

Burmese government to hold elections in 3 months

RANGOON, Burma — Parliament on Sunday yielded to weeks of massive nationwide protests and approved holding the first multiparty elections since 1960.

The legislature appointed a group of elders to supervise the polling and set a target date for about three months from Saturday, when President Maung Maung announced the ruling Burma Socialist Program Party would relinquish its 26-year monopoly on power.

Despite government concessions, opposition leaders continued to press for an interim government to cope with Burma's growing chaos, and demonstrations continued in the capital.

Maung Maung issued a stern warning to demonstrators, who have taken to the streets by the millions since spring in their fight for democracy.

"People are now fed up with this lawlessness

and are expecting the government to take effective action," Maung Maung said. "I therefore warn those responsible for the lawlessness to cease such activities."

In some areas of Burma, he said, students and Buddhist monks were setting up rival local governments, creating "a grave and dangerous situation for those responsible."

He called on demonstrators to get back to work and on civil servants to reactivate the stalled machinery of government. In addition, he attacked the recent formation of a rival government by former Prime Minister U Nu.

Maung Maung called Sunday's decision "a milestone in Burmese history."

"It will be evident in 20 years' time whether the decision was correct or not," he told the 489-member Parliament.

While authorizing elections in about three months, Parliament also held out the possibility

that they could be postponed or held as early as November.

Parliament empowered the Council of State, the highest government organ, to change the Constitution to permit a multiparty system, enlarge the elections commission if necessary and formulate election rules.

Named to the Elections Supervision Commission were three retired civil servants, a retired army brigadier general and a former member of Parliament. The men, all over 70, are generally regarded as neutral, although not especially prominent. At least four are not members of the ruling party.

The Parliament session was held under tight security, and delegates slept in the building Saturday night. The area was cordoned off with barbed-wire fences and road blocks manned by troops.

The multiparty elections would be the first in Burma since Feb. 6, 1960, when U Nu's

Clean Anti-Facist People's Freedom League won a massive victory over an army-backed party. U Nu was overthrown by the military on March 2, 1962. The coup, led by Gen. Ne Win, ushered in rigid one-party rule.

Maung Maung urged Burma's 22 million voters to "use their potent weapon — the vote — to choose the right representatives."

The Western-trained lawyer and author, the country's first civilian leader in 26 years, said he would not run in the elections and the powerful military "will not lobby for any party in the general elections."

A Western diplomat in Rangoon said the Burmese people were highly skeptical of the recent government moves.

"They don't trust the government to keep this promise" of elections, said the diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "They perceive it as another trick."



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Snow gives break to firefighters

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. — Snow dusted parts of Yellowstone National Park on Sunday, giving firefighters a break in their battle against forest fires, and employees evacuated from park headquarters began returning.

Federal officials said they would double the number of soldiers sent to battle the fires that have charred nearly half the 2.2 million-acre park.

After months of drought and heat, temperatures were expected to reach only the mid-50s Sunday with humidity as high as 90 percent. Some sections of the park were dampened by light showers Saturday.

Winds were expected to stay in a more manageable range of 15 to 30 mph, well below the gusts above 50 mph that had driven the flames the previous two days.

Fires have charred more than 900,000 acres of Yellowstone since June in what firefighters call the worst fire season in the West in 30 years.

Smoke has drifted as far east as Pennsylvania and New York, the National Weather Service said Sunday.

"A couple days ago most of the smoke was over the Midwest and it has now gradually drifted eastward," said Brian Smith of the Severe Storms Center in Kansas City, Mo. "It's just going to have a thin hazy appearance and might create some colorful sunsets, but it's not expected to present any health problems because it's so far up."

In Colorado, residents of mountain neighborhoods in Boulder Canyon were evacuated Saturday when 60 mph gusts pushed a fire across fire lines on three sides, doubling the blaze to nearly 1,500 acres. The fire moved about 7 mph.

Crews near Wenatchee, Wash., completed firebreaks around about 90 percent of a 47,000-acre fire, although containment was at least three days away.

A 229,400-acre fire in Yellowstone remained about a mile from park headquarters at Mammoth

Hot Springs, said spokeswoman Marty Tobias. That fire has threatened West Yellowstone, Mont., and destroyed several buildings at Old Faithful geyser.

Park officials Saturday ordered all families and nonessential employees to leave Mammoth, near the park's north entrance. But they were allowed back after conditions improved. Tobias did not know how many people decided to return.

