

Troops arrest Burundi president in coup

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NAIROBI, Oct 21 (AFP) - Tutsi troops backed by tanks arrested Burundi's President Melchior Ndadaye on Thursday in a coup against the first head of state from the majority Hutu people, the radio of neighbouring Rwanda reported.

The soldiers, led by the newly appointed chief of general staff, Colonel Jean Bikomagu, and loyal to former military ruler Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, also detained several cabinet ministers and shut down Burundi's state radio, the Burundian ambassador to Kenya said here.

Fighting raged in Bujumbura in the morning between forces loyal to Ndadaye, who was elected in June, and the putschists, Ambassador Joseph Bangurambona said.

Residents of Bujumbura, the capital of the small central African nation, were "organising resistance" to the putschists, according to Radio Ki-

gali, monitored here.

Telephone links between Bujumbura and Nairobi were cut.

The coup began with an attack on the president's residence by four tanks of the 11th Armoured Division and about 100 paratroopers at around 2:00 a.m. (0000 GMT), Radio Kigali reported.

Soldiers arrested parliamentary speaker Pontien Karibami and the foreign and labour ministers, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and Julie Nguriye, the radio said.

Alongside Bagaza, who ruled from 1976 to 1987 and returned from exile in July, the radio said former foreign minister Cyprien Mbonimpa was also involved in the coup.

Mbonimpa was freed from prison last July 17, after being detained since 1991 for another coup attempt.

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