



A businessman living in the United States will exhibit, for the first time, some of Korean-American artist Paik Nam-june's works. They include, at left, "Ger-tude Stein," from 1990 and the 10-meter (32.8-foot) long "Turtle" from 1993. Provided by Mr. Hong.

## Paik Nam-june artwork purchased for \$15 million

By Park Jee-young / Ser Myo-ja  
JoongAng Ilbo / Staff Writer

After hearing about a Japanese collector's attempt to buy 15 never-before exhibited works by Korean video artist Paik Nam-june, a Korean-American businessman said he will unveil them in Seoul and New York.

"I purchased them from a German collector in Hamburg for \$15 million," said the 61-year-old businessman, who asked to only be identified as Mr. Hong. "I will receive them at the end of March and I want to premier them to Koreans first."

He said the works will be displayed in New York and Seoul with-

in the next six months. The art community welcomed the plan, saying it is rare for pieces from private collection to be publicly exhibited.

In asking for anonymity, Mr. Hong said he is not an art collector. He said he bought the artwork only because he loves his homeland.

Mr. Paik, an American who was born and raised in Korea, is considered the founder of video art. He died at his home in Miami last January, at the age of 73.

The works Mr. Hong purchased were pieces Mr. Paik produced in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, when the artist was actively working in the media art genre. "TV Bed," pro-

duced in 1972, is one of Mr. Paik's signature works of the 1970s, next to "TV Bra" and "TV Cello," said Kim Hong-hee, a media art expert and head of the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art. Mr. Hong's 15 purchases included "Video Chandelier X" and "Vide Chandelier NR.4." Art critics said those pieces are unique to Mr. Paik's style.

"In the 1970s, Mr. Paik used a single monitor for his work and in the 1980s, he worked with multivisions," said Ms. Kim. "In the 1990s, Mr. Paik worked with lasers. His later works tend to be more meditative and Oriental, and 'Turtle' is one such example."

Mr. Hong said he is not an art expert, but his friend, Cha Gil-jin, moved him to spend the money. Mr. Cha told Mr. Hong about a Japanese art collector who tried to buy the 15 works at a low price. In hearing that, Mr. Cha told him he had felt sad as a Korean. "I thought it would be nicer for a Korean to buy the art at an appropriate price," Mr. Hong said.

"When you live overseas, your love for the homeland becomes special," Mr. Hong said. "It is my joy to purchase a famous Korean artist's works and show them to Korean art patrons."

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## Judges who ruled for Park regime will be identified

By Baek Il-hyun / Ser Myo-ja  
JoongAng Ilbo / Staff Writer

The names of the judges who made rulings three decades ago about violations of emergency decrees under the Park Chung Hee military regime will be released this week, a national fact-finding commission said.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, designed to review controversial incidents in the modern history of Korea, made the announcement yesterday, roiling the legal community.

The commission has reviewed 1,412 rulings made by district and appeals courts regarding their convictions of 589 people for violating emergency decrees. About half of the convictions were handed to people who criticized the president or his administration in regular conversations.

The commission said it will release its report this week. According to the committee, a daily wage laborer was sentenced to two years in prison for saying, at a drinking party, that Mr. Park was attempting to become a lifetime president.

In another case, a 12-year prison term was handed down to a farmer for saying "Mr. Park had participated in the 1948 armed rebellion by communist soldiers in Yeosu, South Jeolla province against the Syngman Rhee

administration, and only became president because he was lucky."

About 40 incumbent judges began their careers on the bench before 1979, when the decrees were lifted. It is unclear as of now if any of the 40 senior judges participated in the trial.

"The commission probably wants to highlight inappropriate rulings and say the judges were unconscientious," said a Supreme Court official who declined to be named. "But the rulings were based on the laws of the time. Making public the names may damage the rule of law and defame the judges."

The Park administration enforced nine decrees from 1974 to 1979. They were intended to ban gatherings and protests to allow the military regime to oppress anti-government groups.

Members of academia also criticized the plan. "I wonder if making public the names is an appropriate way to reexamine our past," said Kim Jong-cheol, a law professor at Yonsei University.

Another expert, however, said he supports the commission's decision. "It is important to lay bare the names, because the judiciary was nothing more than the administration's maids," said Lim Ji-bong, a law professor of Sogang University.

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## Founder of Uri to start a new party of his own

By Ko Jung-ae  
JoongAng Ilbo

Saying it was impossible to work within the Uri Party's framework, former Justice Minister Chun Jung-bae, a founding member of the ruling party, said he would start a new party.

In a press conference yesterday, Mr. Chun said he was leaving Uri because a new political force was needed to adhere to the people's desires.

"I will look to get reform-minded people together. Former Uri Party members can be included as well," Mr. Chun said.

Nevertheless, he also made clear whom he didn't want to be allied with. "The Democratic Labor Party has a different vision than our group," the lawmaker said.

He stressed that he, alone, made the decision to leave the party. "I have discussed my course with many people, but leaving the party was an independent decision," Mr. Chun said.

He apologized for leaving the party he helped found, but said he needed to find a way to do things better.

The lawmaker also left a message for the people remaining in the party. "Those who are with the party do not have a different goal from me. Nevertheless, their judgment on the party's current status and the reality is different," Mr. Chun said.

The defection of a key senior party member makes Uri Chairman Kim Geun-tae's job of keeping the party together even harder during this presidential election year.

Inside the party, some officials have interpreted his move to stay with the party as a strategy to take the initiative for the formation of a new party.

Nevertheless, other members of the party's leadership have been not as clear on their future plans.

