

Burmese opposition leaders urged to act now

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by Kevin Cooney of Reuter

KEY opposition leaders have come under renewed pressure in Burma's struggle for political power to do more than simply urge on protesters and demand the government's resignation.

Student leaders, diplomats and analysts in Bangkok and in Rangoon and, it seems, the foremost opposition figures themselves, agree the time has come to offer Burmese an alternative govern-

"They offer an election to starving people and then say they are going to shoot people."

Government radio said on Monday the army would shoot people spreading false rumours about the military.

The analyst said the opposition had to set up an alternative government now because there was nothing else for it to do.

"They can't expect more people to turn out onto the streets," he said. "Just about everybody is already out on the streets now except Ne Win himself."

ment with prospects of ending economic privation.

Students summoned the most prominent government opponents to a meeting on Tuesday and urged them to unify and come up with a plan for an opposition-based potential government.

Attending the meeting were Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of independence hero Aung San, former military men Tin Oo, Aung Gyi and Bo Yan Naing, former prime minister U Nu and others.

"We agreed to deliver a response within 48 hours," said Aung San Suu

Ne Win seized power from U Nu in a 1962 coup and held on to it until July when he resigned in the face of mounting street protests. He is believed by many to still be running the BSPP.

On Monday, Aung San Suu Kyi, Aung Gyi and Tin Oo issued their first joint statement. It rejected the election plan.

"The joint statement is an encouraging sign as it looks as though the opposition is gradually moving towards a common position, which I think they have to do very soon," a Western diplomat in

Kyi.

The meeting took place days after the government offered multi-party elections within three months — an apparent final compromise, diplomats say.

The opposition says the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party is incapable of running an honest election and insists that it step down and let an interim government lead the country back to democracy.

"The government has consistently used the carrot and stick approach," an analyst of Burmese affairs said here.

Rangoon said.

Others said agreeing on an alternative government might not be so easy.

"Unfortunately the opposition movement remains fairly splintered," another diplomat said. "There could be a serious problem with a power vacuum and it is difficult to see who could set up an interim government."

U Nu tried to reclaim his premiership by setting up a provisional government last week. His move faltered when other opposition figures and student leaders failed to rally behind him.

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