
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 30

ALL MON REGIONS DEMOCRACY PARTY ROLLS OUT PLATFORM

The All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMRDP) was formed on 7 April. The group is made up of 15 mostly ethnic Mon members from all over Burma. The Union Election Commission (UEC) officially allowed them to form a political party on 24 May. Under UEC electoral laws, the AMRDP is the only Mon political group legally taking part in the elections. Other Mon political groups have declined to participate in protest against the junta's controversial 2008 constitution. Party leader Nai Ngwe Thein, 71, is a retired assistant education officer for Mon State who hails from Htone Eine village in Karen State. He has also held the post of education officer for Pegu Division and Kachin State and director of the Upper Burma Basic Education Department. The party includes veterinary surgeon Dr Nai Hla Aung and other retired government officers from the education, health and law departments. According to Nai Ngwe Thein, AMRDP policies are based on gaining democratic rights, establishing ethnic unity, ridding government of corruption and bribery and working towards social development and world social order as priorities. The party aims to bring change to the present economic system while promoting free trade as its priority and will work to increase foreign investment and the development of production through modern technology by promoting industry. Being the sole Mon party contesting the polls, the party has had little difficulty gaining the minimum party membership of 1,000 members. Party members have paid visits to Yay, Thanphyu Zayat, Moulmein and Mudon Townships to garner support from local residents. The AMRDP plans to campaign mostly in the 10 townships in Mon State, but said that it would also contest in two townships in Karen State, one in Tanintharyi Division and one in Pegu Division to total 14 townships. At the same time, the party aims to contest in all three legislative bodies namely the People's Parliament, the National Parliament and the States/Regions Assembly and the party will be represented by at least four candidates in each of the townships.¹

KAMAN PARTY TO REMOVE MONOGRAM FROM FLAG AFTER OPPOSITION

The Kaman National Progressive Party (Kaman NPP), which was recently granted permission to form by the Election Commission, will remove its monogram from the party flag after some Arakanese politicians expressed opposition to it. A party spokesperson said, "We have decided to remove the monogram from our flag because the monogram represents the state of Arakan, not the party. We realized we should not use the monogram of Arakan State for an individual party. We are now preparing to make another flag with a new design." The Election Commission had announced in military government-run newspapers on 16 June that the public had a week to voice opposition to the flag and seal of the Kaman NPP. Some politicians filed their opposition to the party's use of the Arakan State monogram on the party flag. The Kaman NPP was formed by a few Kaman leaders in Rangoon with the aim of promoting the development of Arakan and the Kaman people. The Kaman is an ethnic nationality living in Arakan State and they primarily practice Islam. In the 1990 elections, a Kaman party won a parliamentary seat in the Sittwe constituency, but later the authorities disqualified the party after a Rakhine candidate who had lost challenged their victory with accusations of election fraud.²

¹ All Mon Regions Democracy party rolls out platform - <http://www.mizzima.com/news/election-2010/4075-all-mon-regions-democracy-party-rolls-out-platform.html> (Mizzima) 1 July 2010

² Kaman party to remove monogram from flag after opposition - <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=2653> (Narinjara) 28 June 2010.

KACHIN ETHNIC MEMBERS IN USDP MADE TO FLOAT NEW PARTY BY JUNTA

Kachin members belonging to the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have been pressurized by the Burmese military junta to form a new political party to contest the elections. Last week, Kachin USDP members in Myitkyina, the capital of Burma's Kachin State, were advised to leave the party and form a new political party. The proposal was made by Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, Minister of Post, Communication and Telegraphs, and U Aung Thaung, Minister of Industry-1 – both are senior members within the USDP party. The Kachin State Unity and Democracy Party (KSUDP) was formed last week by Duwa Hkyet Hting Nan, the USDP's chief public organizer for the elections in the region. The KSUDP is the fourth Kachin party in the country to join the election fray. However, none of the other Kachin parties have been approved by the Union Election Commission. These three Kachin parties – Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), a party formed by former NDA-K General Secretary Layawk Ze Lum and the Northern Shan State Progressive Party (NSSPP) – are still awaiting a decision from the UEC.³

