

Burmese councils quit ruling party

Rangoon (Reuter, AFP) — Two of Burma's most important provincial councils have resigned en masse from the ruling Socialist Party and all the members have taken sanctuary in Buddhist monasteries, a leading opposition figure said.

General Tin Oo, a former defence minister, told Reuters in a telephone interview yesterday that all members of the provincial councils in Mandalay division and Sagaing division had withdrawn from the Burma Socialist Programme Party.

Mandalay and Sagaing control the mineral rich centre of the country at the bend of the Irrawaddy, where the great river shifts west before continuing its southern flow.

Mandalay, Burma's second city, and Monywa, one of the main towns of Sagaing, were the sites of huge anti-government demonstrations last month, but news from the two areas has been sparse since then.

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Tin Oo said an election commission appointed just days ago to supervise BSPP-authorised multi-party elections had already been discounted by the opposition.

"The election commission's activities are already defunct, categorically defunct," he said. "Not a single person is willing to cooperate with them."

Meanwhile, some 200 army officer cadets were sent home from a training school outside Rangoon yesterday after voicing support for protesters demanding the resignation of Burma's authoritarian regime, reports reaching here said.

The 200 were sent home from the officers training school in Hmawbi, 30 miles (50 kms) from Rangoon, residents and independent sources said.

The cadets had voiced support for the people's struggle for democracy in reply to a question from the school's principal on Wednesday, the sources said.

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