
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 22

NLD MEMBERS FORM NEW PARTY

Prominent members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) have decided to form a new party to contest the elections. It will be called the National Democratic Front (NDF) and is being founded by members who strongly voiced their disapproval of the NLD's decision to boycott the elections. Members include Dr. Than Nyein, Dr. Win Naing, U Sein Hla Oo and U Thein Nyunt who all served as active members of the now disbanded NLD. The newly formed party will consist of a 20-member Central Committee with Khin Maung Swe serving as advisor. The party has yet to register with the Election Commission and it is expected that other members of the NLD will become members of the NDF. The NDF and many of its leaders have reiterated that they are not opposing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. However, they feel that it is important for them to continue their political activities even though the NLD has deemed the electoral process to be "unjust and unfair."¹

APPLICATIONS TO SET UP POLITICAL PARTIES REACHES THIRTY ONE

The most recent parties which have submitted applications to the Union Election Commission are as follows:

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| (1) All Mon Region Democracy Party | – Registered on 30 April 2010 |
| (2) Democracy and Peace Party | – Registered on 3 May 2010 |
| (3) Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP) | – Registered on 6 May 2010 |
| (4) Rakhine Nationals Progressive Party | – Registered on 3 May 2010 |
| (5) United Democracy Party (Kachin State) | – Registered on 30 April 2010 |
| (6) Union Democratic Party (UDP) | – Registered on 3 May 2010 |

Among the groups that have submitted applications, the Union Election Commission has passed and approved the following parties:

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| (1) All Mon Region Democracy Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (2) Chin National Party | – Approved on 3 May 2010 |
| (3) Chin Progressive Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (4) Democracy and Peace Party | – Approved on 6 May 2010 |
| (5) Inn National Development Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (6) Kayan National Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (7) National Democratic Party for Development | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (8) Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (9) Rakhine Nationalities Development Party | – Approved on 6 May 2010 |
| (10) Rakhine State National Force of Myanmar | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (11) Shan Nationals Democratic Party | – Approved on 3 May 2010 |
| (12) Union Democratic Party (UDP) | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (13) Union Solidarity and Development Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |
| (14) United Democratic Party (Kachin State) | – Approved on 6 May 2010 |
| (15) Wa National Unity Party | – Approved on 4 May 2010 |

So far, a total of 27 groups out of 31 that have submitted applications to set up political parties have been approved and passed by the Union Election Commission.²

¹ NLD members to form new party - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18403 (Irrawaddy) 6 May 2010.

² Compiled from the following articles: Applications to form political parties, for continued existence as political party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-01.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 1 May 2010 / Applications to set up political parties scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-04.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 4 May 2010 / Applications to

FORMATION OF TOWNSHIP SUB-COMMISSIONS AND DUTIES ASSIGNED

The Union Election Commission has issued notifications on the formation of township sub-commissions and duty assignments dated 6 May 2010. Eighteen township sub-commissions in Kachin State under notification No.27/2010, seven in Kayah State under notification No.28/2010, seven in Kayin State under notification No.29/2010, nine in Chin State under notification No.30/2010, 37 in Sagaing Division under notification No.31/2010, 10 in Taninthayi Division under notification No.32/2010, 28 in Bago Division under notification No.33/2010, 25 in Magway Division under notification No.34/2010, 31 in Mandalay Division under notification No.35/2010, 10 in Mon State under notification No.36/2010, 17 in Rakhine State under notification No.37/2010, 45 in Yangon Division under notification No. 38/2010, 50 in Shan State under notification No.39/2010 and 26 in Ayeyawady Division under notification No.40/2010 were formed and assigned duties. The offices of the township sub-commissions will open at their respective Township General Administration Department Offices.³

NDF PARTY TO ALLY WITH PRO-DEMOCRACY, ETHNIC GROUPS

“Our unfinished duty is to bring peace, democracy and development to the people of Burma and for this cause we will work together with other political parties including ethnic parties,” said Than Nyein, a former NLD leader and leader of the newly created National Democratic Front (NDF). He went on to add that the NDF would not rush into political alliances and that his party would avoid contesting in ethnic areas to preserve the rights of ethnic political parties to manage their own affairs.⁴

USDP STEPS UP ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN KACHIN STATE

The newly formed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) after its recent name change and transformation from the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) has begun entrusting Secretaries and Central Executive Committee (CEC) members of township USDA organisations in the Kachin State to carry out party organisational activities and election campaigns. According to a local resident, hard-core USDA members from Moe-nyin and Myitkyina districts in Kachin State have been given training on party organisational matters as well as lobbying and campaign tactics. At present the activities are being conducted in the various USDA township premises especially those located along the Myitkyina-Moe-gaung-Moe-nyin rail-track viewed to be a key and strategic area within Kachin State. Likely candidates tipped to run in Kachin state for the USDP include Thein Zaw (Minister for Posts, Telegraphs and Communications), Phone Swe (Deputy Minister for Home Affairs), San Pyei (Director, General of Border Trade Directorate), and Nyunt Aung (Director-General of Ministry of Industry (1)). Furthermore, nominations and selection of party members and executive committee members of the USDP party throughout the country is now underway and all State/Regional, District and Township Peace and Development Council level offices have been tasked to assist with the on-going process.⁵

set up political parties scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-05.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 5 May 2010 / Application to set up political parties scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-07.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 7 May 2010.

