

Rebels to help uprising by *Bp880920* stepping up war

Moreh, India (Reuter) — Burmese guerrillas said yesterday they would back a popular uprising by stepping up their war against Rangoon following a military coup there.

"The army takeover is a threat to the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people and must be fought with all determination," declared the rebels' clandestine radio monitored in this town near the Burmese border.

The radio issued a statement in the name of the National Democratic Front (NDF), an alliance of 10 guerrilla groups, including the Burmese Communist Party which has fought Rangoon for decades.

"The National Democratic Front will step up armed revolutionary activities against the Burmese armed forces to help the Burmese people achieve their objectives," it said.

The rebel broadcast, aired just before witnesses in Rangoon said soldiers opened fire and killed scores of people defying a ban on demonstrations, called on the army to go back to the barracks.

Meanwhile a Burmese

rebel leader says the Rangoon government has inaccurately portrayed his group as drug traffickers and thieves, when the real aim of his movement is to bring about a multi-party system and respect for human rights.

Brang Seng, leader of one of 10 ethnic minority rebel groups united as NDF, said in an interview published on Sunday: "There has been 26 years of determined disinformation ... trying to discredit us as malcontents, thieves and drug smugglers ...

"That's propaganda put out by former leader Ne Win to discredit the truly genuine nationalist aspirations of these people," he told Newsweek International.

"Ours is not an ideological struggle, but a struggle for equality, human dignity and the rights of the people," Brang Seng was quoted as saying.

He added that the NDF's goals do not include secession but the setting up of "a genuine federal union in which all the states will have equal rights and a degree of autonomy in politics, economics and education."

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