
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 3

INVITATION SENT TO PYITHU HLUTTAW AND AMYOTHA HLUTTAW REPRESENTATIVES

Invitations have been sent to the respective elected representatives to attend the first session of the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Parliament) and the Amyotha Hluttaw (National Parliament) by the State Peace and Development Council. The first sessions of the two parliamentary assemblies are set to convene in Nay Pyi Taw at 08:55 on the morning of 31 January 2011 (Monday). According to the announcement, the elected-representatives have been requested to inform the authorities in Nay Pyi Taw no later than 27 January 2011 if they will attend.¹

POLITICAL PARTIES CALL FOR END TO ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A senior member of the Democratic Party (Myanmar) has used the 63rd anniversary of Independence Day to call for the removal of economic sanctions because of the negative impact they have had on the country. Democratic Party General Secretary Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein said at a ceremony on 4 January that senior party members were preparing to submit a proposal to the United States Embassy in Rangoon urging the removal of sanctions. A spokesperson for the party said the proposal would also be sent to local political parties, elected representatives and also to the European Union. The Democratic Party's call comes at a time when many are questioning whether sanctions have had any positive effects. Some argue sanctions have done little to encourage democracy in Burma and instead have pushed the government closer, economically and politically, to its Asian neighbours. Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein's proposal has been supported by representatives from the National Democratic Force (NDF), the Union Democratic Party, the Party for Democracy and Peace, the Wunthanu NLD and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP).

A group of four elected representatives led by Union Democratic Party Chairman U Thein Nyunt, formerly of the NDF, has also called for an end to sanctions. U Thein Nyunt said the group, whose members were all elected from constituencies in Thingangyun Township, was arranging a motion calling for the removal of sanctions to present to the Pyithu Hluttaw. "We are determined to get sanctions removed because we think they have affected foreign direct investment inflows," he said. "We'll work within the parliament to get our message across."²

REFORMS UNDERWAY IN NDF CORE

Fifteen members have been elected to the Central Committee of the National Democratic Force (NDF), one of the largest opposition parties which competed in the recent elections. The party, which split from the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) in order to contest the elections, fielded 61 candidates, came in 5th and won 16 seats. Its chairman, Dr. Than Nyein, said that the NDF is also planning to form committees to represent women, youth, farmers, and workers. Key players such as Khin Maung Soe and Dr. Than Nyein will retain their positions, while former secretary Soe Win has been promoted to Deputy Chairman. The newly elected NDF Central Committee members were chosen from the 61 candidates who contested the elections.³

¹ Invitation cards sent to Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw representatives to inform Nay Pyi Taw not later than 27 Jan - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-01-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 January 2011 (p. 16)

² Political parties call for end to economic sanctions - <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2011/news/557/news55701.html> (Myanmar Times) 10 January 2011

³ Reforms underway in NDF core - <http://www.dvb.no/news/reforms-underway-in-ndf-core/13696> (DVB) 13 January 2011

CHIN PARTY DRAFTS FIRST PARLIAMENTARY BILL

Chin National Party Chairman Pu Zozam has announced that the party's first parliamentary bills have been drafted. He said that the party's parliamentary agenda is to boost the tourism sector in Chin State, to set a minimum wage in the country of about 3,000 kyat (about US\$ 4) a day, to ensure the right of Chin children to learn the Chin language in school, and to protect the environment.

Party delegates, including the 9 MP-elects, attended the recently held party meetings to set the parliamentary agendas for all three assemblies, which will convene on 31 January. Pu Zozam said that if the national minimum wage isn't increased, it will be hard to encourage those living overseas to return. "Currently, the average income in Burma is very low and cannot fulfil the basic needs", he said. He added that the party also plans to work to create a ministry of conservation in Chin State, since many people are hill farmers and it is important to provide them the necessary training and education. The party also plans to address the issue of protecting natural resources as well as finding ways to provide relief to famine victims in Chin State and those who suffered loss of crops due to the rat infestation in the region. The party also plans to improve roads, including building a road to link Matupi and Paletwa townships. In addition, a committee has been formed to draft a charter for people's rights in Chin State.⁴

ETHNICS SEEK VICE-PRESIDENT NOMINATION

Six ethnic political parties that won seats in November's general election will meet on 15 January (Saturday) in Rangoon with a view to establishing a unified approach in calling for equality and self-determination in the new Parliament. The parties will also discuss a proposal to nominate an ethnic representative as Vice President in both or either of the houses to be submitted to the Electoral College, according to several ethnic party leaders. "Our nomination will be in line with the rules of the Constitution," said Aye Maung, the chairman of the Rakhine National Democratic Party (RNDP). "We would like to propose an ethnic representative to be Minister of State, but that simply won't happen." The 6 parties include the All Mon Regions Democracy Party, the Chin National Party, the RNDP and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), said SNDP Vice-Chairman Sai Saung See.