A mile from headquarters, firefighters sprayed protective foam Sunday on buildings at the Young Adult Conservation Corps camp, where fire destroyed a tent.

"Basically with this cold front that's moved in it's going to put us kind of in a holding pattern. We'll see how it goes from there," Tobias said. "Let's just drop this wind and we'll be in business."

However, Brian Morris, a Forest Service spokesman in West Yellowstone, said: "It's not going to be with us too long. We expect warmer weather and a drying trend this week."

More Americans are buying books, visiting museums

WASHINGTON — A growing number of Americans are buying books, visiting museums and joining cultural groups, but enrollment in college humanities courses has fallen drastically in the past 20 years, a government report said Sunday.

The report by Lynne V. Cheney, chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, describes a "remarkable blossoming" of public interest in history, literature and the other humanities, and says television actually is boosting purchases of books.

Americans who spent twice as much on sports events as on cultural endeavors 20 years ago are now spending more on culture — \$3.4 billion compared with \$3.1 billion for

sports in 1986, the report said.

The endowment, an independent federal agency, said the bad news is found at colleges and universities, where preparation for a money-making vocation has overtaken interest in getting a well-rounded liberal arts education.

While the number of bachelor's degrees awarded increased 88 percent in the past two decades, degrees in the humanities dropped 33 percent, it said. Foreign language majors were down 29 percent, English majors 33 percent, philosophy majors 35 percent and history majors 43 percent, it says.

Mrs. Cheney said too many colleges are neglecting the achieve-

ments of Western culture while requiring ethnic courses, treating literature masterpieces as political documents, stressing publishing rather than teaching, and dealing in topics so specialized that they have little meaning outside the academic world.

The 73-page report ordered by Congress on the state of American culture said the country's museums, libraries, educational TV stations, state humanities councils and private historical societies provide so much education that they have become "a kind of parallel school," reaching millions of people outside college campuses.

"The remarkable blossoming of the humanities in the public sphere is one of the least noted, though most

important, cultural developments of the last few decades," wrote Mrs. Cheney.

The \$140 million endowment she has headed since May 1986 provides grants to scholars, colleges, museums, libraries and other institutions to promote the humanities.

Citing a variety of sources, the report gives several examples of increased public interest in the humanities, including a doubling of the number of historical organizations in 20 years to nearly 10,000, brisk sales of cultural books and a 660 percent increase in visitors to the National Gallery of Art in Washington since 1957.

In assessing the academic ap-

proach to the humanities, the report says: "Viewing humanities texts as though they were primarily political documents is the most noticeable trend in academic study of the humanities today. Truth and beauty and excellence are regarded as irrelevant; questions of intellectual aesthetic quality, dismissed."

The report says Western tradition is rich and creative, but many colleges are abandoning courses that teach it.

It says a course in great Western literature is under attack at Columbia University in New York. The report said Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and the University of Wisconsin at Madison require ethnic or Third World courses but have no Western civilization requirements.

Disease threatens thousands

DHAKA, Bangladesh — Flood waters began to recede Sunday, and the government said it has received \$236 million in aid to fight the destruction and disease caused by the worst floods in memory.

Thousands of lives were threatened by diarrhea caused by drinking water contaminated with sewage and garbage washed up by raging flood waters, health officials said.

More than 200,000 people have contracted the disease and at least 123 have died from it, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

As river levels began to fall after

two weeks of flooding, many residents returned to their homes, said officials at the Flood Control Center. They said they expect the water level to drop quickly starting Monday.

The floods covered three-quarters of the nation and 53 of the country's 64 districts, with a population of 30 million, said Information Minister Mahbubur Rahman.

He said 866 people have died of drowning, snakebites and disease. The government figure is considered low, and newspapers estimate at least 1,532 people died.

"The world has responded promptly and generously to our appeal for help to the flood vic-

tims," Rahman told reporters.

He said the United States pledged \$150 million in aid on Saturday, in addition to \$2.6 million committed earlier. More funds and relief supplies have arrived from Japan, the Soviet Union, the European Economic Community, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, among others, he said.

The Soviet Union has offered 100 tents, 1,000 blankets and 100 tons of medicine, he said.

Rahman estimated the damage from flooding would exceed \$1.4 billion and that 6,000 to 10,000 tons of grains stored in warehouses were damaged or destroyed by water.

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