Floor leader Kim Han-gill has said he would think about his future after his term as floor leader expires on Tuesday. africanu@joongang.co.kr



Chun Jung-bae

## Same city, different conditions Poor districts call funding disparities unfair

By Kim Soe-jung  
Staff Writer

The road that runs through Nowon district in northern Seoul is cracked, and bricks lay on the sidewalk. Outdoor playgrounds are rusting, the sand in some playgrounds hasn't been changed for more than a decade and the students' chairs are falling apart.

"Although we want to replace the old and crumbling chairs and desks at the schools, we don't because we wouldn't have money left for educational programs," said Lee Roh-geun, head of the district office in Nowon, home to 624,000 residents.

On the other side of town, south of the Han River, the districts of Seocho and Songpa had extra money in their budget and residents last year asked the district not to repave the pristine streets just because they had the money to do it again.

Why the disparity? A national government tax system distributes money to districts without taking into

account their unique expenses, particularly welfare costs.

"Although the district offices in low-income neighborhoods have to spend more on welfare policies, the administration has been offering the subsidies in the same proportion as other district offices. Now, several district offices north of the Han River, including Nowon, have little money to spend on projects other than welfare," said Mr. Lee.

The district office's budget is roughly divided into two categories: local taxes and government subsidies. Local taxes consist of property, land, business and license taxes.

In the Seocho district last year, 90 percent of the budget came from those local taxes, plus its own additional income, the highest percentage in the city. Gangnam and Songpa finished second and third in the percentage that local taxes made up of their total yearly budget.

North of town, it was a different story. The district offices of Jungnang,

Eunpyeong, Gangbuk and Nowon filled only about 30 percent of their yearly budgets from local taxes.

In November, Mr. Lee met with reporters at City Hall and announced a plan to submit a petition to the Welfare, Gender and Administration Ministry seeking a revision of the way government subsidies are split up. Welfare Minister Ryu Simin said the ministry would hold a public hearing on the issue early this year, with civic groups and local offices invited.

For one major project, the national basic livelihood program, under which households living on a below minimum income receive monthly government subsidies, the government pays 50 percent of the expenses and the city government and a district office each pay 25 percent.

In Nowon, 21,125 benefit from the program, the highest in the city and 2.5 to 7.2 times more than the districts south of the Han River. The district also

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## Price for new software hiked by Korean sellers

By Wahn Dong-hee / Lee Weon-ho  
Staff Writer / JoongAng Ilbo

The new Windows Vista operating system costs about 130,000 won (\$140) more in Korea, so consumers here blamed Microsoft for abusing its monopoly position.

The real culprit, it turned out, was the Korean vendors themselves.

Microsoft said that it provided Vista at the same wholesale price to all personal computer makers, and that local vendors decided the retail prices of the software sold separately.

"The consumer price for Vista is up to the local Internet shopping malls or shops," Microsoft Korea said.

"Differences can occur because distributing companies take into consideration the size of the market as well as shipping costs and taxes." Windows Vista goes on sale for regular users on Wednesday.

The Korean-language Home premium version, for people who are installing the operating system for the first time on their computers, has a price tag of 359,000 won (\$382).

This is much more than the \$240 retail price of the English version sold

in the United States on Web sites such as Amazon.com.

The upgraded version, which is for people who want to upgrade their version of Windows, costs 242,000 won, about 100,000 won pricier than the same software available in the United States.

Vista Business, for middle and small companies, is about 200,000 won more expensive, at 446,000 won.

On major Web portals, consumers complained about the price difference, suggesting that Microsoft was taking advantage of Koreans.

"Most people will use the new operating system when they buy a new PC — very few will be affected by actually buying a separate operating system," said Soft Vision, an authorized Vista retailer. "There is not a lot of Vista selling in the Korea market, so we had no choice but to set the bar high."

Lee Chang-whan, a self-proclaimed hacker wannabe, said, "At that price, it would be a better deal to get a new computer altogether."

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## No white stuff fell, so forecasters' faces are red

By Kang Chan-su / Ser Myo-ja  
JoongAng Ilbo / Staff Writer

It didn't snow much over the weekend, so the Korea Meteorological Administration came under fire yesterday.

Internet users posted strong complaints at the weather body's Web site after it predicted heavy snow on Friday and Saturday.

The weather body said agencies in Japan and Europe, reading the same data, also predicted snow for Korea.

"Weather forecasters keep recent trends in mind," said Lee Chun-sik, a forecaster with the Korea Meteorological Administration. He said that if there has been recent heavy snow and rain, a forecaster uses his judgment and tends to increase the amount of precipitation from what the data suggest. Korea received a major snowfall on Dec. 16.

According to the Korea Meteorological Administration's report to the National Assembly last year, it issued 277 heavy snow warnings from July 2004 to July 2006. Among them, 65 of the warnings were later labeled as "wrong."

On Thursday morning, it hap-



On a bank of the Han River yesterday in Seoul, people sled on an artificial slope despite the lack of snow. The nation's weather forecasters had predicted heavy snow over the weekend.

[NEWSIS]

pened again. The weather administration issued a heavy snow warning, saying Seoul and the nation's central regions could see up to 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) of snowfall starting Friday morning. The National Emergency Management Agency also issued snow warnings

to mobile phone users who subscribe to its text message warning service on Friday morning.

The weather forecast, however, went largely wrong. In Seoul, only 0.1 millimeters of sleet fell. Incheon and Suwon had no more than 1 centimeter of snow. The Jeolla

provinces and South Chungcheong province received up to 8 centimeters.

Jeong Ji-su, a store owner, complained to the weather forecaster's Web site. He said the fouled up

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