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## ELECTION MONITOR NO. 40

### SHAN STATE, PA-O SELF-ADMINISTERED ZONE ELECTORAL SUB-COMMISSIONS MEET

A meeting between the Shan State Electoral Sub-commission and the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone Sub-commission was held at the meeting hall of Hopong Township Sub-commission on 27 August. The chairman of Shan State Sub-commission, U Pwint, addressed the meeting and sub-commission members. Township Law Officer, U Maung Maung, and Deputy Director of the Information and Public Relations Department, Daw May Ni, explained the election laws, rules and the electoral process. U Thet Tun, the chairman of Pa-O Self-Administered Zone Sub-commission, discussed the electoral work this is to be jointly carried out by the Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung Townships. U Than Win, the chairman of Hopong Township Sub-commission, also discussed conducting electoral training courses and issues related to the preparation of sites to be designated as polling stations with sub-commission members.<sup>1</sup>

### ELECTORAL PROCESS COURSES OPENED IN MAUBIN TOWNSHIP

On 2 September, a training course on the electoral process organized by the Maubin Township Election Sub-commission in Maubin District, Ayeyawady Region for returning officers, deputy returning officers and members of polling stations was opened at the Aungheit village-tract. Those present included Members of Maubin District Sub-commission Daw Ngwe Khin and U Myo Myint as well as trainees. Township election sub-commission members U Thaung Nyunt, U Htein Lin and U Myint Soe briefed those present on electoral laws and by-laws and gave lectures on the electoral process for returning officers and deputy returning officers. After a demonstration of how voting will be organised at polling stations, officials answered questions posed by the participants. Similar courses will take place at 11 designated places in 12 Wards and 76 village-tracts of Maubin Township during the period of 2 to 15 September.<sup>2</sup>

### ELECTORAL PROCESS DEMONSTRATED IN TAMU

On 6 September, the Tamu Township Election Sub-commission of Sagaing Region conducted a training course for returning officers, deputy returning officers and polling stations members, along with an electoral demonstration at Setyaung Balu Hall in Tamu. The chairman of the township election sub-commission, U Tun Yee, delivered a speech and Tamu Township officials U Zam Khinn Man and U Myint Soe gave talks on the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Election Laws. Township election sub-commission members also explained the State/Region Hluttaw Law and regulations and work guidelines to the trainees. The course was attended by 321 officials and members from Tamu Township.<sup>3</sup>

### DEADLINE REVEALS ELECTION DYNAMICS

The passing of the 30 August deadline to register candidates for this year's general election has confirmed the massive challenge some parties are facing, both in terms of funding and candidate numbers. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP) will each field at least six times the number of candidates as their closest rival, the National Democratic Force (NDF). "We can guess the result of the election now," said Maung Wuntha, a veteran journalist and election analyst. "From the side of the democratic groups, the strongest party, the National Democratic Force, will contest about 150 constituencies. So of all the [Pyidaungsu Hluttaw] seats, they might be able to contest one quarter," he said. "And we can't assume or expect that they will be able to win all of those seats." Shortly before deadline, the NDF chairman Dr. Than Nyein confirmed the party expects to have 161 candidates. While the final number is yet to be confirmed, the USDP is likely to field candidates in almost every constituency across the country. U Thar Win, a spokesperson from the USDP's Yangon office, confirmed on 1 September that the USDP had registered 149 candidates in Yangon Region constituencies, the maximum number possible. This figure includes candidates

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<sup>1</sup> Shan state, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone subcommissions meet - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-09-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 September 2010

<sup>2</sup> Electoral process courses opened in Maubin township - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-09-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 September 2010

<sup>3</sup> Electoral process demonstrated in Tamu - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-09-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 September 2010

for the Kayin and Rakhine “nationality constituencies” in the Yangon Region Hluttaw. “We are likely to contest almost all constituencies across the country but I haven’t got the exact figure,” he said. NUP spokesperson U Thein Tun has said that his party would have more than 990 representatives in the elections. The party will field about 290 candidates in the Pyithu Hluttaw, 150 in the Amyotha Hluttaw and 550 in State or Region Hluttaws. “We have not yet received the complete list of the candidates from remote areas so I can only provide estimates at this stage,” he added. According to U Hla Myint, spokesperson for the Democratic Party (Myanmar), the party has registered 50 candidates, although it initially expected to have around 100. All parties are currently awaiting confirmation of their candidates from the UEC. The UEC had until 10 September to scrutinise the lists and are anticipated to confirm or disqualify candidates shortly after this date.<sup>4</sup>

### **RAKHINE PARTY PULLS OUT OF SITTWE SEATS**

One of two major Rakhine political parties has announced it will not contest constituencies in the state capital Sittwe to avoid “social conflict”. U Myint Zaw, General Secretary of the Rakhine State National Force, said the “unanimous” decision was in line with the party’s guiding philosophy of ensuring peace and stability in the region. “Our party’s platform is unconditional peace, the development of the Rakhine State and for people from all walks of life to be able to enjoy the fruits of that development,” he said. He added that due to on-going tensions between ethnic groups in Sittwe and in order to preserve the unity and peace of the Rakhine people there, the party took the decision to withdraw from contesting in Sittwe. Not surprisingly, the decision was welcomed by the Rakhine National Development Party, the other prominent party in the state. “We are happy that they made this decision. It is for our mutual benefit. We appreciate their true and honest ‘setana’ (generosity or goodwill),” party chairman Dr Aye Maung said. “We will field candidates in 44 constituencies in Rakhine State and Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon regions at the November 7 election.” U Myint Zaw said the Rakhine State National Force will still field candidates in about 20 constituencies, including Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk Oo, Minbya and Thandwe townships. The party has branch offices in 12 townships. Other parties expected to contest constituencies in Rakhine State include the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the National Unity Party (NUP), the Mro National Party, Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organisation, the Khami National Development Party and the Kaman Progressive Party.<sup>5</sup>

