



Burmese newspapers again enjoy freedom

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Banner-carrying members of a newly formed Burmese Housewives Committee join growing anti-government protests in central Rangoon on Saturday.

BURMA's official newspapers still carry verbatim the speeches of ruling party leaders and front-page headlines proclaim "President Dr Maung Maung sends felicitations to People's Republic of Bulgaria."

But next to such reports these days the voices of dissent are given room.

After a quarter century under tight government control the *Guardian* and the *Working People's Daily*, publications of the Ministry of Information, are reporting both sides of events in one of the world's most secretive

states.

Sunday's leading story in the *Guardian* was the text of the President's speech to an emergency congress of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) convened to offer compromise to a rebelling populace.

Next to it was a statement from a group of former military officers who pledged their support to the struggle to overthrow the BSPP, which has ruled Burma for 25 years.

Recent editions of the two newspapers, and the dozens of newsheets that have sprung to life as gov-

ernment control faltered, were brought to Bangkok on Sunday night by the evacuated wife of a Rangoon-based Western diplomat and shown to Reuter.

Photographs on the frontpage of Sunday's *Guardian* show Maung Maung addressing Saturday's congress and a formal shot of the meeting taking place in the huge parliament hall.

Across the page, police-women on strike in support of anti-government demonstrators were shown chanting and raising their arms in clenched fist salute.

The frontpage of Saturday's *Working People's Daily* was totally given over to the opposition.

The left side of the page carried the story of opposition leader U Nu's declaration of a provisional government, a move that attracted only patchy support. The right side of the page carried a report of a news conference by another dissident, Aung San Suu Kyi, at which she denounced the move.

Both papers are filled with photographs of the mass demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people that have become a daily feature of Rangoon life.

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