

After Buddha, Nepal stung by terror claims about last king

After the controversy over Bollywood kungfu comedy 'Chandni Chowk to China', which wrongly claimed the Buddha was born in Nepal, the Himalayan republic has been stung anew by Indian media reports that a suspended Indian soldier was allegedly involved in a terror plot to establish a Hindu state with help from Nepal's last king Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah.

'We are not surprised that Indian intelligence agencies and media have been propagating groundless reports about Nepal,' Nepali weekly Jana Aastha Wednesday said.

The report came after a section of the Indian media published the alleged transcript of a conversation between Lt. Col. Shrikanth Prasad Purohit, an Indian Army officer arrested last year on suspicion that he was involved in a series of terror attacks in west India.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) released a 4,500-page chargesheet against the suspended army officer and 10 other people, alleging they had wanted to form a Hindu state and had enlisted the support of Nepal's last king Gyanendra, who was deposed officially last year.

The mammoth chargesheet includes transcripts of a conversation between Purohit and two other men that were allegedly stored in the laptop of one of them.

'Let me also tell you our meeting had been fixed with King Gyanendra on June 24, 2006 and then in 2007,' Purohit allegedly said during the conversation. '... the king had accepted the proposal ... 20 people from my side will train as officers there (in Nepal) every six months ... I'll get 40 persons every year ... I'll get 400 soldiers.'

The army officer also allegedly said he had asked the king to buy AK-47 rifles, for which his group would foot the bill. 'The king has accepted ... ,' the officer allegedly said.

According to the Indian media, Purohit also talked about Nepal's Queen Aishwarya's interest in Hindu fundamentalism and her association with him.

Asked who she was, he allegedly said: 'Gyanendra's wife, the maharani. She is anyway attached to him. We have been in contact with her.'

Queen Aishwarya died in 2001 during the infamous palace massacre in Nepal in which the king as well as seven other royal family members were killed. She was married to King Birendra, who too perished in the tragedy.

Queen Komal, King Gyanendra's wife, is not known to have shown any interest in politics or power.

Also, in June 2006, when Purohit allegedly says a meeting was set up with Gyanendra, the king was in no position to support any international conspiracy since he had been forced to surrender power only two months earlier following a pro-democracy movement.

Stripped of his power and facing public wrath, he lived under the shadow of an election that would eventually abolish his crown and was focusing on survival.

In April 2007, the king's arch enemy, the Maoists, had joined the government. So it would have been both suicidal and impossible for the cornered king to have fixed a secret meeting with pro-Hindu activists.

'The Indian media has been discussing this threadbare,' the Jana Aastha said. 'But few Nepalis are aware of it due to the prevailing power outage in Nepal.'

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