

No bids as house of Myanmar's Suu Kyi auctioned again

AFP- The lakeside mansion where Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi spent years under house arrest was put up for auction for the second time on Thursday but once again attracted no bids, AFP reporters said.

The two-storey house and 1.9 acres of land were put up for sale following a decades-long dispute over the property between the Nobel laureate – who has been detained since a 2021 military coup – and her brother.

The auction set the floor for bidding at 300 billion kyats – around \$140 million at the junta's official exchange rate of 2,100 kyat to the dollar.

Similar-sized properties in upmarket Yangon neighbourhoods might go for around one or two million dollars, a local realtor told AFP in March.

Ahead of the auction, a small crowd of mostly journalists gathered outside the colonial-era house on leafy University Avenue, a few doors from the US embassy.

Above the gate, a portrait of Suu Kyi's father, independence hero Aung San, watched over the proceedings while armed police stood guard behind sandbags.

A notice pasted to the door by a local court advertised "Buildings and every heirloom under the name of Daw Khin Kyi" – Suu Kyi's mother.

An auctioneer came out of the compound and asked three times for any buyers, then announced the auction was unsuccessful when none came forward.

For around 15 years, Suu Kyi was confined within the house's crumbling walls by the military after shooting to fame during

huge demonstrations against the then-junta in 1988.

Cut off from her husband and children in England, Suu Kyi spent time playing the piano, reading detective novels and meditating as her status as a democracy leader grew.

Hundreds gathered regularly on the pavement outside the property to hear her talk about democracy and fighting military rule through non-violence.

After her release in 2010, she continued to live in the villa, where she received a string of foreign leaders, journalists and diplomats.

In 2012, then-US president Barack Obama lionised her as an “icon of democracy” during a visit to the home.

Suu Kyi left Yangon in 2012 and moved to the capital Naypyidaw to govern as part of an uneasy power-sharing arrangement with the military.

She was detained there in the early hours of February 1, 2021 when the military seized power again, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the Southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil.

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