

NEPAL

HISTORIC PEACE ACCORD SIGNED

After 25 years of underground activity and 11 years of armed struggle across Nepal's jungles and mountains, and the loss of 13,000 lives, the notorious Maoist leader finally declared an end to his armed insurgency.

In a historic ceremony on Nov 21, PM Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda signed the 'Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) 2006,' bringing the decade-long armed insurgency to an end and promising to chart a new destiny for "a peaceful and democratic" new Nepal.



KOIRALA AND PRACHANDA SIGNING THE ACCORD

The front page of the largest selling English daily in Kathmandu read:

THE END OF THE WAR: GOVERNMENT AND MAOISTS SIGN PEACE AGREEMENT "NATION ENTERS INTO NEW ERA."

The government declared a public holiday to celebrate the breakthrough.

The 10-point CPA which included provisions on human rights, civil and political rights, arms and army management, socio-economic transformation, among others, was signed in the presence of ministers, political party leaders, Maoist leaders, foreign diplomats, MPs, government officials and media representatives.

"Beginning today, the politics of killing, violence and terror will be replaced by the politics of reconciliation," declared the 85-year-old PM Koirala who said he had put his entire political career at risk by venturing on this path of peace and democracy.

"Being a democrat, I wanted to bring non-democrats into the framework of democracy. I was warned by many friends about the hazards of dealing with terrorists but I thought that bringing all under democratic framework was the duty of a democrat. We all are entering into a new era from today. All of us Nepalis must come together to build a new Nepal."

He added that Nepal will, henceforth, be regarded as a model in conflict resolution by other conflict-torn countries around the world.



PRACHANDA

Prachanda stated that with the signing of the CPA, people of Nepal were in a position to give a message to the entire world. "The continuity of 238-year-old tradition has been broken now. This is the victory of Nepalese people and the loss of regressive elements."

He said that like in the war, his party would work with equal zeal to implement the peace accord. "We have no prejudices against anyone. We want to make it clear to everyone that we are neither conservative nor dogmatic in our thinking," and the people of Nepal will "perform another miracle" by working on a war-footing to develop their nation after the elections of a Constituent Assembly (CA).

He termed the successful struggle of the people of Nepal as the first miracle of the 21st century.

Effective immediately, the CPA states that illegal carrying of weapons, their display and any kind of attack, threat or intimidation would, henceforth, be punishable by law.

Reiterating the commitment to hold the elections of CA by mid-June, 2007, the CPA prohibits all kinds of illegal use of weapons, raid, ambush, mining, aerial attack, abduction, etc. Within 30 days both the sides will share information regarding the placement of mines and within 60 days they all would be disabled.

The CPA also talks about rehabilitation of conflict victims. It vows to form a high-level Truth and Recon-ciliation Commission to investigate about human rights abuses. It has a provision guaranteeing free passage of civil servants, UN, I/NGO workers across the country. It also has separate provisions dealing with civil and political rights and rights of women and children.

On the issue of implementation and monitoring, the accord states that the UN will be allowed to continue its monitoring of human rights. Likewise, the UN team will be asked to verify and monitor arms and army management, which will be as per the November 8 agreement. It also states that the UN will be asked to observe the CA polls as well.

The CPA also declares that henceforth no parallel institution will exist in the country – which means the Maoists' People's Court, People's Government, parallel tax collection and similar other parallel outfits will cease to function. This effectively ends the existence of two regimes – which the Maoist leaders have often used to justify their extortion, justice dispensation and similar other activities - within the country.