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## ELECTION MONITOR NO. 19

### **PARTY REGISTRATION REACHES 19**

According to government media sources in Yangon, the number of political parties now registered to contest the forthcoming elections stands at nineteen.<sup>1</sup> The number of parties that applied for registration is sixteen and those which have re-registered is three. Of the total, nine are ethnic-based parties (\*) from five of the seven ethnic states:

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. 88 Generation Student Youths (Union of Myanmar)  | Registered 22 March 2010    |
| 2. Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics | Registered 22 March 2010    |
| 3. National Unity Party (NUP)                       | Re-registered 29 March 2010 |
| 4. Democratic Party                                 | Registered 30 March 2010    |
| 5. Kayin People's Party (KPP)                       | Registered 31 March 2010*   |
| 6. National Political Alliances League              | Registered 1 April 2010     |
| 7. Pa-O National Organisation (PNO)                 | Registered 2 April 2010*    |
| 8. Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP)            | Registered 5 April 2010*    |
| 9. Myanmar New Society Democratic Party             | Registered 5 April 2010     |
| 10. The Difference and Peace Party                  | Registered 6 April 2010     |
| 11. New Era People's Party                          | Registered 6 April 2010*    |
| 12. Chin National Party                             | Registered 7 April 2010     |
| 13. Union Democracy Party                           | Registered 8 April 2010     |
| 14. Shan Nationals Democratic Party                 | Registered 8 April 2010*    |
| 15. Taaung (Palaung) National Party                 | Registered 8 April 2010*    |
| 16. Union Kayin League                              | Re-registered 8 April 2010* |
| 17. Wunthanu NLD (Union of Myanmar)                 | Registered 9 April 2010     |
| 18. Wa Democratic Party                             | Registered 9 April 2010*    |
| 19. Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organization   | Re-registered 9 April 2010* |

In the 1990 elections, 235 parties registered and 93 parties fielded candidates. The government's Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) has yet to register as a party.

### **USDA LOBBIES TO GAIN VOTES**

In an effort to garner support, the government backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) is embarking on social development projects in Yangon and Ayeyawaddy Divisions. Members of USDA are undertaking the development of roads, providing loans and assisting in building schools, clinics and medical dispensaries. In Phawt-kan Ward, Insein Township, funds to upgrade roads have been provided by the USDA with the understanding that the locals vote for USDA candidates. In other areas of Yangon, the organization is planning to provide financial loans, and it is estimated that 12 Billion Kyats has been allotted to carry out development projects. Development works have also been implemented in Ahlone, Kyimyindine, Sanchaung, Kamayut, Hlaing townships in Yangon Division, while at the same time local residents have been coerced into joining the organization. According to government sources the USDA now has a nationwide membership of 24 million members.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Party Registration Reaches 19 - <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/104newsn.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 10 April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> USDA Lobbies to Gain Votes - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/bur/index.php/news/1-news/2953-2010-04-07-08-35-23> (Irrawaddy) 7 April 2010.

### **RAIL TRANSPORT MINISTER LOBBIES IN TOUNGOO**

Minister for Rail Transport, Major-General Aung Min has been busy wooing Muslims in Toungoo, Bago Division, with promises to re-open mosques in return for votes and support. During racial riots in Toungoo in 2001 between Buddhist and Muslim communities, many mosques were forced to close down and still remain closed. Aung Min, a former Commander of LIB No.66 based in Pyay and a former Regional Commander of Southern Command, is planning to run as a candidate for Toungoo according to local residents.<sup>3</sup>

### **RAKHINE USDA LEADERS TRAVEL TO NAYPYIDAW**

Leaders of the government-backed Rakhine State USDA traveled to Naypyidaw after being invited by authorities for the formation of the USDA political party, according to a USDA member from Sittwe. The delegation was led by U Kyaw Win, Secretary of the Rakhine State USDA, and comprised of all members from state and district levels of the organization within Rakhine State. According to news sources, the group would take part in a USDA meeting in Naypyidaw which was scheduled to end before the Burmese New Year (Thingyan) on 17 April. A source from Sittwe reports that the USDA organization will register with the Election Commission in the near future after the organization is transformed into a party. A senior retired army officer, Lt. Col Kyaw Zan Hla, is expected to lead the party in Rakhine State. He is also being tipped to become the regime's choice to serve as Minister of State/Chief Minister.<sup>4</sup>

### **ELECTION COMMISSION ANNOUNCES LAST DATE FOR PARTY REGISTRATION.**

According to Announcement No.18/2010 dated 9 April 2010, issued by the Union Election Commission, political parties must register before 6 May 2010 in order to be eligible to contest the elections. Under Article 25 of the Political Parties Registration Law, parties failing to submit their registration in time will most likely face exclusion from the electoral process and consequently be deemed illegal. Similarly, existing parties wishing to re-register their continued existence must meet the same deadline.<sup>5</sup>

### **UNION ELECTION COMMISSION OPENS LAWS, RULES AND MANUAL GUIDE COURSE**

A two-day training course by the Union Election Commission (UEC) for government officials who will serve in polling stations was launched in Naypyidaw on 7 April 2010. The course was attended by Justice Ministry officials from state/division/district level offices, officials from the Ministry of Immigration and officers from General Administration Department nominated as Secretaries of state/division/district election sub-commissions. The training course was aimed at polling station officers at district and township levels while village and ward level polling officials will be appointed by the respective township authorities. In his opening address, the Chairman of the Election Commission U Thein Soe stated the need for the trainees to understand the duties and responsibilities of the Commission and emphasized to them the importance of understanding the electoral laws. A total of 252 trainees attended the course from 7 to 9 April.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rail Transport Minister Lobbies in Toungoo - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/bur/index.php/news/1-news/2954-2010-04-07-10-32-04> (Irrawaddy) 7 April 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Arakan USDA Leaders Travel to Naypyidaw - <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=2553> (Narinjara) 12 April 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Election Commission Announces Last Date for Party Registration - <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/104newsn.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 10 April 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Union Election Commission Opens Laws, Rules and Manual Guide Course - <http://myanmargeneva.org/NLM2010/eng/4Apr/n100408.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 4 April 2010.

