

## Maoists claims seven dead in police firing

by UPI

KATHMANDU, Nepal -- Nepal's Maoist party claimed security forces shot and killed seven of their activists as the Himalayan kingdom prepared to vote. The party said the security forces opened fire after a scuffle between the Maoists and youths working for a candidate of a rival party in the Dang district in the west of the country, the BBC reported. There has already been considerable violence preceding the elections to be held Thursday to pick a constituent assembly. The country is currently ruled by an interim government led by the Nepal Congress party and includes the Maoists. Police were quoted by other reports as saying the Maoists tried to attack a vehicle being used by a Nepali Congress candidate. Separately, CNN reported Rishi Prasad Sharma, a communist candidate, was shot and killed in Surkhet, about 250 miles west of Kathmandu, hours before the shooting in Dang. The constituent assembly will be made up of 497 members, who will write a new constitution and decide the fate of the last Hindu kingdom's 239-year-old monarchy, now led by King Gyanendra, who already has been stripped of most of his powers.

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