

Maoists gun for top posts

Want comrade as Deputy PM

Anirban Roy
Kathmandu, January 16

WITHIN HOURS of joining the interim parliament on Monday, the Maoists have all but demanded that they be given "top posts" in Nepal's political set-up.

Sources close to the PMO told the *Hindustan Times* that the Maoists have insisted that the posts of Speaker and Deputy Prime Minister in the interim parliament be given to comrades. The oldest member of the interim parliament, Bal Bahadur Rai of Nepali Congress, played the pro-tem speaker's role on Monday and administered oath to all the 330 new members.

But the Maoists made it clear to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala that they did not want Subash Nemwang, the Speaker of the House of Representative (HoR) that was dissolved on Monday, to retain his post in the interim government. Koirala, however, reportedly wants otherwise — he is keen that Nemwang of CPN (UML) should continue as the Speaker because of his "great performance in the HoR during a crucial period".

Maoist chief Prachanda and his deputy Baburam Bhattarai held a marathon meeting in this regard with Koirala on Monday. The meeting was resumed on Tuesday to finalise the impor-

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The situation got more complex after the Maoists refused the option of having two Deputy Prime Ministers

— Senior Nepali Congress leader

On one hand, the Maoists have demanded top posts in the new government. On the other, CPN (UML) — the second largest party in the interim parliament — has also placed strong proposals for the posts of Speaker and Deputy Prime Minister.

“The situation got more complex after the Maoists refused the option of having two Deputy Prime Ministers,” said a senior Nepali Congress leader. “A solution must now be found to resolve the crisis,” he added.

A section of Nepali Congress leaders said the leader of the Maoist parliamentary party, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, is too junior a political leader and does not have the experience required to qualify for the post of Deputy Prime Minister.

Since the next session of the interim parliament is scheduled for Wednesday, it is being presumed that Koirala would be able



SAGAR SHRESTHA/UN

General Jan Erik Wilhelmsen, head of the UN arms monitoring team, being welcomed by Maoists in Chitwan.

UN ready to disarm guerrillas

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EVEN AS 83 Maoist MPs joined the interim parliament on Monday, the UN made itself ready to begin the management of weapons in the seven designated cantonments in Nepal.

The UN arms monitors were engaged over the past two days in preparing the final logistics for beginning the registration of the weapons. General Jan Erik Wilhelmsen is heading the arms monitoring team, which on Monday completed inspecting the final logistics preparations for arms registration at the Peoples Liberation Army's 3rd Division cantonment site at Jutpani in Chitwan.

On Tuesday, the inspection team visited the cantonment of the 4th Division in Nawalparasi, said sources from the office of the UN Secretary General's

and this should take two weeks. The guns would ultimately be locked up in containers.

Martin was in New York to brief the Security Council as well as UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on the progress of the peace mission in Nepal, which he is heading. Having returned to Kathmandu on Tuesday evening, he is likely to meet Maoist chief Prachanda and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Wednesday to finalise the schedule for completing the arms management.

This management, as well as that of the PLA soldiers, is now crucial for the people of Nepal. For, only after it is completed would the interim government — which would also include at least five Maoist ministers — be formed.

All 35 members of the team monitoring the arms and PLA soldiers have arrived in Nepal. The UN Security Council has also given its mandate for keeping