
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 2

PARLIAMENTS TO CONVENE ON 31 JANUARY

In an announcement made on state-run Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV-4), the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Chairman Senior-General Than Shwe has issued and signed orders for the convening of the National Assembly (Amyotha Hluttaw), the People's Assembly (Pyithu Hluttaw) and the Region and State Assemblies (Pyinay/Dae-tha Gyee Hluttaw) on the morning of 31 January 2011. According to the announcements, the three parliamentary assemblies will convene simultaneously on the same day. The notifications were issued by Than Shwe in the New Light of Myanmar on 11 January.¹

NDPD FILES CASE AGAINST USDP IN BUTHIDAUNG

The National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD) filed a case on 30 December 2010 at the Nay Pyi Taw Union Election Commission office against the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) for rigging votes during the 7 November national elections, according to an officer from Buthidaung. Abu Taher, a Buthidaung NDPD candidate for the Pyithu Hluttaw filed a case against Shwe Maung, an elected member of the USDP, for stealing votes in the 2010 election. Abu Taher believes he received 20,000 more votes than Shwe Maung, yet the latter was declared the winner, the officer said. The Union Election Commission office received the allegation case against Shwe Maung and issued a letter with reference number 2/RAKAPAKHA – 1/KAMARA (6) on 31 December. The case will be heard on 17 January at Constitutional Tribunal No.9, according to an officer from Election Commission office. "The State Election Commission office announced on 12 December that the USDP member Shwe Maung won the seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw for Buthidaung, but this was done without the agreement of the NDPD candidates. We don't know what will happen after the case is heard in Nay Pyi Taw," said an NDPD organizer from Buthidaung.²

USDP LODGES COMPLAINT AGAINST RNDP CANDIDATE

A USDP candidate from Rathidaung constituency has filed a complaint against his rival candidate from the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), who won the seat for state parliament in the 7 November elections. U Hla Maung Thein of the RNDP party said that he received the letter of complaint from the Election Commission on 1 January 2011 in which the USDP candidate U Thein Maung had charged him with 15 violations. "There are 15 facts in the complaint letter against me, but only one fact is directly concerned with me. The other 14 are related to other people, especially polling officers," he said. In the letter, U Thein Maung appealed to the Election Commission to set aside U Hla Maung's victory because the RNDP candidate allegedly visited a polling booth of a constituency without permission and that his presence there had violated existing electoral rules and regulations. U Thein Maung also claimed that some polling officers stole votes for U Hla Maung Thein, allowing him to win the election unfairly. The RNDP candidate was informed by the Election Commission that he has to appear in Nay Pyi Taw on 17 January and must submit a letter of refutation to the Commission four days before his appearance.³

¹ First Pyithu Hluttaw Session on 31 January; First Amyotha Hluttaw Session on 31 January; First Region/State Hluttaw Session on 31 January - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-01-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 January 2011 (pg 1)

² NDPD files case against USDP in Buthidaung - http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2973:ndpd-files-case-against-usdp-in-buthidaung&catid=130:january-2011&Itemid=2 (Kaladan) 4 January 2011

³ USDP Lodges Complaint Against RNDP Candidate - <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=2854> (Narinjara) 5 January 2011

USDP TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CORRUPT MP'S

A Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) meeting held in the Burma's capital Nay Pyi Taw on 2 and 3 January has decided to take action against newly elected MPs found to be corrupt or indulging in illicit sexual activities. The meeting was attended by over 300 central executive committee members, including top party leaders and recently elected MPs. The discussion comes after the party received a number of formal complaint letters alleging misconduct. MPs-elect decided first to investigate any allegations before taking action. However, a party source did not elaborate on the type of action that would be taken. A USDP member who attended the meeting said that the recent complaints led to the adoption of the resolution as they reflected badly on the party. According to a party member from Rangoon division, numerous voters had sent letters of complaints against USDP MPs-elect and party members for visiting massage parlours, karaoke bars and restaurants and for indulging in illicit sexual activities. The committee meeting also deliberated on issues to be included in its parliamentary agenda, in preparation for the official opening of the People's Assembly scheduled later in January.⁴

