
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 44

SIX PARTIES FORM PRO-DEMOCRACY ALLIANCE

Six Burmese political parties have joined in alliance to increase the chances of their pro-democracy candidates being elected in the November 7 elections. The six political parties are:

1. the Chin National Party,
2. the League for Democracy and Peace,
3. the National Democratic Front (NDF),
4. the Rakhine Nationals Development Party,
5. the Shan Nationals Democratic Party (SNDP), and
6. the Union Democratic Party (UDP).

According to the NDF party leader Khin Maung Swe, "We joined in alliance because we want to show to the people that we are strong, and we'll fight for democracy in the election and in the parliament after the election." The SNDP secretary Sai Hla Kaw said, "We will all benefit from the alliance in terms of more human and financial resources."

The six parties will field:

- 68 candidates in the Upper House (Amyotha Hluttaw),
- 176 candidates in the Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw) and
- 152 candidates in Regional and State Houses.

Party leaders also agreed to work together for democracy and equal rights, the rule of law, and for a system of checks and balances in the political process.

Furthermore, the leaders said they would try to align with other democratic groups in parliament after the elections and urged people not to boycott the election and to vote. "Many people are not interested in the election because they do not like the 2008 Constitution and some people think that the opposition is too weak to fight for democracy because the National League for Democracy (NLD) is not taking part in this election," said Thein Htay, the UDP party chairman. In the absence of the main opposition party, the NLD, many observers expect that junta's proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) to win a landslide victory. However, as Khin Maung Swe also added, "The people know who they should vote for. It is too early to say the USDP is going to win."¹

PA-O PARTY AIMS TO CONTEST IN SELF-ADMINISTERED REGION AND TOWNSHIPS

Party Chairman U Khun San Lwin of the Taunggyi-based Pa-O National Organisation (PNO), which has been involved in promoting regional infrastructural development projects since 1996, claimed that they will be able to garner support of the local residents in the upcoming elections. Since the cease-fire agreement signed between the junta and the PNO in 1991, the group has been engaged in implementing regional development projects to promote the interests of the local residents and consequently gained the trust and support of the Pa-O nationals living there. The party has nominated candidates to run in Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung Townships, which encompasses the Pa-O Self-Administered Region. In total the PNO has submitted the names of 10 candidates, to represent the party in the elections; with 1 candidate for the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), 1 candidate each for the three townships of Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung Townships in the Pyithu

¹ Six parties Form Pro-democracy Alliance - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19635 (Irrawaddy) 5 October 2010

Hluttaw (Lower House), as well as 2 candidates each for the three townships in the Pa-O Self-Administered Region elections.²

PARLIAMENT (HLUTTAW) TO BE STAFFED WITH MILITARY PERSONNEL

According to sources within Nay Pyi Taw Regional Command, preparations are now underway to recruit and appoint military personnel to serve in three Parliaments (Hluttaws) after the elections. Those appointed will be required to have 5 years of military service as well as to have served in the Offices of (Tat-yin-hmu) Battalion Commanders. Likely candidates will be chosen from the ranks of Ayar-khan-bo (Warrant-Officer), Du-ayar-khan-bo (Regimental Sergeant Major), Tat-kyat-kyee (Sergeant), though it still remains unclear whether the would-be appointees will remain in uniform or be transferred to the various parliaments as civilians. An officer from the No. 99 Regimental Battalion went on to add that instructions had been given to recruit loyal personnel and those selected would be given training courses in October prior to the 7 November election date.³

ELECTORAL PROCESS COURSES OPEN IN LASHIO

On 2 October, an electoral process course for members of ward and village sub-commissions and polling station officials was organized by the Lashio Township Sub-commission of Lashio District, Shan State (North). Township Sub-Commission Chairman U Sai Zaw Min and other responsible persons briefed those present on the activities relating to the electoral process. A similar course was opened at No. 6 Basic Education High School (BEHS) in Lashio the following day and included 80.⁴

COORDINATION MEETING ON ELECTORAL PROCESS HELD IN MYEIK

On 4 October, Union Election Commission member U Aung Myint held discussions with members of Taninthayi Region Election Sub-commission and township, ward and village election sub-commissions and polling station officers in Myeik District at Pearl Yadana Hall in Myeik. U Aung Myint made a speech and Taninthayi Region Sub-commission Chairman U Tin Aung Win gave a progress report on preparations for the elections. The Secretary of Taninthayi Region Sub-commission explained other important points, and there was an opportunity for a question and answer session with the representative from the UEC.⁵