He added that the ethnic parties wish to nominate one representative that will stand before each House — the Pyithu Hluttaw (Peoples' Assembly) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Nationalities Assembly) — which each hold a duty to elect one vice-president as two of the three members of the Electoral college. The other Electoral College vice-president will be selected by the 25% of Parliamentary seats held by the military appointees. "We believe the chief ministers of each state should appoint a representative from the ethnic minorities," said Saung See. Some of the 14 regional and state chief ministers have already been selected, and the 6 parties will discuss a nomination for the position of Chief Minister of State, he added. However, according to Aye Maung, it seems the chief ministers will be representatives with an ethnic background appointed from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Although representative from the Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party cannot attend the meeting, they have said they will stand by the decision made by the parties on Saturday, said their party chairman Khin Maung Myint.⁵

NUP SEEKS POLITICAL ALLIANCES IN PARLIAMENT

The National Unity Party (NUP), winner of the 2nd highest number of parliamentary seats in the recent election, has invited other political parties to form a political alliance in the parliament, according to party sources. The NUP won 64 parliamentary seats in the election. Han Shwe, the

⁴ Chin party drafts first parliamentary bill - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/4749-chin-party-drafts-first-parliamentary-bill.html> (Mizzima) 13 January 2010

⁵ Ethnic Seek Vice-President Nomination - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=20527 (Irrawaddy) 14 January 2011

Central Executive Committee member and NUP spokesman, said, "We are ready to co-operate with any party in the Parliament for the sake of the people."

NUP leaders met various MPs-elect on at party headquarters on University Avenue Road in Rangoon, including NUP Chairman Tun Yee (a retired Lieutenant General), party central executive committee members, 12 MPs-elect of the People's Assembly, 5 MPs-elect of the National Assembly, Chin leader Salai Hla Tun of Magway Division and Pa (aka) Khin Maung Swe, a Burmese from Kachin State. Party spokesman Han Shwe said that the first parliamentary conference on 31 January was intended to inform the MPs about parliamentary laws and regulations, which were recently announced. In the 1990 election in Burma, the NUP placed 2nd behind the National League for Democracy (NLD).⁶

MEMBERS YETS TO GET PARLIAMENTARY LAW BOOKS

Though the Burmese military junta has convened the three parliament houses on 31 January, some of the elected members have yet to procure the 17 parliamentary law books. "The books can be bought in Yangon for Kyat 2300 to 2500 each, but we members of parliament are still waiting for the books. We hope to get them sooner or later," said U Nangthan of the State Parliament from Falam Township in Chin State. The parliamentary books include the Union Government Law, Region or State Government Law, State Constitution, Tribunal Law, Union Appointment Judicature Law, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law and Bylaw, Pyithu Hluttaw Law and Bylaw, Amyotha Hluttaw Law and Bylaw, Region or State Hluttaw Law and Bylaw, Union Judicial Law, Union Attorney -General Law, Union Auditor-General Law, State seal Law and Bylaw, Law and Bylaw on Election of President and Vice-Presidents, Self-Administered Division or Self-Administered Zone Leading Body Law, Nay Pyi Taw Council Law, State Flag Law and Bylaw and National Anthem Law and Bylaw. Apparently the books were printed on 11 January, but the government does not want many to be in circulation. The 2008 Constitution was also printed in limited numbers.⁷

ANALYSIS

With the preparations to convene the first parliamentary assemblies in over 2 decades, elected MPs and parties alike are now engaged in exploring together possibilities of forming political alliances as well as preparing to introduce new legislative bills. Forming alliances will become an important factor for opposition parties in the parliamentary discussions, since, at present, the political agenda is likely to be dominated and led by the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). While the party is set to assume the lead role in the three parliamentary assemblies, it remains embroiled in court cases on electoral fraud and vote rigging allegations. The steps taken by the Chin National Party (CNP) to draft bills aimed at promoting the Chin region and people will no doubt become an area of interest for other ethnic-based parties. The junta, for its part, will no doubt closely follow and monitor these activities, and, at the same time, draw up counter-measures to distinguish any form of threat and danger to its authority. All these and many other questions on Burma's political scene will no doubt be answered in the coming weeks.

⁶ NUP seeks political alliances in Parliament - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/4750-nup-seeks-political-alliances-in-parliament.html> (Mizzima) 14 January 2011

⁷ Members yet to get Parliamentary law books - <http://www.khonumthung.org/news.php?readmore=360> (Khonumthung News) 14 January 2011