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PHALANO

by *Rajesh KC*



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POLL

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- Deliberate politicking
- Ill-informed protestors
- Don't know
- Justified protest

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Sunday WEATHER

KATHMANDU

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	High	22°C
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	Sunset	5:49 pm



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Nepali team without skis at world event

REPUBLICA

KATHMANDU, Feb 7: The long-cherished dream of Nepali slalom racers to go at world Alpine ski championships is dashed for lack of some skis that meet the requirements imposed by the International Ski Federation (FIS), Reuters reported.

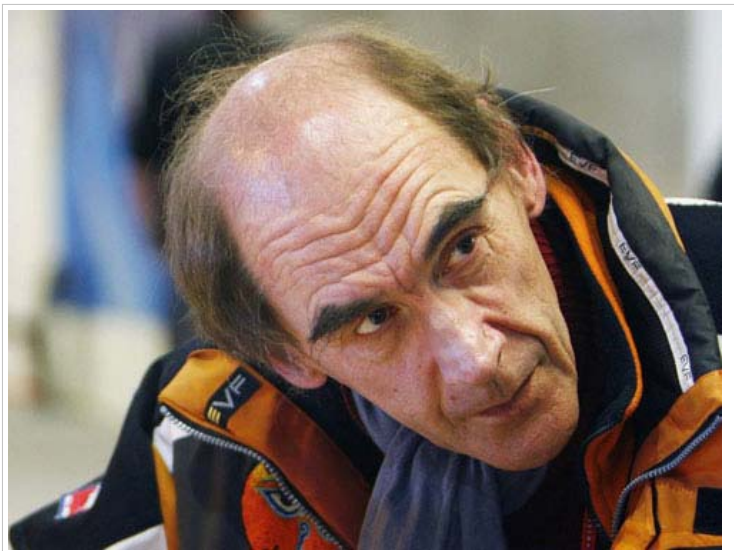
Shyam Dhakal and Subash Khatri knew that the skis they had did not meet the FIS requirements to take part in the completion being held in Val D'isere, France. Worse, no money for the skis was forthcoming from Nepal Ski Association, the team's coach Richard Morley said.

Now, Nepal's first appearance at the world championship depends on charity.

"A local shop offered to lend us some skis but we're not sure they will be legal. It's very frustrating when you see that some of the guys from leading ski countries just use their training skis a couple of times and just throw them away," the Reuters quoted Morley as saying.

Morley, a British businessman and former skier, launched the Nepal Alpine skiing team a decade ago at the request of the then King Birendra.

According to Morley, Dhakal and Khatri, who must go through qualifying to get places in next Friday's giant slalom race, could earn the respect of fellow skiers.



Richard Morley, the British coach of the Nepal ski team.

Photo: Reuters

"They are mountain boys with as much guts, commitment and potential as mountain boys from Switzerland or Austria. They just need the training facilities," the Reuters quoted Morley as saying.

The 56-year-old Englishman first gave Nepal a taste of international ski racing when he took his adopted son Jayaram Khadka to the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics to compete in Nordic skiing events.

Jayaram's adoption had made headlines when it was repeatedly rejected by the British government for seven years before the new Labor administration cleared it in 1997.

Since Salt Lake, Morley has started his own training camp for Nepalese skiers in Les Arcs, a resort in the same valley as Val d'Isere. He has three skiers at the camp -- Dhakal, 27, Khatri, 22, and Urtam Rayamashi, 16, who joined the team last year.

Morley is realistic that Nepal's Alpine skiers will never compete with the major nations.

"This is not the world championships, this is the First World championships. We're only here to make up the numbers," he said.

"Why don't we have our own world championships for the Third World nations? In football, you have second divisions."

Altogether seventy-three countries are competing in Val d'Isere from this week. Under current regulations, the small nations are allowed to take part only in the giant slalom races and they are obliged to go through qualification.

"It's an unfair game. It's like having a guy walking up a mountain and the other going to the top by taxi and saying I've won," Morley said.

His racers do not have dedicated pistes to train on in Les Arcs and ski amid recreational skiers. At the world championships, they are given accommodation by the FIS only on competition day.

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