

# Burmese army clears 'centres of revolt'

BURMA's military government said it had cleared centres of revolt in about 100 towns and that troops had killed 54 people since it took power on Sunday but Western diplomats said the death toll was much higher.

One envoy said 300 to 400 people had been shot in the capital alone.

The army-controlled state radio, monitored here, said last night that since the coup "security units undertook measures to enforce peace and tranquility and law and order" in Rangoon and 91 towns in Burma's nine military regions.

The sweeps, mostly carried out from dusk on Sunday to dawn yesterday, ranged from the northernmost railhead at Myit-kyina to Kawthaung on the Andaman Sea on Burma's southern tip.

It did not mention Mandalay,

Burma's second city which has been under the control of Buddhist monks and students since an abortive army attempt to suppress dissent killed thousands of Burmese between August 8 to 12.

Those killings, following a generation of repression and declining living standards, triggered the current revolt.

Sunday's coup ostensibly ended BSPP rule, but diplomats said the same 19 generals who held top BSPP posts make up the new ruling committee for establishment of law and order.

Ne win, the BSPP founder who groomed those officers after he seized power in a 1962 coup, retired as party chief in July but remains supreme leader, according to western diplomats.

Rangoon-based envoys estimated that hundreds of people were killed

in Rangoon since Sunday by troops who fired on large crowds of unarmed demonstrators.

After taking power, the military announced a curfew, banned public gatherings and ordered people to go back to work — an attempt to end the monthlong strike called by press demands for an independent interim government to hold free elections.

In Rangoon people, mostly students, swarmed into the streets in defiance of those edicts. Witnesses said troops opened fire without warning on several occasions in a half-dozen areas in the capital.

By the government's own account, 20 persons were killed outside the Sule Buddhist pagoda in the heart of Rangoon. American diplomats saw two men shot dead in front of their embassy. — Reuter

GA/1988/957/0016