

Policemen join Rangoon rallies

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Rangoon (UPI) — Police, air force officers and ethnic minorities joined hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in mass rallies yesterday as the Peoples' Assembly announced multi-party general elections within three months.

Ethnic Shan and Palaung nationals, monks, employees of the Peoples' Assembly and Council of State, students, police officers and air force officers joined demonstrators in Rangoon to call for an interim government as well as the multi-party elections.

A chartered Thai Airways International plane flew 304 evacuees, including 102 Japanese, 55 dependents of United States diplomats, 30 United Nations officials and South Koreans, French, and Britons from Rangoon to Bangkok last night.

At an emergency meeting held yesterday, two days ahead of schedule,

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the Peoples' Assembly appointed a five-man supervision committee to arrange and oversee multi-party general elections to be held within three months — but not less than 45 days from yesterday.

"I'm not sure if the people will wait that long for an election," said one Asian diplomat in Rangoon.

"More protests and demonstrations will show they are unwilling to wait."

The elections committee includes Ba Htay, a retired financial commissioner, Kyaw Nyu, a retired ambassador, San Maung, a retired commissioner of savings and insurance, Saw Kya Doe, a retired brigadier general, and Saya Chai, a former parliamentarian and assembly member.

On arrival in Bangkok,

the US evacuees were reluctant to talk about Rangoon but said they were "greatly relieved" to be out of Burma.

"The situation there is very confusing and changes every hour," said Takushi Masakumi of the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

"People are not happy with Maung Maung's announcement that elections will be held within three months because they don't trust the elections commission," Masakumi said.

Some evacuees said looting in Rangoon was aimed only at the government and its buildings, not foreigners.

Rangoon General Hospital and the street in front of the US Embassy continued to be the locations preferred by the hundreds of thousands of anti-government, pro-democracy demonstrators.

Mass rallies were also staged in Rangoon's South Okkalapa and Thaketa townships.

The assembly announcement seconded a unanimous decision made on Saturday by an ex-

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traordinary congress of the oppressive Burma Socialist Programme Party to hold free, fair, multi-party general elections without a referendum.

The announcement was the latest popular victory over the authoritarian system which has been in power since a military coup in 1962 which installed a government that reduced the former Brit-

ish colony of nearly 40 million people to one of the world's poorest countries.

An estimated 1,300 people were killed when the police and army tried to suppress the pro-democracy movement.

President and party

leader Maung Maung, in office for only 24 days, met other party leaders on Saturday behind closed doors and amid heavy security.

Demonstrators applauded the party's decision on Saturday, but many promised to push

for the government's resignation.

Maung Maung has said neither he nor any member of the top government or party leadership would compete in the elections, but did not rule out other party members participating.

He promised that the military, which is intricately entwined with the ruling party, would be neutral in the elections.

Police join rallies

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● Burmese monks and students ride on a truck in Rangoon during a demonstration on Thursday demanding democracy. More than half a million joined a month of demonstration.—
Reuter

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