

Nobel Peace Prize for Suu Kyi

OSLO, Oct 14 (Reuter):
Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, held under house arrest for more than two years by her country's military rulers, won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize today.

Francis Sejersted, head of the five-member Nobel Committee which awards the prize, said Aung San Suu Kyi had become a symbol of a fight for democracy and human rights in Burma (now

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Myanmar).

"She is a worthy winner," he told reporters.

Placed under house arrest two years ago for outspoken attacks on a military that baynetted and shot thousands in suppressing an uprising for democracy, the slight 46-year-old has become a figurehead to a people grown cynical about their leaders.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said it was awarding Aung San Suu Kyi the prize—a gold medal, a diploma and a cheque for six million Swedish crowns (about a million dollar)—for her "non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights".

"Suu Kyi's struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades," it said in a statement. Military repression has plagued Burma since 1962 and beggared one of Asia's richest lands.

"She has become an important symbol in the struggle against oppression," it added.

Last year, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev won the prize, named after Sweden's Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite.

Aung San Suu Kyi was among the favourites for this year and is the first woman to win the award since Swedish peace campaigner Alva Myrdal in 1982 and Mother Teresa in 1979.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to honour this woman for her unflagging efforts and to show its support for the many people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means," it said.

"We will await the regime's reaction with anticipation," Sejersted said. He said he hoped the prize might help bring about her release.

The prize will be handed out in Oslo on December 10.

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