

## **Monthly stipend for Nepal rebels**

The Nepalese government will provide a monthly stipend to thousands of former rebel fighters confined to UN-supervised camps under a peace deal to help improve their living conditions, officials have said.

The 31,000 former combatants will get 3,000 rupees (\$46) each every month while in the camps set up early this year. Ram Chandra Poudel, minister for peace and reconstruction, told reporters the decision was made by the government after a meeting with Maoist leaders on Sunday.

The camps were set up as part of the peace process that saw the Maoist rebels abandon their decade-long armed revolt and join parliament and the government.

The Maoists have been demanding that living conditions in the camps be improved and the rebels living there be provided with money every month. They had gone as far as to stop UN arms monitors from continuing their work in the camps to press their demands. UN workers have been prevented from beginning the second phase of efforts to verify the former combatants' identities.

The former fighters have been living in seven main camps and 14 satellite camps across Nepal. They will remain in the camps until elections later this year are held for the special assembly, which will then debate their future.