
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 7

BURMA'S POLICE CHIEF ORDERED TO RUN IN 2010 ELECTIONS

SPDC Chairman Senior-General Than Shwe has given orders for Burma's Police Chief, Brig-Gen. Khin Yi to step down from his post and to run as a candidate from Myaungmya Township in Irrawaddy Division in the upcoming 2010 elections according to a senior official from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The move to transfer the police chief is said to be related to his involvement and handling of an on-going investigation of Rangoon Police Chief, Pol. Col Win Naing for misuse of power and corruption. Sources in Yangon claim that Win Naing was a close aide of the Police Chief and played a major role in providing information for the press conferences given by Khin Yi in the past. Rumors are circulating that Khin Yi is also under investigation. According to police officials based in Yangon, the SPDC hierarchy is reluctant to punish Khin Yi but chose instead to demote him to a less important role in the political arena. A high ranking military official from the North-Western Regional Command is being tipped to replace Khin Yi as the new Police Chief.

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUP URGES ETHNIC GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE IN 2010 ELECTIONS

The Rangoon based civil society group "Myanmar Egress" has recently been lobbying ethnic minority groups to take part in the 2010 Elections according to Yangon sources. At a recent meeting held at the groups' head-office on 18th November, Egress officials met with members from Rakhine Thaya, Rakhine Womens' Association, Rakhine Literary and Cultural Association, Rakhine Maung-Mei Association and emphasized the importance and participation of Rakhine nationals and groups in the political process as well as the upcoming elections. Meetings between Myanmar Egress officials and members of the Kachin and Kayin groups were also held recently, and similar meetings with Shan, Mon and Chin groups are scheduled to take place in the near future. A second-round of discussions with the Rakhine groups and associations has been scheduled for the latter part of November 2009 according to a Myanmar Egress official.

MILITARY HOLDS FIRE-BRIGADE TRAINING IN THANPHYUZAYAT, MON STATE

Infantry Battalion No. 62 has recruited residents from the various quarters of Thanphyuzayart town as well as inhabitants from several nearby villages into local militia-run fire brigades. Trainings for the new fire brigade units began in early November 2009 and will last a month. IB No. 62, which oversees the military-run firefighting unit for Thanphyuzayat town, ordered the new recruitments to commence at the end of October of this year. Each town quarter is required to send 20 new recruits to the fire brigade training. Trainings for the new units are being conducted at the local militia-run fire department in Thanphyuzayat. According to a local resident with connections to the firefighting unit's trainers, the training is officially known as "fire

brigade training” but the actual “firefighting” tutorials will be largely rudimentary. The recruits will spend most of their time learning basic military training, and the main point of the recruitments is bolster the ranks of the Burmese military before the 2010 elections. “The main point is that those who are attending the training are the people we will teach how to organize the people in their Town quarters for the 2010 elections, and we will teach them how to lead the people [in the Burmese government’s favor],” this Thanphyuzayat resident quoted a fire brigade trainer as saying. According to a member of the Thanphyuuzayat Chapter of the Mon Unity League (MUL), the training is being used to increase the power of the regime before the 2010 elections and as a means to up its voter levels but also to promote the government’s politics in the Mon State.

U THU WEI WRITES TO SPDC CHAIRMAN TO PROMULGATE ELECTION LAW

Thu Wei, the Chairman of the Democratic Party - one of the political parties keen on contesting the forthcoming election, sent on 13 November a letter to junta supremo Senior-Gen. Than Shwe, asking for promulgation of the election law soon. In the letter, which he claimed was personal, he said that he thought it was too late for the election law yet to be enacted and promulgated. Thu Wei added that he was making the request on behalf of all other political parties and that it was important for political parties to have enough time to prepare to contest the elections. While the main opposition party the National League for Democracy and its allies (the ethnic nationalities parties) have called for a revision of the controversial 2008 constitution, the Democratic Party has accepted the regime’s decision to conduct elections based on the new constitution.

In the 1990 election, the Political Party Registration Law was enacted and promulgated 20 months before the election date, while the Election Law was enacted and promulgated 12 months before. However this time, despite many rumours being circulated, the Election Law has not yet been announced. Thu Wei also said that to hold the election in a free and fair manner, the contesting political parties should have freedom for organizational work and freedom in issuing statements. The media too should be free, he said. The party was floated in the last week of June this year, with 15 EC members, including the daughters of former Prime Ministers of Burma - Than Than Nu, Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein and Nay Yee Ba Swe. Thu Wei was a journalist and served as a personal assistant to the former Deputy Prime Minister and AFPFL Party Vice-Chairman Kyaw Nyein in the 1950s.

ANALYSIS

In preparing for the 2010 elections, the regime has been able to utilize its advantage over the opposition parties by being able to nominate candidates well in advance of the promulgation of the Election Law. The nomination of the national Police Chief Brig-Gen. Khin Yi to run as candidate for Myaung-mya can be regarded as a form of punishment. According to some analysts, Myanmar Egress is linked to the regime. Thus their call for ethnic groups to participate in the 2010 elections is being supported and welcomed by

some and criticized by others. The regime is determined to hold the elections. Thus, the participation of ethnic groups and opposition parties could be seen as an opportunity to promote the military's interests. The recent letter from U Thu Wei of the Democratic Party highlights the importance for opposition parties and groups to participate in the elections. Rejection of the political process would not be in the interest of all and would only further marginalize any hopes of national reconciliation. The military, with its might and power, is able to engage in all parts of the country and thus the training of Fire-Brigade personnel by the IB No.62 Thanphyuzayat is but one of many activities to be expected to unfold as the elections draw closer. The regime with its army, the USDA and other groups and organizations are now well established and clearly preparing for the 2010 elections. Therefore, the time has now come for others to stop talking and start working if we are to bring about change in Burma.