SHORT COURSE ON ELECTION PROCESS FOR SAGAING DIVISION SUB-COMMISSION

A short course on the electoral process for Sagaing Division Election Sub-commission and township election sub-commissions was held on 18 June at the Sagaing People's Hospital, with an address by the Chairman of the District Election Sub-commission U Kyi Tun. Members of the District Election Sub-commission explained the Hluttaw election law and work guidelines for election sub-commission, work guidelines for returning officers, deputy returning officers and members of polling booths and essentials for members of sub-commissions. The course was attended by members of district election sub-commission and election sub-commissions from Sagaing, Myinmu and Myaung townships.⁴

USDA MEMBERS CHOSEN TO SERVE AS WARD AND VILLAGE-TRACT ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION OFFICIALS

In the selection process in appointing members to serve on the ward and village-tract election sub-commissions, priority has been given to members the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). According to Ward Peace and Development Council (WPDC) officials, together with the USDA, members of the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) have also been picked to serve as members of the ward and village-tract election sub-commissions. According to a MMCWA member in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon, of the 21 commission member recently selected for her ward - 5 are from the MMCWA, 9 from the USDA, 2 from the MNCWA and 5 are independent individuals. Such selection methods have drawn strong criticism, since those nominated are members of organizations closely linked to the military junta and the USDP. Members of the USDP who are over the age of 30 will most likely be chosen to serve in the election sub-commission as well as polling station officers, while those under 30 will be recruited as USDP members, said a party member of the USDP from Tarmway Township.⁵

³ Kachin ethnics in USDP made to float a new party by junta - <http://www.kachinnews.com/News/Kachin-ethnics-in-USDP-made-to-float-new-party-by-junta.html> (Kachin News) 28 June 2010.

⁴ Short course on election process opened for Sagaing Division sub-commission - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 June 2010.

⁵ USDA Members Favored for Election Sub-Commissions - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18851 (Irrawaddy) 1 July 2010.

ANALYSIS

The newly created Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State (UDPKS) was formed through the initiative of senior leaders of the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Many observers believe the party will serve as proxy party for the USDP in the Kachin State. The USDP may be hoping that the UDPKS' local ethnic image will please Kachins and gain the support of local residents. Thus many are left pondering the fate of the three Kachin parties namely the Kachin State Progressive Party, Northern Shan State Progressive Party and United Democracy Party (Kachin State) that are still awaiting approval by the UEC.

Most observers believe that the delay is due to the continued refusal by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) to accept the regime's demand to transform itself into a Border Guard Force controlled by the Burma Army. Although no official response has been given by the UEC, many believe that the two are indirectly linked and the key to the approval of the registration of the Kachin parties lies very much in the hands of the KIO.

Duwa Hkyet Hting Nan, the UDPKS leader, is a former member of the junta-backed USDP as well as an executive committee member of the Kachin Cultural Office in Myitkyina. Thus, it is clear that the SPDC is using the UEC to dictate the outcome of the elections. Since the KSUDP was formed by the junta as an alternative to the other 'nationalist' Kachin parties, it is most probable that its registration will proceed smoothly.

Since the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMRDP) is the only Mon party to have registered to date, it may be quite successful in gaining the support and votes of Mon nationals.

The recent selection of members from the junta supported USDA to serve as officials on the Ward and Village-tract election sub-commissions is a clear indication that only those loyal enough to serve and promote the interest of the regime will be accepted and entrusted with such responsibilities. The inclusion of members from Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) to serve along with USDA members on Ward, Village-tract election sub-commission further cements the fact that the military will dictate the terms and conditions of the electoral process as well as the elections. This means that the process will be by no means fair.