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## Nepalese royal family massacred

Crown Prince slays King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and 10 others before turning gun on himself



AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's crown prince shot dead his parents - the king and queen - and several other relatives during a family dinner at the royal palace here before turning the gun on himself, officials said yesterday.

An official statement on state-run radio said King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, their children Prince Nirajan, 22, and Princess Shruti, 24, and one of the king's cousins, Princess Jayanti Shah, had been killed.

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However, Home Minister Ram Chandra Paudel said a further six people had been shot dead, including the king's two sisters and one of their husbands, when Crown Prince Dipendra reportedly opened fire with two semiautomatic weapons during the family's regular Friday dinner at the Narayan Hity Palace.

The 29-year-old heir to the throne of this small Himalayan kingdom then turned the gun on himself.

"It was the crown prince," said Paudel. "This is the most unfortunate and shocking event in the history of the Nepalese royal

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### Shahabuddin, Hasina, Khaleda shocked

UNB, BSS, Dhaka

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia in separate messages yesterday expressed deep shock at the brutal killing of Nepalese King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and other members of the Royal family.

"King Birendra was a great statesman of the region and a true friend of Bangladesh. President

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### Nepal seals border with India SAARC meet put off

AFP, Colombo

A meeting of top South Asian diplomats expected to help break the ice between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan was put off indefinitely following King Birendra's slaying, officials said yesterday.

The South Asian Association for Regional Countries (SAARC) postponed the two-day standing committee meeting of foreign secretaries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka due on June 8.

The meeting was keenly awaited as it was due to offer the first oppor-

tunity in two years for a high-level meeting between Indian and Pakistan foreign secretaries ahead of a summit of their leaders shortly, diplomats said.

"It is back to the drawing boards to agree on new dates," an Asian diplomat here said. "We were are hopeful of early dates to have the meeting."

The foreign ministry statement here did not give fresh dates for the meeting of foreign secretaries, known as the Standing Committee meeting.

"It has been decided to postpone

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### The deadly dispute

AFP, Kathmandu

The shocking murder of the king and queen of Nepal by their son Crown Prince Dipendra was triggered by a bitter family row over the woman he wanted to marry, sources close to the royal palace said yesterday.

Although there has been no official confirmation of the circumstances leading to the killing of the royal couple and several other family members, the sources said a furious argument broke out during the family's weekly Friday dinner gathering at the royal palace in Kathmandu.

The crown prince reportedly wanted to marry 22-year-old Devyani Rana, daughter of former foreign and finance minister Pashupati Shumshere Rana, but his choice was strongly opposed by Queen Aishwarya, who had another candidate in mind.

Besides, Crown Prince Dipendra, educated at Eton College in the United Kingdom, was heir to the throne.

According to recent press reports, astrologers had advised that the crown prince should not be allowed to marry or have children until he reached the age of 35.

The astrologers warned that the king would die if this advice was ignored. Dipendra had refused to be swayed, revealing that he had secretly already married Devyani in a temple according to Hindu rites.

According to the sources, King Birendra had warned the heir to the throne that unless he bowed to the queen's wishes he would be passed over in the succession, in favour of his younger brother Prince Nirajan.

As the argument at the dinner table peaked, the crown prince apparently stormed from the room.

He went to his private quarters in the palace, armed himself with two semi-automatic weapons, walked back to the dining room and opened fire, before shooting himself.

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### Prince Gyanendra named regent

AFP, PTI, REUTERS, Kathmandu

Prince Gyanendra, the younger brother of the late King Birendra, has been named as regent to the Nepalese throne after several members of his family were massacred at the royal palace.

The 53-year-old Gyanendra was staying at the winter palace in Pokhara when the shooting, which killed his brother and other family members took place.

State radio reported yesterday that Gyanendra had been named as regent to his nephew and new king, Crown Prince Dipendra, who reportedly turned the gun on his family and then himself at a regular family dinner on Friday.

Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, chairman of the Nepal's Royal Privy Council, announced the deaths and the succession to the country on television and radio 17 hours after the massacre at the royal palace, the Nepalnews.com web site reported.

"We announce death of His Majesty King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev on the 19 of Jeshtha 2058 (June 1, 2001) at 2115 local time in the evening.

"According to the 2046 (1990) Constitution of Nepal and the laws of succession and according to the grand traditions we declare that his majesty's eldest son, Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, will be the king of Nepal as of the evening of 19 Jeshtha 2058.

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