Nepal: Treacherous past, tortuous future

CK Lal provides a ring-side view of Nepal's historic transition from monarchy to democracy



AFP

THE end of the decade-old armed insurgency in Nepal was heralded by a public ceremony at the Birendra International Convention Centre in Kathmandu on November 20. In an ill-organized affair -- till the last moment, the master of ceremonies didn't know who needed to be called to the dais -- Premier Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist supremo Prachanda signed a peace accord declaring that the civil war was over.

It was followed by a consensus over the interim constitution that is expected to pave the way for the entry of Maoists into the provisional parliament and interim government. The new set-up will then conduct the elections to a constituent assembly which will decide the fate of the monarchy and write the seventh constitution of the country.

Constituent assembly elections are slated to be held in June 2007. However, it is conditional upon management of the Maoists' weapons under UN supervision. Constituent assembly elections aren't like parliamentary polls that could be conducted under the provisions of the dormant constitution of 1990. The parliament will have to enact necessary laws to empower the election commission for re-delineation of constituencies, updating of electoral rolls and making preparations for the constituent assembly elections.

Even though the government and the Maoists have agreed to mobilize ex-Gorkha soldiers, retired from British