NEWLY ELECTED MON CANDIDATES HEADING TO NAY PYI TAW TO JOIN NEW GOVERNMENT

Six candidates from the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP) will travel to Nay Pyi Taw to join the new parliament of Burma, according to the party's leaders. AMDP chairman Nai Ngwe Thein said, "(The junta) will hold a meeting on 27 January to form the new government. They told our candidates to arrive on 24 January at Nay Pyi Taw. Our candidates will leave from Moulmein on 19 January." The six AMDP candidates include Nai Hla Maung, Nai Thein Aung, Mi Myint Than, Nai Kyaw Thei, Nai Tun Ohn, and Dr. Banya Aung Moe. Three of the candidates won seats in the People's Parliament (Pyithu Hluttaw) and three won seats in the National Parliament (Amyotha Hluttaw). "We have prepared a lot of things to discuss at parliament," said Nai Ngwe Thein. The AMDP fielded 34 candidates and won 16 seats in the election, and for many of its elected candidates this will be their first time entering into politics.⁵

CHIN PARTY MEETS TO DISCUSS ETHNIC ALLIANCE

The Chin National Party (CNP) held a three-day conference at the beginning of January at Hakha, the capital of Chin State, and planned to discuss the forming of an alliance with other ethnic parties, according to CNP chairman Pu Zo Zam. He added that the conference started on 6 January and was attended by about 60 representatives and party members. "We will discuss the CNP's future plans, including the possibility of forming an alliance with other parties, but we haven't made any decision so far," said Pu Zo Zam. The party fielded 25 candidates in the 7 November elections, and won 9 seats.⁶

FIRST STATE PARLIAMENT TO MEET AT CURRENT SPDC OFFICE BUILDING IN HAKHA

When the new State/Region Parliament is convened in February, legislators will be housed at the current building of the Chin State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in Hakha, according to an informed source in the State capital. The present building has been used as the Chin State administrative headquarters since the 1970's without major renovations during the last four decades and many people are opposed to the idea of continuing to use it as the new Chin State Parliament.

⁴ USDP to take action against corrupt MPs - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/4727-usdp-to-take-action-against-corrupt-mps.html> (Mizzima) 6 January 2011

⁵ Newly Elected Mon Candidates Heading To Naypyidaw to Join New Government - <http://monnews.org/?p=1543> (Mon News) 6 January 2011

⁶ Chin Party Meets to Discuss Ethnic Alliance - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=20487 (Irrawaddy) 7 January 2011

Leading Chin political parties and newly elected legislators alike are saying they will push for the construction of a new Parliament Building in Hakha as soon as the legislative process gets in motion. According to a source inside the SPDC office, there are plans to construct a three-storey new building at the current site that will house both the Chief Minister's Office and the legislative chamber. However, the official remained reluctant to provide further details on the construction of the new building. Meanwhile, ex-Brigadier-General Hung Ngai, the current Chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council, who was elected as the USDP's candidate from Mindat township, is widely tipped to become the Chief Minister when the State Government is formed.⁷

ANALYSIS

With the 7 November election completed, the junta is now embarking on steps to convene the various Hluttaws, attended by the Hluttaw members, in accordance with the new constitution and in line with its Seven Step Political Road Map. While parties and elected MPs gear themselves up to explore the unchartered territories of the soon to be established parliamentary assemblies, on-going complaints of electoral fraud remain unfinished, while new cases continue to surface. Although no decisions on the alleged complaints have yet been made, the majority of cases have been filed against USDP candidates. That being said, the USDP, on its part, has also filed complaints against elected MPs, including against MPs from the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) party. While the reasoning behind the complaints remains unclear, the process will not augur well in Burma's new and fragile political setting.

In a country where for many decades democratic norms and standards have yet to flourish, the convening of the Hluttaws on 31 January will no doubt provide a window of opportunity to those who wish to seize it, while others will beg to differ and deem it differently. Whatever the position or view one may take on the situation in Burma, the political process set to begin on the 31 January will rest on the crucial role of all the elected MPs and how they serve to promote the interests of their constituencies and the Burmese people at large. The convening of the Hluttaws will not be a means to an end but may go a long way in helping the process towards democracy.

⁷ First State Parliament to Meet at Current SPDC Office Building in Hakha - <http://chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/1155-first-state-parliament-to-meet-at-current-spdc-office-building-in-hakha.html> (Chinland Guardian) 7 January 2011