³ Notifications on formation of townships sub-commissions, duty assignments issued - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-07.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 7 May 2010.

⁴ NDF party to ally with pro-democracy, ethnic groups - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18420 (Irrawaddy) 7 May 2010.

⁵ USDA elevates election campaigning in Kachin state - <http://www.khitpyaing.org/news/May2010/7510f.php> (Khitpyaing) 7 May 2010.

USDP PREPARES TO COLLECT MEMBERSHIP FEES

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) will shortly start to compile lists of members and begin to collect party membership fees to provide for much needed campaign funds. Under the electoral laws, political parties are prohibited from taking assistance and financial support from the government. According to a USDP official, Rangoon, with an estimated population of 6.5 million, has 3.5 million USDA members. Thought to be the organization with the largest membership, the party plans to launch its fund raising campaign but has yet to determine the amount. Since its inception the USDA has been seen as a junta-backed social organization, and thus to eliminate all doubts or suspicion of the party's involvement with the regime, the decision was made to collect membership fees, said an official from Tarmway USDA.⁶

CHIN STATE USDP PROVIDED FUNDS TO BUILD PARTY OFFICE

USDP officials in Falam Township have been provided an estimated Kyat 1000 lakhs to build a new party office by the military regime. According to Ngun Lal, who is an USDP party nominee for Falam Township, "military authorities in Naypyitaw sanctioned the project and have entrusted Kawl Luai, Chairman of the USDP Falam Township, to carry out the project." The present USDP office in Falam is located in a private rented house, but after the organization converted to a political party, authorities immediately began constructing a new building in the heart of the Falam town.⁷

NOMINATION OF OFFICIALS TO SERVE ON ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION

Local authorities in Muse, Northern Shan State have been busy compiling the names of candidates who will serve as members of the Muse Election Sub-Commission in the upcoming elections. The eleven candidates nominated so far to serve on the Election Sub-Commission have been selected from Muse, Namkham and Khutkaing, Kyukok (Pangsai), Mongpaw, Mangho (Manghiro) and Tarmony Townships. According to the set-up of the election sub-commissions, Muse Township will be represented by four members, with the remaining townships represented by one official from each township. Two other remaining candidates, one from Seilant village in Muse Township and the other from Naung-taung village in Kyukok (Pangsai), will also be included in the Muse Election Sub-Commission. According to local residents, those who have been initially drafted to serve on the Muse Sub-Commission are thought to be non-locals - a move seen to be a way for the authorities to assert control and influence on the members of the sub-commission.⁸

ANALYSIS

After the 6 May deadline, the number of parties including newly established and re-registered parties has risen to 31. While the registration of new parties and election organisation continues day by day, the all important election date still remains a mystery.

The decision by the NLD not to re-register has put an end to its legal status. However, the news that some prominent members of the NLD led by Khin Maung Swe are planning to create a new party to be called the National Democratic Force (NDF) will be welcomed by many in the opposition parties, since the current election scene has been dominated by the regime-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and its ally, the National Unity Party (NUP). In his initial statement, Dr. Than Nyein, head of the new NDF party, stated that the party would explore the possibilities of forming alliances with other pro-democracy parties as well as ethnic parties. Should this become a

⁶ USDA prepares to collect membership fees - <http://www.khitpyaing.org/news/May2010/7510d.php> (Khitpyaing) 7 May 2010.

⁷ Chin State USDP provided funds to build party office - <http://www.khonumthung.org/news.php?readmore=204> (Khonumthung) 7 May 2010.

⁸ Nomination of officials to serve on Election sub-commission - <http://www.mongloi.org/burmese/2008-08-01-03-22-02/85-2008-08-01-03-14-40/836-2010-05-07-12-34-06> (Shan State Herald) 7 May 2010.

reality, it could serve to strengthen the opposition. With the NLD removed from the political scene, the USDA or USDP will surge ahead.

A worrying trend is the total disregard the USDP and the SPDC have for their own constitution and election laws. First, the constitution prohibits civil servants from being members of political parties, but the USDP was formed by the serving Prime Minister and members of his cabinet. While ministers in other systems could argue that they are not civil servants, this is not the case in the Burmese system. All ministers are civil servants in one way or the other. They are not elected politicians. Next, while the Rangoon USDP members are trying to collect membership fees to show their independence from the government, the military hierarchy in Naypyidaw sanctioned \$100,000 to build the new USDP Chin State headquarters in Falam. More seriously, State/Regional, District and Township level Peace and Development Councils across the country have been tasked to assist the USDP and the on-going electoral process. This does not bode well for the independence of the various Election Commissions and Sub-Commissions.