

Anarchy in Rangoon as Govt ignores ultimatum

Rangoon (Reuter, UPI) — This city of three million people descended into anarchy yesterday but President Maung Maung defied an opposition ultimatum and held onto power as increasing numbers of troops moved into Burma's capital.

"It looks like we are heading for a confrontation," a Western diplomat said.

The diplomat said troops carrying automatic weapons and rifles were being brought into the capital in civilian pick-up trucks and in army lorries.

The troops moved through streets that just hours before had been filled with marauding crowds of looters and vandals.

The opposition had set last night's news broadcast on Radio Rangoon as a deadline for the resigna-

tion of Maung Maung and his Burma Socialist Programme Party, which has ruled the country for a quarter-century of increasing impoverishment and political repression.

The opposition promised to fill the streets with hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators today to mark the beginning of a nationwide general strike.

The broadcast carried instead a government order prohibiting people

from gathering at the parliament building next Monday, the date set for an emergency congress of the BSPP to decide the country's political future.

"Tomorrow we hope to show the government that we can paralyze the whole governmental machinery if we so wish," opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said after the broadcast.

Maung Zaw, an official of the Peace and Democracy League, which includes senior opposition leaders U Nu, Burma's last democratically elected prime minister, and former Defence Minister General Tin Oo, also spoke to Reuters after the Radio Rangoon broadcast.

"We have to wait and see what will happen tomorrow," Maung Zaw said. "We think the army will stand on our side, with the civilians."

Earlier in the day, the government issued an order to the army to shoot anyone caught ransacking factories or warehouses.

Five looters were killed, six wounded and 88 arrested, Radio Rangoon said.

The worst looting began early yesterday morning, witnesses said, when three river boats loaded with charcoal were boarded by hundreds of men who emptied the boats. About 5,000 gathered on

The crowd then broke into nearby government timber shops, carting away lumber and furniture.

"No one dared to prevent the looting as a good many of the people were armed with knives, pointed iron rods and slingshots," the witness told UPI.

Looters were seen breaking into the Institute of Medicine at Rangoon University and a number of government warehouses in the downtown area.

"The streets are mostly deserted. People are afraid," a Western diplomat said.

"There have been numerous clashes between looters and local citizens' committees trying to preserve order," he said. "We have received reports of killings and beheadings."

Rangoon residents attributed the looting to desperation by poor people unable to pay rising food prices caused by the unrest and the collapsing socialist economy.

There were also persistent reports that army troops initiated most of the looting by taking stores from government warehouses, leaving the doors open and inviting local residents to help themselves to what was left.

"The looting and disturbances may be related to an army plan to create instability as a justification for a coup," one diplomat said.

Barriers that neighborhood protection committees usually erect after dusk were thrown up at noon yesterday in anticipation of increased

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Looters shot dead in Rangoon

olence.

In recent days soldiers have spent their time reinforcing defensive positions around Radio Rangoon, the Defence Ministry, a key railroad bridge, the homes of the ruling elite and small command posts on the outskirts of the city.

Until yesterday's action against looters, the army had stood by passively since August 12 as anti-government protests continued, government control disintegrated and

economic activity came to a halt.

August 12 saw the end of the 18 days in power of Sein Lwin, the chosen successor of long-time ruler General Ne Win who ordered soldiers to fire on demonstrators.

Three thousand died in Rangoon alone, doctors say, but for each who died hundreds more joined the protests.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the 43-year-old Oxford-educated daughter of inde-

pendence hero Aung San, said the government had made "a great mistake" in refusing to listen to the people.

"The situation can't go on for very long and if the government is sensible they should bring it to an end very quickly by forming an interim government acceptable to the people," she said.

Sixteen soldiers held a news conference in the afternoon to call on their army comrades to join the pro-democracy forces.

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