

# Explosions in Rangoon after army stages coup

Rangoon (Agencies) — Heavy gunfire and explosions were heard throughout Rangoon late last night after the army seized power and ordered a curfew that was defied by student protesters.

A western ambassador said he heard heavy automatic weapons fire near his home in the centre of the city. A military attaché said he heard the booms of recoilless rifles.

Truckloads of troops moved into Rangoon University, a centre for anti-government protest where students were reported gathering stockpiles of rice.

More troops were reported surrounding Rangoon General Hospital and a Buddhist temple believed to be harbouring army deserters.

In a series of broadcasts starting early yesterday interspersed with martial music, the army said it was taking over to "halt deteriorating conditions all over the country and for the sake and interest of the people".

It told people to stay off the streets of Rangoon between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. and banned gatherings of more than five people.

A western visitor staying in the capital's main business district reported hearing sporadic gunfire yesterday evening.

The wife of opposition leader General Tin Oo, reached by telephone at their home three kilometres to the north, said: "I can't talk any more. I can hear the gunfire."

An aide to another opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, also reported hearing shots.

Rangoon residents reached by telephone late last night reported hearing explosions and seeing flames and smoke. Lights were out and the city was in darkness.

Explosions were heard near the railway station.



SAW MAUNG...promised democracy.

north of the business district and near the racecourse to the northeast.

The western visitor in the business district said he saw trucks containing heavily-armed troops moving past the Strand Hotel and soldiers removing barricades put up by students earlier in the day.

After the military takeover was announced, groups of students gathered at several points around the city, some shouting: "We are not cowards, we will fight."

Last night a diplomat said large numbers of students were in the streets in defiance of the curfew and the ban on gatherings.

Shortly after the state-run Radio Rangoon announcement, many thousands of people took to the streets of the capital in spontaneous rejection of

the new regime and shouted for others to come out of their homes with weapons — mostly spears, knives and home-made cross-bows.

The protesters felled trees and threw them across the roads to obstruct military traffic.

"I believe the people will rise up again and this time they are going to be angrier. It's going to be tragic," said Burma expert Josef Silverstein when contacted in the United States.

Street protests since July have forced the resignation of two leaders. More recent strikes, demonstrations, looting and lawlessness have paralysed the economy and pushed the nation to near anarchy. Some 300,000 people marched yesterday in Rangoon before the coup announcement at about 4 p.m.

Radio Rangoon broadcast a statement from Saw Maung, who identified himself as chairman of the Peace Restoration Committee. Saw Maung, who has been defence minister since July, is widely regarded as a hardline officer and a right-hand man of toppled president Sein Lwin.

The 59-year-old general toppled civilian President Maung Maung, abolished key government institutions and slapped a curfew on the capital, saying his moves were needed to halt deteriorating conditions in Burma and hold democratic elections.

Maung Maung's fate was not immediately known.

According to Radio Rangoon, others on the committee include the army, navy and air force commanders, eight of Burma's nine regional military commanders, and the widely hated military intelligence chief, Khin Nyunt.

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The initial broadcast, preceded by martial music, said the military had assumed state authority "to curb further deterioration of the general situation in the country."

It said military authorities would "restore law and order, peace and tranquility in the country... and ease the daily livelihood of the people."

"After accomplishing the above objectives, (authorities will) hold general elections under a multi-party system," it said. "Political parties that accept and practice true democracy can prepare for the general elections from now on."

It said the Election Supervision Commission formed by Maung Maung's government would be retained.

Maung Maung, a Western-educated lawyer, on August 19 became the nation's first civilian leader since the 1962 coup that ended democracy in Burma.

Maung Maung bowed to massive street protests and offered general elections under a multiparty system, but demonstrators said they do not trust the party and demanded

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Police join anti-government demonstrators earlier this month in the streets of the Rangoon. Some army personnel also broke ranks and sided with pro-democracy forces but the military announced they had seized control of power yesterday. — AP

## Coup in Burma

an interim administration conduct the polling. The government has given no indication it would agree to this.

The military has been instrumental in carrying out the harsh repression of dissent since 1962, but some elements have opposed the recent suppression of rioting.

On Saturday, Buddhist monks and students disguised 24 soldiers as protesters and got them past a heavily armed, 100,000-strong mob angered over the shooting of demonstrators.

The monks and students later occupied the Ministry of Trade building, which the soldiers

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had been guarding, in what was believed the first government office in the capital seized by protesters.

Late Saturday night, explosions and shots were heard near City Hall, where nearly 100 people were on a hunger strike. Rumours spread that soldiers had fired on demonstrators, and over 100,000 people quickly surrounded the building. The noise actually had come from the Central Bank building 300 metres away where drunken soldiers fired and threw a grenade during a brawl.

## Coup announcement

Rangoon (AP) — Here is the complete text of the announcement yesterday of the military coup led by Armed Forces commander Saw Maung. The Associated Press translated the broadcast over Radio Rangoon.

"To curb further deterioration of the general situation in the country, the tatmadaw (military) has taken over the overall authority of the state to carry out the following:

"To restore law and order, peace and tranquility in the country.

"To provide safe and smooth transportation, and to ease the daily livelihood of the people.

"After accomplishing the above objectives, to hold general elections under a multi-party system.

"For the successful holding of the multi-party general elections, the present elections supervision commission will be retained.

"Political parties that accept and practice true democracy can prepare for the general elections from now on.

"For the successful implementation of the above objectives, organisations, individuals, and the entire public engaged in current activities are requested to cooperate.

"Signed, Gen Saw Maung, chairman, Peace Restoration Committee."