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## ELECTION MONITOR NO. 11

### **SUU KYI CALLS FOR REFORMS OF AGING NLD LEADERSHIP**

After meeting with three elderly and ailing NLD leaders at the Seinle Kantha State Guest House in Rangoon on 16 December, detained Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi called for a reorganization of the aging Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party. It is the first time since the NLD was formed in September 1988 that Suu Kyi has called for a reform of the party. “We heard from our senior members that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told them she wanted to reorganize the central executive committee of the NLD,” said NLD spokesman Khin Maung Swe. “In reply, the senior leaders told her that they definitely agreed on the party's reorganization.” Since the formation of the NLD, the party's generation gap has steadily grown, adding to the difficulties it faces due to the regime's efforts to suppress its activities. Apart from Suu Kyi, who is 64, and Khin Maung Swe, 67, other central executive committee members are in their 80s and 90s. Six of 11 committee members are not well, according to NLD sources.

Sources said that Suu Kyi met NLD Chairman Aung Shwe, 91, Secretary U Lwin, 86, and Lun Tin, 88, for about 45 minutes. Spokesman Khin Maung Swe said the issue of a reorganization of the party leadership had been raised by members wanting to energize the NLD. “The reorganization is necessary for us today,” said Khin Maung Swe.

Suu Kyi had asked for a meeting with U Aung Shwe, U Lwin and U Lun Tin in a letter to junta leader Senior-General Than Shwe on November 11, where she told Than Shwe that she wanted to pay her respects to the ailing trio. She also said she wanted to hold a separate meeting at her home with other NLD leaders—including detained Vice Chairman Tin Oo and central committee members Win Tin, Khin Maung Swe, Than Tun, Soe Myint, Hla Pe and Nyunt Wai. “To make the NLD's activities more active and effective, I would like to invite and hold a meeting with all CEC members at my house,” she said in her letter. She also asked for a meeting with Than Shwe himself, saying it would be in the interests of Burma.

The NLD wrote on 16 November to the junta and the election commission saying that, under the terms of statement No. 245 of the Burma Election Commission in 1989, the NLD has the authority to reorganize the party. Khin Maung Swe said senior NLD leaders would first of all have to nominate successors, followed by a nationwide party conference and a vote. However, he added: “At the moment, there are many difficulties in holding a nationwide meeting.” In its 16 November letter the NLD nominated, along with other CEC members, two successors - Win Tin and Khin Maung Swe - who were released from prison in September 2008.

### **RAKHINE ROHINGYA DELEGATION TO VISIT RANGOON TO TRAIN FOR 2010 ELECTIONS**

According to a businessman from Buthidaung Town, a Rakhine Rohingya delegation comprising of 11 members from Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Kyauktaw Townships of Rakhine State is due to visit Rangoon soon for training to prepare them for the forthcoming 2010 general elections. The authorities selected the Rakhine Rohingya members to participate in the training which will take place in Rangoon or Naypyidaw. The authorities have already listed 5 members from Buthidaung Township, 3 members from Maungdaw and 3 members from Kyauktaw Township. There will be other members from Sittwe, Rathedaung, Mrauk-U and other towns in future, said a trader from the locality. The delegation members from Buthidaung Township are Abul Kalam, Senior Assistant Teacher of Buthidaung High School, Quila Meah, Senior Assistant Teacher of Buthidaung High School, Dr. Boshir of Buthidaung Town, Abu Sofian, from Seindi Pyin village of Buthidaung South, and Moulvi Ali Matalab Korani from Kyee-Noke-Thee village of Buthidaung North, according to a village elder from Buthidaung Township. The selected persons from Maungdaw and Kyauktaw Townships have not been named yet. These selected Rakhine Rohingya are from the “Myanmar Muslim Organization” which was established by the military government. People believe that they will be trained for the approaching 2010 elections and will try to establish “Myanmar Muslims” in place of “Rakhine Rohingya Muslims” in Rakhine State, said a politician from Maungdaw. Earlier, U Hla Myint and Dr. Boshir of Buthidaung Town were called to the office of the Tactical Operation Commander (TOC) of Buthidaung Town in the presence of a Malaysian citizen and representative of the “Social Welfare Organization” of Malaysia, said a local elder from Buthidaung. The military personnel have been preparing and campaigning for the coming 2010 elections by involving Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and Swan-Arshin members.

### **LOCAL AUTHORITIES URGE RESIDENTS TO REGISTER FOR ELECTION**

While awaiting the announcement of the Election Commission Law, the local Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) authorities in Hlaing, South Dagon and Thongwa townships in Rangoon Division have started campaigns to scrutinize and compile lists of eligible voters for the upcoming 2010 election according to the local residents there. In Ward No. 7 of Hlaing Township, VPDC officials visited houses and urged residents to register and update their Family Members List (Mi-thar-su Tha-gaung-sa-yin) with the aim of enlisting all residents aged 18 and those eligible to vote. Similar measures are underway in Thongwa township, where VPDC members have called for residents in the 12 wards of the township to register their Family Members List in preparation for the elections. Furthermore, according to one local resident, the Ta-Sa-Nya - National Unity Party (NUP), an umbrella party of the regime, has embarked on its campaign to foster support in the 64 outlying village tracts of Thongwa township.

## **TWO USDA CANDIDATES FOR TONZANG AND CHIKHA TOWNSHIPS NOMINATED IN CHIN STATE**

Two candidates have been nominated by the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) to stand for elections in Tonzang and Chikha constituencies in northern Chin state for the forthcoming 2010 general elections. U Zam Khen Thang, a middle school teacher will be the candidate for the Eastern Tonzang Township and U Than Za Tuan, former Deputy Director of Education, will be the candidate for Western Chikha Township. The USDA has also selected U Lian Kham Suan as a substitute candidate for the eastern zone and U Thang Khan Dal as a substitute candidate for the western zone of the Chin State. “We selected the four in the first week of November,” said a USDA member. Despite that the military junta has not yet announced the Election Commission Law and Code of Poll Conduct, the USDA has gone ahead in nominating its candidates for Tonzang and Chikha constituencies. However, it has not yet selected the candidates for Tidim township constituency. “They are making preparations before the Election Commission Law is announced”, the USDA member added. It is said that the people are not even remotely interested in the forthcoming 2010 general elections because they believe it cannot be free and fair. In the 1990 general elections, the Zomi National Congress party was victorious in the Tonzang township constituency.

### **ANALYSIS**

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s call to reorganize the aging CEC of the NLD should be regarded as a positive step within the party prior to the 2010 elections. The acceptance for the need to re-organize the leadership is a clear indication that the current CEC members desire the NLD to function efficiently and effectively. The main focus will now be centered on the process of finding replacements or younger generation members to supplement the existing members. The willingness of the present members of the CEC to step down will be a test for the party prior to any changes or reforms. Furthermore, the importance of introducing new and young faces to the NLD leadership is now needed more than ever, in order for the party to be fully active in the on-going political process.

While calls for changes in the leadership are taking place within the opposition, the regime, on its part, has made progress week by week and slowly but steadily to prepare for the elections. The Rakhine Rohingya delegations’ visit to Rangoon, the measures to register local residents of townships in Rangoon Division together with the recent nominations of two USDA candidates in Chin State show the clear intentions and seriousness of the regime in preparing for the 2010 elections. If the opposition are to stand any chance gaining support or winning electoral votes, now is the time for all to put aside differences and work together in drawing up concrete plans and strategies to be able to respond effectively to the SPDC’s domination.