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## ELECTION MONITOR No. 23

### REGISTRATION OF KOKANG AND PA-O PARTIES APPROVED

The following parties have been passed and approved by the Union Election Commission:

1. Kokang Democracy and Unity Party - Date approved 7 May 2010<sup>1</sup>
2. Pa-O National Organization (PNO) - Date approved 13 May 2010<sup>2</sup>

To date, 37 parties have submitted their applications to set up or to continue to exist as political parties. Three ethnic parties are still being scrutinized by the Union Election Commission (UEC).

### USDP CRITICISED FOR FAILING TO ABIDE BY ELECTION LAWS

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a party established by the military junta, came under criticism for failing to abide by the junta's prescribed Electoral Laws. According to Phyo Min Thein, Chairman of the Union Democratic Party, the USDP has been given state funds as well as state-owned facilities in contradiction of Article 7 Paragraph (c) of the Political Parties Registration Law, which, therefore, should be addressed by the authorities. Furthermore, students 18 years old and younger and government employees have been drafted into the party's ranks. This contravenes the existing Election Laws, and, therefore, need to be made known to the wider public, said Nyo Tun, member of the UDP party. The UDP has clearly voiced its concern with regards to the on-going unfair and unjust activities of the USDP and has threatened to file an official complaint to the Chairman of the UEC as well as to the State Peace and Development Council Chairman, Senior-General Than Shwe.<sup>3</sup>

### ELECTION COMMISSION TRAINS SCHOOL TEACHERS

The Election Commission office in Falam Township, Chin state in western Burma has begun conducting short-term training courses for school teachers who will be serving in polling stations during the upcoming elections. "The training began last month and is related to the 2010 elections, and military and Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) affairs," said a teacher from Falam. High school teachers are amongst the first to be given this training by Election Commission officials. "After completion of the training of high school teachers, middle and primary school teachers will follow suit. Each batch will have 10 trainees," said a local school teacher. The short training also requires the teachers to persuade their students to cast votes for the USDP in the coming elections. The course also provides the teachers with a brief background of the USDP and its objectives. In the past, educational refresher training courses were conducted in the summer in Chin State, however, local authorities have decided to replace these with the electoral training course in order to prepare for the polls later this year.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Continued existence as political party scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Applications for registration of political parties scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs08/NLM2010-05-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> USDP criticized for failing to abide election laws - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/bur/index.php/news/1-news/3129-2010-05-10-12-11-22> (Irrawaddy) 10 May 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Election Commission trains school teachers - <http://www.khonumthung.org/news.php?readmore=205> (Khonumthung) 10 May 2010.

## **USDP MINISTER LOBBIES IN YENANGYAUNG**

Minister for Electrical Power (1) U Zaw Min (formerly Colonel) of the USDP visited Yenangyaung in Magwe Division and lobbied local residents to vote for the USDP and its candidate in the forthcoming elections. According to locals, the Minister made a tour in Myoma-taung, Myoma-myauk, Sontaik, Ywathit wards in Yenangyaung and urged the residents to vote for the USDP candidate, Ko Aung Naing Win, a (45) year old graduate from Magwe College and resident of Myoma-taung ward. Another prominent member of the USDP, Kyaw San, Minister for Information, also visited his own constituents in Pale township, Sagaing Division, to lobby locals for support in the elections.<sup>5</sup>

## **ELECTION COMMISSION DELAYS KSPP APPROVAL**

The application submitted by the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) to register with the UEC has been delayed according to its Chairman, Dr. Manam Tu Ja. "We are awaiting party registration from the Commission in order to start organizational work. We feel that there is a deliberate delay in granting the registration. Many other parties have been approved," said Tu Ja. The KSPP applied for registration to the Election Commission on 5 April, but has not been approved, despite that over 20 parties which applied later have been approved. Along with the KSPP, the applications of the Shan State (North) Progressive Party and the United Democracy Party (Kachin State) are also pending. A four-member delegation of the KSPP led by Dr. Tu Ja was invited to meet with the UEC Chairman in Naypyitaw on 7 May, and during the meeting the KSPP was given assurances that the matter would be solved soon. Meanwhile, the KIO, which known to be linked to the KSPP, is still refusing to transform its armed forces into the Burma Army controlled Border Guard Force (BGF).<sup>6</sup>

## **ANALYSIS**

Party registration is slowly gaining momentum with the figure standing at 37 as of 14 May 2010. However, the applications of the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), the Shan State (North) Progressive Party, and the United Democracy Party (Kachin State) have yet to be approved. Some observers believe that the refusal by the KIO and the Shan State Army (North) to transform their forces into the regime-controlled Border Guard Forces (BGF) could be the major factors behind the delay.

The accusation by the Union Democratic Party against the USDP for using state funds and facilities, which contravenes the Political Parties Registration Laws, is serious. The fact that students under 18 years of age and civil servants are also on the party membership list is another serious offense. No official response has been made to date. If formal complaints are filed with the Union Election Commission, they could become legal grounds to challenge election results at a later date.

The short training courses given by the State Election Commission to school teachers in Chin State can also be seen as a blatant contravention of the Election Laws. Instead of being neutral, the Election Commission is training and forcing teachers to campaign for the USDP. A formal complaint should also be filed with the UEC.

If enough complaints are filed country-wide showing the USDP contravening the SPDC's own election laws, there may be enough cause to nullify the results of the elections should the USDP win a majority.

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<sup>5</sup> USDP Minister lobbies in Yenangyaung - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/bur/index.php/news/1-news/3136-2010-05-11-11-50-08> (Irrawaddy) 11 May 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Election Commission delays KSPP approval - <http://www.mizzima.com/news/election-2010/3926-election-commission-delays-kspp-approval.html> (Mizzima) 11 May 2010