## **UNION ELECTION COMMISSION ISSUES ANNOUNCEMENT ON FORMATION OF STATE AND DIVISION SUB-COMMISSIONS**

The Union Election Commission (UEC) of the Union of Myanmar has issued Announcement No. 3/2010 on the formation of state and division election sub-commissions. The announcement states that in exercise of the powers stipulated in the Article 8 (c) of the Union Election Commission Law, Kachin State, Kayah State, Kayin State, Chin State, Sagaing Division, Taninthayi Division, Bago Division, Magway Division, Mandalay Division, Mon State, Rakhine State, Yangon Division, Shan State and Ayeyawady Division sub-commissions have been formed to supervise the successful holding of the Hluttaw elections in 2010. Offices of the election sub-commissions will be opened at the respective State and Division General Administration Department offices. The sub-commissions formed and assigned are to supervise the elections and ensure that they are free and fair and in accord with election laws and rules.<sup>7</sup>

## **UNION ELECTION COMMISSION ISSUES ANNOUNCEMENTS ON FORMATION OF AND ASSIGNMENTS TO DISTRICT SUB-COMMISSIONS**

The Union Election Commission (UEC) of the Union of Myanmar has also issued announcements on the formation of district election sub-commissions and assigned duties to them.<sup>8</sup> The district sub-commissions and duties assigned by the UEC in the states and divisions are as follows:

- Announcement No. 4/2010: Putao District, Bhamo District, Mohnyin District and Myitkyina District sub-commissions in Kachin State;
- Announcement No 5/2010: Bawlake District and Loikaw District sub-commissions in Kayah State;
- Announcement No. 6/2010: Kawkareik District, Hpa-an District and Myawady District sub-commissions in Kayin State;
- Announcement No. 7/2010: Falam District and Mindat District sub-commissions in Chin State;
- Announcement No. 8/2010: Kalay District, Katha District, Hkamti District, Sagaing District, Tamu District, Mawleik District, Monywa District and Shwebo District sub-commissions in Sagaing Division;
- Announcement No. 9/ 2010: Kawthoung District, Dawei District and Myeik District sub-commissions in Taninthayi Division;
- Announcement No. 10/2010: Toungoo District, Bago District, Pyay District and Thayawady District sub-commissions in Bago Division;
- Announcement No. 11/2010: Gangaw District, Pakokku District, Magway District, Minbu District and Thayet District sub-commissions in Magway Division;
- Announcement No. 12/2010: Kyaukse District, NyaungU District, Nay Pyi Taw District, PyinOoLwin District, Meiktila District, Mandalay District, Myingyan District and Yamethin District sub-commissions in Mandalay Division;
- Announcement No. 13/2010: Mawlamyine District and Thaton District sub-commissions in Mon State;
- Announcement No. 14/2010: Kyaukphyu District, Sittway District, Maungtau District and Thandwe District sub-commissions in Rakhine State;
- Announcement No. 15/2010: Yangon (South) District, Yangon (North) District, Yangon (West) District and Yangon (East) District sub-commissions in Yangon Division;

<sup>7</sup> Union Election Commission Issues Announcement on Formation of State and Division Sub-Commissions - <http://myanmargeneva.org/NLM2010/eng/4Apr/n100408.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 4 April 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Union Election Commission Issues Announcements on Formation of and Assignments to District Sub-Commission - <http://myanmargeneva.org/NLM2010/eng/4Apr/n100408.pdf> (New Light of Myanmar) 4 April 2010.

Announcement No. 16/2010: Taunggyi District, Loilem District, Langkho District, Kyaukme District, Kunlon District, Muse District, Lashio District, Laukkai District, Kengtung District, Tachilek District, Monghsat District and Mongphyat District sub-commissions in Shan State;

Announcement No. 17/2010: Pathein District, Pyapon District, Maubin District, Myaungmya District, Labutta District and Hinthada District sub-commissions in Ayeyawady Division.

## **ANALYSIS**

Several ethnic groups and organizations have opted to join the electoral process with some key groups still remaining undecided. The number of parties will no doubt increase in the few remaining weeks of party registration, however the numbers compared to 1990 are very low. This could work to the advantage of the SPDC.

The decision taken by the ethnic groups can be seen as positive, allowing for their greater participation in shaping the political future of the country as well as promoting development in their regions. The regime-backed parties and organizations will continue to use all available resources and strategies to garner support in order to determine the outcome of the election results. Although the USDA has not yet officially registered as a party, in the eyes of many the organization stands to benefit from the decision taken by the NLD in declaring its unwillingness to contest the polls under the present circumstances.

Announcements on the formation of District Sub-Commissions and the conducting of training courses for polling station officials once more highlights the determination of the junta to implement the Seven-Step Road Map. All that remains now is to await the announcement of the election date by the regime, while at the same time monitor the outcome of the unresolved Border Guard Force saga between the junta on one side and the Wa and KIO ethnic cease-fire groups on the other.