

Nepalese vote in election

by UPI

KATHMANDU, Nepal -- Nepalese voted Thursday to pick a constituent assembly that will decide whether to end King Gyanendra's monarchy and make the Himalayan nation a republic. An international team led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was on hand to observe the election in the landlocked country and last Hindu kingdom. About 17.6 million people are eligible to vote. There has been widespread violence with at least 20 people killed in the run up to the election but on Thursday, Nepalnews.com reported polling was proceeding peacefully. The election will be based on both proportionate as well as direct voting systems. More than 10,000 candidates representing 55 parties are contesting under the two systems. The country is currently run by an interim coalition led by the Nepalese Congress party of Prime Minister G.P. Koirala. The coalition includes Maoists, who joined the government after waging a 10-year rebellion against the monarchy. "This day marks the death of feudal monarchical system," one Maoist leader was quoted as saying. The constituent assembly has been promised since the 1950s but has been held up for one reason or the other including pressure from the monarchy.

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