
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 9

SPDC INTO ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN CHIN STATE

Campaigning for the 2010 general elections in Burma seems to have begun in earnest from the military junta's side with the Deputy Minister of Power and Electricity visiting Tidim town and Tawnzang town in Chin State on November 13 to 15 on a campaign tour. The Minister arrived and met departmental staff members, representatives of the Union Solidarity Development Association, Women's Association and about 100 parents in a high school hall in Tawnzang town. He addressed them regarding the election, and urged the local populace to cast votes for the candidates of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and beware of enemies of the state. According to a person who attended the meeting quoted "that the forthcoming general election cannot be free and fair. Even if we cast votes against the authorities will convert the votes in its favour," he added. Similarly, the second commander of LIB 309 Myat Soe had campaigned in Kalemyo and Tamu Township on November 7, where he met representatives of the Union Solidarity Development Association, Women's Association, volunteer firemen and local parents. Although the military junta has officially announced the elections for 2010, there is no declaration of codes and conducts of the election and the date.

NATIONAL UNITY PARTY (NUP) STARTS CAMPAIGNING FOR POLLS IN MAUNGDAW, RAKHINE STATE.

The National Unity Party (NUP) has started campaigning for the 2010 elections in southern Maungdaw since November 26, said a local elder from Alaythankyaw village. The NUP's organizational in-charge for Maungdaw, U Ba Than son of U Ba Htun, an Arakanese Rakhine, is spearheading the campaign with the support of the Township Peace and Development Council, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and Swarn-arr-shin, he added. On November 26, the NUP started campaigning at the Burma Border Security Force (Na-Sa-Ka) sector No.8 with the help of the authorities. They distributed 20 kgs of rice, one kilogram of edible oil and one longyi (Sarong) to each family, said a village authority member from Inndin Village. The NUP campaigned in southern Maungdaw; Inndin, Kyaukpundu (Sitarpawrika), Myinthlut (Mayrulla) and

Thawinchaung (Bossara) from November 26 to 30, the village authority members said. From December 1 till now the NUP is campaigning in northern Maungdaw where they are looking at people in the age of 18 and without colour-coded Citizens Scrutiny Cards (CRCs). It is issuing cards to them without any charge, said a school teacher. "This is the reason, poor people who could not pay charges to the authorities earlier, joined them to get their white cards or pink cards, " the teacher said. On the other hand, some elders from the village told the villagers to think of the current situation and look for a change to democracy. "This is the last change for us to change the situation," they told villagers of Na-Sa-Ka Sector 4.

KSPPP KICKS OFF CAMPAIGNS FOR 2010 ELECTIONS

The Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) led by former leaders of Kachin ceasefire groups' have begun their pre-election campaigns in major townships of the Kachin State. The KSPP party campaigns are now underway in Myitkyina, Waing-Maw, Puta-O, Naung-mong, Ma-chambaw, Kaung-lanphu, Ingyan-yang, Pharkant, Ta-naing, Moe-nyin, Moe-gaung, Bahmo, Moe-mauk, Shwe-gu townships according to party chairman Dr. Tu Ja. He added that party members would be sent to Chi-bwey township and neighbouring towns and villages in the near future and his party's activities are just small steps in preparing for the 2010 elections. Currently, the KSPP is mainly composed with retired KIO and NDA-K officers, led by former Vice-President of the KIO Dr. Manam Tu Ja, member of Kachin Consultative Council U Zaw Phang, Major Mann-chan Thein Saung of the NDAK, Major Phong-ram of the KIO splinter faction La-saung-aung-wa group. At present the KSPP is one of the few ethnic groups which have accepted the junta elections process and thus have been able to campaign freely without any hinderance and according to party sources its membership is around 900 members.

NLD (KACHIN) ENDORSES SHWEGONDINE DECLARATION

At a recent party meeting held in Moe-nyin, Kachin State, NLD members from 7 township committees gave its full support and endorsed the Shwegondine Declaration. According to Vice-Chairman U Than Naing of Moe-nyin NLD, members from Bahmo, Shwe-gu, Moe-gaung, Moe-nyin, Myitkyina, Ta-naing, Pharkant NLD committees and

members unanimously adopted a decision to accept the guidelines and policies laid down in the Declaration. While adopting the CEC guidelines on one hand, in a rare and bold move, NLD (Kachin) committee and its members have in recent weeks attempted to re-open some of its local township offices as well as recruiting new members to promote the party's interest and image. However, these activities proved to be counter-productive, when a recent NLD Village/Ward level meeting came to an abrupt end when local VPDC authorities intervened. However, NLD Kachin has vowed to continue its activities in line with the Central Executive Committees' guidelines.

ANALYSIS

Election campaigns in Chin, Rakhine and Kachin States by USDA, National Unity Party-NUP and KSPP, indicates the systematic step-by-step approach taken by the junta as it prepares itself for the 2010 elections. Parties representing the regime and those loyal to it have been granted immunity and freedom of movement to campaign in their respective constituencies. Other regions and far flung areas of the country will now see the influx of USDA and its members rallying to foster support as the elections draw closer. Calls for amending the 2008 Constitution plus other political demands by the opposition is falling on deaf ears on one hand, allowing the junta a free hand to coordinate strategies and plans to its benefit on the other. The NLD (Kachin)'s attempt to revitalize and inject impetus to the party's image and membership at the regional level is a positive sign and should be explored further to the fullest extent. Consideration should be given to engage in lobbying campaigns on a small scale basis prior to the announcement of the Electoral Law by others involved in this political process. The SPDC has stated its position with regards to the holding of the elections and it remains for the rest to decide the path they wish to follow in shaping the Burma's modern day history.