### **WRITERS & JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS QUIT TO CONTEST ELECTION**

Four senior members of the Myanmar Writers and Journalists Association (MWJA), including the association’s chairman, resigned at the end of August to participate in the 7 November elections. Association secretary U Ko Ko said Chairman U Tin Kha, Vice-Chairman Dr Tin Tun Oo and Central Executive Committee members U Aung Nyein and U Hla Tun all resigned their posts on 27 August, in order to allow them to contest the elections as representatives of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). “As we are an independent association, we have a rule that our members must not join a political party. Because they are preparing to participate in election as candidates of a party, they had to resign,” said U Ko Ko. He added that some less prominent members of the association may have also resigned to join political parties but the number, if any, was not yet known. The deadline for candidates to register was 30 August. Former MWJA Vice Chairman Dr Tin Tun Oo said, he was determined to grasp the “opportunity” presented by this year’s elections and would stand as a Pyithu Hluttaw candidate for Pazundaung Township in Yangon.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Deadline reveals election dynamics - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2010/news/539/news001.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 September 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Rakhine party pulls out of Sittwe seats - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2010/news/539/news003.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 September 2010

<sup>6</sup> Writers, journalists association officials quit to contest election - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2010/news/539/news012.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 September 2010

## **NEW ERA PEOPLE'S PARTY SUBMITS 30 CANDIDATES**

The New Era People's Party has registered 30 candidates to run in various constituencies within Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy Divisions according to party General Secretary (2) Daw Yee Yee San. The party had initially expected to field 100 candidates. However, due to lack of funding, the submission of 67 would-be candidates had to be withdrawn. The party now plans to contest 4 candidates each in both the Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw, as well as 19 candidates in the Region/State Hluttaw. Daw Yee Yee San also said that the party will now shift its focus to election campaigning after the 10 September and will rely mainly on disseminating pamphlets in order to get votes.<sup>7</sup>

## **WUTHANU NLD PARTY TO CONTEST IN FIVE TOWNSHIPS**

The Mandalay-based Wuthanu NLD (Union of Myanmar) will be represented by five candidates in the upcoming general elections, according to an official party document released on 26 August. The five constituencies are Aungmyathazan, Pyigyetaun and Patheingyi townships in Mandalay and Kyauktada and Pabedan townships in Yangon Division, according to Party Secretary Daw Nan Shwe Kyar. The candidates who will represent the party include Maha Weizar U Tin Win (Aungmyaythazan), Daw Nan Shwe Kyar (Patheingyi), Dr.Thein Htaik Oo (Pyigyetaun), U Tun Shwe (Kyauktada) and U Tin Shwe (Pabedan).<sup>8</sup>

## **DEMOCRATIC PARTY MEMBER'S CANDIDATURE REJECTED**

The candidature of U Hla Myint, a member and Central Information Officer for U Thu Wai's Democratic Party (Myanmar), has been rejected by a district election sub-commission. Although no official statement has yet been made in connection to the case, according to an official of the District Election Sub-commission in Yangon, Hla Myint's candidature has been rejected on the grounds of tax evasion as well as not meeting the required 10 years of consecutive residence within the country. Initially, U Hla Myint had been nominated to run as a candidate in the Region/State Hluttaw for Minglar Taungnyunt Constituency (2), Yangon Division.<sup>9</sup>

## **ANALYSIS**

The submission of candidates to contest the November elections has now concluded with early indications that the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP) will be the two predominant forces with the most number of candidates. Due to the lack of time given for the submission of candidates, as well as funding constraints, many parties were compelled to reduce the number of candidates and some have even had to withdraw from strongly supported constituencies. Although the Union Election Commission (UEC) has yet to make any official announcements since the 30 August deadline, media sources are citing early casualties from opposition parties who are being informed of the rejection of party candidates by the Election Commission. The rejection of U Hla Myint, candidate of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), is the first and surely will not be the last in the number of rejections, with more likely to follow in the weeks ahead. While the majority of parties are facing the rejection of their candidates, unconfirmed sources say that candidates from both the USDP and the NUP have come through the scrutinizing process unscathed and intact. This once again highlights the biased nature and tactics used by the junta in removing its opposition, while at the same time laying down the foundations to guarantee an assured victory in the elections. With the future of the country at stake, it is important for all Burmese citizens to practice their democratic rights by taking part in the on-going electoral process by contributing to determining the outcome of the elections.

<sup>7</sup> New Era People's party submits 30 candidates - <http://www.myanmar.mmtimes.com/2010/news/483/news03.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 September 2010

<sup>8</sup> Wuthanu NLD party to contest in five townships - <http://www.myanmar.mmtimes.com/2010/news/482/news07.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 September 2010

<sup>9</sup> Democratic party (Myanmar) member's candidature rejected - <http://www.khitpyaing.org/index.php?route=detail&id=4383> (Khitpyaing) 9 September 2010