VOTING PROCESS DEMONSTRATION STAGED IN THATON TOWNSHIP

Union Election Commission Member U Nyunt Tin visited Thaton District sub-commission members on 4 October and gave a demonstration of the voting process and explained the procedures on casting votes to responsible persons. Would-be candidates and servicemen of units and regiments in Thaton Township together with village sub-commission chairmen and members, and local people were also present at the demonstration session.⁶

² Pa-O party aims to contest in their own self-administered region and townships - <http://www.myanmar.mmtimes.com/2010/news/486/news06.html> (Myanmar Times) 4 October 2010

³ Parliament (Hluttaw) to be staffed by military personnel - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/bur/index.php/news/1-news/4206-2010-10-04-06-56-25> (Irrawaddy) 4 October 2010

⁴ Electoral process courses open in Lashio - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 October 2010

⁵ Coord meeting for electoral process held in Myeik - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-07-op.pdf> (NLM) 7 October 2010

⁶ Voting process demonstrations staged in Thaton Tsp - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-08-op.pdf> (NLM) 8 October 2010

UEC CHAIRMAN MEETS MEMBERS OF DISTRICT/TOWNSHIP ELECTION SUB-COMMISSIONS

Union Election Commission Chairman U Thein Soe and members met with members of Sub-commissions of different levels in Yangon Region at the National Theatre on Myoma Kyaung Road in Dagon Township on the morning of 1 October. Also present at the meeting were UEC members Dr Tin Aung Aye, Dr. Daw Myint Kyi and Daw Khin Hla Myint, Chairman of Yangon Region Sub-Commission U Ko Ko, chairmen of District/Township Sub-commissions and members and officials concerned. On the occasion, UEC Chairman U Thein Soe delivered the opening speech and heard reports by the chairmen of the various sub-commissions of Yangon District on electoral work being carried out. The Chairman and UEC members together with the Chairmen of Yangon Region Election Sub-commission and the District/Township Sub-commissions viewed a demonstration on casting votes at polling station No. 1, 2 and 3 in Ward 3 of Latha Township in Yangon West District ⁷

UEC MEMBER MEETS PYAY DISTRICT/TOWNSHIP SUB-COMMISSION MEMBERS

UEC Member Dr. Daw Myint Kyi together with Bago Region Election Sub-commission Chairman U Myint Aung and other members attended a demonstration session on the voting process at No. 1 Polling Station in Hsandaw Ward, Pyay Township on 5 October. UEC member Dr. Daw Myint Kyi also met with Pyay District Sub-commission Chairman U Moe Swe and members, and township sub-commission chairmen and members at the office of Bago Region (West) Peace and Development Council. The district/township sub-commission chairmen and Bago Region sub-commission chairman reported on arrangements for the electoral process.⁸

UEC MEMBER U SAW BA HLAING MEETS SUB-COMMISSIONS IN KAYIN STATE

Union Election Commission member U Saw Ba Hlaing met members of the election sub-commissions in Kayin State at the meeting hall of the Kayin State Peace and Development Council in Hpa-an on 2 October. The UEC member explained the procedures of the commission and chairmen of sub-commissions submitted progress reports on preparations for the elections. Kayin State Election Sub-commission Secretary U Thein Zaw also submitted a supplementary report. The meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by UEC representative U Saw Ba Hlaing, who also inspected the lists of eligible voters at polling booths in Hpa-an.⁹

ANALYSIS

While the UEC chairman and members continue to conduct their nation-wide tour to brief and implement electoral process courses and coordination meetings, in the past week a pro-democracy alliance of six prominent opposition parties has also been created. The alliance will certainly not be welcomed by the junta. It is possible that some of the remaining opposition parties may join the alliance in the coming weeks. Should that happen, it will certainly create an interesting state of play in the upcoming elections and could perhaps serve to bring much needed cohesion amongst the opposition to rival the one-sided junta-dominated political scene. Some observers believe that such a united opposition may serve as a check and balance to the military in the future legislature.

⁷ UEC chairman meets members of District/Township Election Subcommissions - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 October 2010

⁸ UEC member meets Pyay district/township subcommission members - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-08-op.pdf> (NLM) 8 October 2010

⁹ UEC member U Saw Ba Hlaing meets subcommissions in Kayin state - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-10-08-op.pdf> (NLM) 8 October 2010