



King Birendra

The king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who died in a shooting incident at the Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu on 1 June 2001, was a kindly and, for a monarch, surprisingly popular figure. The

Friday night massacre wiped out the entire Birendra branch of the royal family: **Queen Aishwariya**, 51; the younger son, **Prince Nirajan**; daughter, **Princess Shruti**; the king's sisters, **Princess Shanti Singh** and **Princess Sharada Shah**; the king's brother-in-law, **Prince Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah**; and his cousin, **Princess Jayanti**.

The crown prince, **Prince Dipendra**, 29, who is claimed to have done the shootings and said to have shot himself after killing his parents, brother, sisters and an aunt and a uncle, died on 4 June. Even though brain dead, if not actually dead as many Nepalese believed Dipendra too had died on the same night, he had been declared king after the death of his father and had thus theoretically reigned for two days before the late king's brother, **Gyanendra**, was declared king.

Birendra had succeeded to the throne on 31 January 1972 on the death of his father **King Mahendra** (born 11 June 1922; reigned 1955-72), and was crowned king on 24 February 1975. He had been educated at St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling, India; at Eton, England (1959-64); at the University of Tokyo, Japan; and took a masters degree from Harvard University, USA (1967-68). Besides receiving formal education, he had gone on extensive study tours both abroad and in Nepal. He was exposed to various countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North and South America, even spending one summer as a farm worker in France. He trekked inside his own country, sleeping rough in huts and other zero-star places to study and experience ordinary Nepalese life.

As a monarch, he introduced democratic reforms first in 1976 and subsequently in 1990, when he legalised political parties (August 1990) and promulgated a new constitution (November 1990) becoming a constitutional monarch. Remarkably for a king but unlike many democratically elected heads of state, he had managed to stay very close to his people and was able to resolve not so easy problems of

democratic evolution in a very traditional society. What probably made him not so popular with some powers was his firm policy to stay truly non-aligned and jealously safeguard the independence and integrity of the Himalayan kingdom. He had visited China ten times.

Leila Pahlavi

The youngest daughter of the deposed Shah of Iran, **Muhammad Raza** (d.1980), Leila Pahlavi, 31, died presumably on Sunday 10 June 2001 when her body was found in a London Hotel where she used to stay when in town. Scotland Yard considered it 'as an unexplained death' but said 'there are no suspicious circumstances'. She had an American degree, was unmarried, had nightmares about Iran, felt aimless and struggling 'to find a reason for existing'. She was buried in Paris where her mother **Farah Pahlavi** lives.

Prof Ishak Shari

Professor Ishak Shari died on 30 June 2001 following a surgery for cancer. His death comes as a major blow to Malaysian academia. His passing away has deprived the country of one of the leading minds in the land.

Ishak Shari was born in an ordinary Malay family in 1948. During his youth he witnessed the transition from colonial to post-colonial rule. He was among the beneficiaries the positive discrimination policies that were introduced after independence to help the Malays reach a level of economic, political and social equality with the other races in the country.

His university education began at the London School of Economics (1967-72) where he worked on the subject of economics and statistics. His concern for the poor and underprivileged drove him towards the field of economic development which later became his doctoral thesis subject at University Malaya in 1985.

As part of the student movement abroad in the 1960s and 1970s, Ishak Shari's interest in the affairs of the rural poor was cultivated. His work on the economic welfare of rural and fishing communities became the basis for a lifelong interest in the welfare of the rural peasantry as a whole.

Shari's main concern was to try and reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable ends: the need for rapid development and the need to ensure that there would be a welfare net so that

marginalised and impoverished communities would not be further alienated in the rush for economic and material progress.

For him, economics was a discipline that needed to be balanced by ethical and moral concerns as well. His later work not only looked at the economic fundamentals but also attempted to formulate alternative developmental paradigms that were rooted in ethics.

His close friend, Professor Abdul Rahman Embong, describes him as 'an enlightened economist (who) envisioned the ultimate goal of economic development not as mere material prosperity per se, but as the development of the whole person through the enrichment of society's civilisation and the cultural values and practices of the individual'.

Shari's academic career spanned several decades, beginning with a teaching post at the Malaysian National University (UKM) in 1972. He became head of department in 1974 and associate professor in 1980. In 1991 he was made full professor, after serving as Dean to the faculty of economics (1988-90). In 1997 he took over as director of the Institute for Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS).

Ishak Shari also served on a number of important quasi-governmental consultation and policy bodies, such as the Malaysian National Economic Consultative Council (MAPEN I and II). He was involved in the National Vision Policy (2001-2010). And at the end of his life he was also the President of the Malaysian Social Science Association (PSSM).

Those who knew Ishak Shari will always remember him as an example of the academic-activist whose work went beyond the confines of the ivory tower of academia. His commitment to a broader social cause brought him into conflict with interest groups that wanted to defend the *status quo* for their own interests. However his perseverance and commitment to change provided his students with a positive example that academic work was also capable of changing the world provided there was a will to do so.

Farish A Noor

Qateel Shifa'i

Famous Pakistani poet, Qateel Shifa'i, 82, who also wrote lyrics for films in both India and Pakistan died in a Lahore hospital, 12 July 2001. He was born in Haripur, Hazara in 1925.