

Top Opposition leaders unite to confront regime

Rangoon (UPI) — The three top opposition leaders yesterday formed the first organisation joining all anti-government groups fighting for fair elections and a democratic government, the leaders said Saturday.

The new umbrella group, called the National United Front for Democracy, is meant to gather all the various student unions, workers groups and protest organisations into a united force against the military regime for the first time.

Opposition leader, former Defence Minister General Tin Oo told United Press International it was too early to say whether the organisation would develop into a political party that would contest proposed elections.

The three top opposition leaders, Tin Oo, Brigadier General Aung Gyi and Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burma's independence hero General Aung San, met for about two hours yesterday to discuss the organisation.

An opposition statement said the three had agreed that the basic goals of the new organisation were to seek a truly democratic government and to prevent the return of the one-party, authoritarian regime.

Tin Oo said the three are also drafting a letter to coup leader General Saw Maung to ask for an end to military repression and some way of assuring that elections will be fair.

Friday night, in his first broadcast speech since taking power on Sunday, Saw Maung promised "free and fair" elections and said the military wanted to turn over power to an elected government as soon as possible.

Tin Oo said there was only one major step for the government to take — how to assure the elections will be free and fair.

Diplomats said the opposition was determined to find a formula that would prevent the military fixing the polls in favour of the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party.

Tin Oo said the opposition would continue strikes that have paralysed the economy.

But he said street demonstrations were too risky because the military had proven its willingness to shoot down unarmed

demonstrators "like a trigger-happy firing squad."

Opposition sources said more radical students were ready to start street demonstrations again on Monday if the leaders could not show progress on more peaceful methods of gaining their ends.

"On the 26th we will march," said a student in a baseball cap meeting a journalist at the Sule Pagoda in central Rangoon. "We will have hundreds of thousands."

"If soldiers shoot, we shoot back," he said.

Burmese and diplomatic sources said the military is using brutal methods, including summary executions, to consolidate its control of the country.

The sources confirmed that troops summarily executed two students on Thursday in front of their parents in South Okkalapa district of Rangoon, where there have been fierce clashes between youths and soldiers.

A Western ambassador said frightened student and labour leaders were asking embassies for political asylum, "to which, of course, the answer has got to be 'no'."

"In searching for weapons house-to-house they are just picking up any valuables they want and taking them, and the people have no recourse," a diplomat said.

The streets of Rangoon were quiet yesterday, but there were stepped up patrols by armoured cars and columns of troops.

Trucks carrying rice and food rumbled into the city.

The government radio yesterday reported five "destructive elements" were killed on Friday by security forces in central

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