eteffa, emphasised negotiations and development

aid. He said that if the world was willing to pay for costly peacekeeping operations, it should be ready to invest a modest amount for peacemaking.

He said there should be no illusion that a settlement was in sight but he noted that including all factions in the negotiating process, led by his country, was important.

Boutros-Ghali has given the Security Council three options for UNOSOM after the American troops leave, ranging from retaining its strength more or less intact to securing only ports and airports to keep supply routes open.

Diplomats said most members favoured his second option of retaining some 16,000 troops plus about 2,500 logistics personnel to be approved — if enough forces and sophisticated logistics support were available.

Under this option, troops withdrawing by March 31 would not have to be replaced and UNOSOM would only use force in self-defence. But the disarmament of Somali factions would be entirely voluntary.

UNOSOM currently comprises more than 29,000 troops, including about 3,000 Americans. Another 17,700 US troops are in Mogadishu or based on ships offshore.

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.

French ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimee criticised the separate status of US forces outside the UN command, apparently fearing this could set a precedent for other nations participating in future UN operations.

De Klerk warns against bid to foil democratic process

DURBAN (South Africa), Nov 19: President Frederik de Klerk on Thursday warned against any attempt by political parties opposed to South Africa's new draft constitution to hamper the democratization process by violence, reports AFP.

De Klerk and African National Congress (ANC) President Nelson Mandela were both in the southern region of Kwazulu-Natal on Thursday, hours after the end of the all-night constitutional session in Johannesburg that saw political leaders adopt the basic law to end 300 years of white minority rule.

"We dare not allow anyone to jeopardize the legitimate democratic process by illegal means," De Klerk said after a meeting with the visiting Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeke Anyaoku.

It was a barely veiled threat against the freedom alliance of conservative parties, including the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) — which has its stronghold in this region — and white far-right groups that have called on their followers to "prepare for war."

Anyaoku said he was "delighted" with the new phase in South Africa's negotiated

passage to majority rule and that the Commonwealth was prepared to help South Africa meet "the challenge of pluralism."

Mandela, meanwhile, took his campaign for the April 27 election into the heartland of his most virulent opposition: heavily right-wing Richard's Bay, a stronghold of Eugene Terre Blanche's Neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, and nearby Empangeni, which strongly supports the IFP.

Hours after the all-night constitutional session in Johannesburg, the 75-year-old Mandela was grilled at Empangeni by Church leaders over the ANC's alliance with the South African Communist Party and ANC members with communist views, participants at the closed-door meeting reported.

A sleepless Mandela, arriving here straight from the World Trade Center in Johannesburg, had a short rest at a local hotel before heading for the black township of Sundumbili, on the banks of the Tugela river that draws the southern boundary of what is historically Zulu territory.

The township has been the scene of fierce clashes between

supporters of the ANC and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's IFP, and ANC security officials and the South African police took strict measures around Mandela.

The ANC leader, in an IFP stronghold for the second week-end in a row, was scheduled to hold one of his "people's forums," in which he replies to questions from the general public on a variety of issues.

The meeting in Sundumbili, ANC sources said, would target mainly "minorities," including White and Indian businessmen of the region.

Mandela's trip came shortly after IFP regional secretary Muzi blessed Gwala called on his supporters to "go in their thousands" to ANC rallies to challenge the ANC leader and "hear all the nasty things Mandela is saying about Dr Buthelezi."

ANC regional secretary Senzo Mchunu told the Sapa news agency that he had contacted Gwala over the remarks, apparently sparked by special invitations to attend the forums the ANC had sent to some IFP supporters.

Mchunu said Gwala had apparently misinterpreted this as a general invitation to all IFP supporters.



A militant of Ezzedin el Qassam, the armed wing of the Islamic fundamentalist movement, Hamas, gestures to a photographer while patrolling Rafah refugee camp in Gaza Thursday.

PLO-Israeli talks resume Monday

CAIRO, Nov 19: Israeli-PLO autonomy talks are to resume at a secret location here on Monday and are expected to continue for four days, chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath announced Thursday, reports AFP.

He told a news conference that each side would be represented by five-member delegations, which could be enlarged to a maximum of eight.

Talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, aimed at implementing a September 13 accord providing limited autonomy to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, broke down two weeks ago after several sessions at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba.

Shaath complained that "the Taba arrangement had been too crowded burdened with a plenary committee and sub-committees."

But since moving to Cairo last week in a streamlined session, he said, "the negotiations have become more positive."

Shaath earlier Thursday said he was "optimistic" that Israel and the PLO would meet a December 13 deadline to iron out differences on the scope of an Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, where autonomy is to be initially implemented.