

# Burmese public scoff at government concession

**Rangoon (UPI) —** Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, waving banners and chanting anti-government slogans, marched through the streets of the Burmese capital yesterday in a massive rejection of the latest concessions by the authoritarian regime.

Protesters also denounced a government warning that striking state workers must return to their jobs by September 26 or "action will be taken."

"I would give the same warning to the government," a student leader said through a loud-speaker. "Get out by that date or we will take action," he said.

Interviews with a number of government employees also indicated that the back-to-work warning would go unheeded.

Government radio turned up the tension another notch by announcing that two ethnic Karen rebel sappers had been detected entering the city with explosives and guns. The official radio gave a detailed description of one of the sappers, allegedly a member of the Karen National Union force fighting the central government, and appealed to the demonstrators to help capture them.

"The main objective of our revolution is the immediate overthrow of the Burma Socialist Programme Party government," said a statement issued by the All Burma Student Unions Federation, one of the key groups behind the protests.

The statement rejected a regulation announced on Friday night that ended the practice of ruling party members holding posts in the military, police and civil service.

"Every second longer that this government lasts is another second

said.

The government regulation forbids all government employees to be members of any political party, including the ruling party.

The regulation was aimed at winning opposition acceptance of a government plan to stage multi-party elections itself, rather than allowing

vice have already abandoned the party, and for the top military the formality of resigning from the party won't change how they act," he said.

The 200,000-man military is about the last major institution supporting the ruling party whose leaders consist almost entirely of current or retired military men.

among the cheering, banner-waving crowds.

Some student groups marched to the beat of a drummer, others strode to tape-recorded popular music blared out by loud-speaker vans.

Troops with assault rifles guarding key government offices provided a grim reminder that military repression of the

open fire unless the crowd dispersed.

The protesters angrily refused, the witnesses said, until Min Ko Naing, president of the Students Union Federation and opposition leader Aung Gyi arrived to defuse the situation.

Aung Gyi, a former army brigadier, pacified the crowd, asking them to

*"Like a man who is trying to stick pieces of paper together with his saliva." — Aung Gyi describing President Maung Maung's efforts to keep his government from disintegrating.*

an interim government to hold the polls.

The move technically deprived the party of an estimated 60 per cent of its more than two million members.

Burmese analysts said the change no longer meant much because the party was already disintegrating.

"Lower level party members in the civil ser-

vice have already abandoned the party, and for the top military the formality of resigning from the party won't change how they act," he said.

Students, Buddhist monks, government employees, slaughterhouse workers, river boatmen and Muslim youths were

demonstrations remained a possibility.

On Friday evening a violent confrontation between protesters and troops was only narrowly avoided, witnesses said.

A crowd of 2,000 demonstrators shouted slogans at troops guarding a Defence Ministry building. Eleven trucks full of heavily-armed troops arrived and threatened to

"fight bloodshed."

"We cannot blame these soldiers for the faults of some of their commanders. Soldiers are born of the people. They are the people's army," he said.

Demonstrators have normally been hiding their weapons but at the Defence Ministry a number, including several

monks, were seen wielding an assortment of homemade weapons.

Hundreds of hunger strikers staged all-night vigils in front of City Hall, Rangoon General Hospital and several other hospitals despite a fierce thunderstorm.

On Friday Aung Gyi described President Maung Maung's efforts to keep his government from disintegrating as "like a man who is trying to stick pieces of paper together with his saliva."

Aung Gyi said agreement on establishment of an interim government was nearly within reach. Key questions were government demands for three seats in the interim government and questions about the future of Gen Ne Win.

## BREAKDOWN

Besides a breakdown of law and order, opposition leaders also fear that growing food and fuel shortages could play into the hands of the stubborn government and army leadership.

The US Embassy announced yesterday it would donate US\$500,000 to buy rice for needy Rangoon residents. A press release said the donation would be funneled through religious organisations rather than the government. Other embassies are known to be trying to organise relief work.

The opposition is also trying to collect money and increasingly high-priced rice for distribution.

Most embassies have evacuated dependents of their diplomatic staffs and some non-essential personnel.

The Foreign Ministry in Tokyo said the Japanese Embassy here has urged the remaining 108 Japanese residents in Burma to leave the country due to continued political instability.

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