

Burma regime sets up new military council

Rangoon, Burma (Agencies) — Troops killed at least 60 people in clashes with curfew violaters, protesters and looters before coup leader Gen. Saw Maung formed a new military dominated government yesterday, state-run radio and witnesses said.

Gunfire was again heard in central Rangoon near the US Embassy after nightfall.

Earlier Radio Rangoon said that troops dispersed a crowd of 50 people looting a warehouse 13 km north of downtown Rangoon at 4 a.m., killing eight people.

Sixteen people died when troops tried to stop more than 200 people from looting a warehouse in the Thamaing campus of Rangoon University, it said.

Security forces killed another 16 people looting the Fisheries Department head office in central Rangoon in the early morning, while five people died as troops broke up looting at a biscuit factory in the northern part of the capital, the radio said.

Troops killed another 14 people when a military truck on patrol in east Rangoon was attacked, it

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said.

Witnesses reported one person was shot dead as soldiers halted looting at a market in the city.

Meanwhile, Saw Maung named himself defence chief and foreign affairs minister, the radio said. He previously was defence minister and armed forces commander.

No president or prime minister was named, and there still was no word on the fate of toppled president Maung Maung.

The announcement came a day after street clashes between armed troops and demonstrators who hurled gasoline bombs and used slingshots, sharpened bicycle spokes and iron darts. At least 100 people died in the capital and other cities. Some estimates put the death toll at several hundred.

The demonstrators had taken to the streets after Saw Maung seized power in a military coup on Sunday that ousted Maung Maung, Burma's first civilian leader in 26 years.

One Western ambassador confirmed that a group of schoolgirl demonstrators, aged around 13 to 14, were attacked by troops and a number killed.

"It is so shameful what is happening. I have no words for it," he said.

Rangoon streets were free of demonstrations yesterday for the first time since the protests and strikes that began on August 8 and toppled hard-line president Sein Lwin four days later.

Residents abandoned the streets at the beginning of the 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew imposed by Saw Maung.

Military trucks rolled down the streets in the morning with loudspeakers warning soldiers would shoot anyone building barricades, said a diplomat.

One opposition leader said street protests had been called off to avoid further bloodshed. He said government workers would protest by continuing their strikes past October 3, the government's new deadline for returning to work on threat of dismissal.

Three key opposition leaders issued a statement condemning the bloodshed and telling

people's just demand for democracy."

They demanded talks with Saw Maung "to seek ways to correctly solve the current crisis ..."

The statement was issued by former Brig Gen Aung Gyi, former defence minister Tin Oo and Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's late independence leader.

In the statement, they also rebuffed offers from the country's ethnic insurgents to support the pro-democracy demonstrations, and told authorities to stop spreading rumours that the rebels had infiltrated the demonstrations.

The top Buddhist monk organisation also issued a statement appealing for dialogue between the two

sides.

Maung Maung had ended martial law and withdrew soldiers from the streets in the start of a series of concessions to the protesters. But the opposition demanded an interim government conduct the democratic elections he promised.

Troops returned in force after Sunday's coup by Saw Maung, who said he took over to halt Burma's social chaos and ensure the elections were held.

Rangoon Radio also said that in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, security forces on Monday arrested 53 people and seized a radio transmitter in clearing a protest centre at the Mandalay Institute of Tech-

nology.

Elsewhere in Mandalay, security forces killed five "disturbance makers," and a mob seized arms from a police station, the radio said.

At least three police stations in Rangoon were attacked by mobs on Monday, the radio said yesterday. It said 1,000 people attacked one station with weapons they seized there earlier, killing seven policemen, including two deputy station commanders. The assailants fled carrying the dead and wounded.

Some diplomats suggested that Saw Maung seized power to save the Burma Socialist Programme Party, the target of months of massive street protests.

Burma has been in turmoil since students rioted last September against government economic policies. Security forces killed scores of protesters in March and June, and demonstrations since July have forced the resignations of long-time leader Ne Win and his successor, Sein Lwin, who lasted 17 days.

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