
ELECTION MONITOR NO. 27

NEW APPROVED APPLICATIONS TO FORM A POLITICAL PARTY

The Union Election Commission (UEC) has granted permission to the following to form a political party:

1. The Regional Development Party (Pyay) - 7 June 2010 (Date Approved)¹

NEW APPROVED APPLICATIONS TO REGISTER AS A POLITICAL PARTY

After a party has been given permission to be established by the UEC, the second step is to officially register as a political party, which involves providing full information on the party - membership lists per township, etc.

Of the parties that have been granted permission to register as political parties by the UEC, the following parties have submitted their full applications as a second step (a number have already been approved by the UEC):

1. Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP) - 8 June 2010 (Date Applied)²
2. National Democratic Party for Development - 4 June 2010 (Date Approved)³
3. Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party - 4 June 2010 (Date Approved)³
4. Union Solidarity and Development Party - 8 June 2010 (Date Approved)²

To date, 42 parties have submitted applications to form and to continue existence as political parties.

32 of 33 parties that have submitted their applications for the second step of registration as political parties have been granted permission to register.

Those that have yet to be approved to form political parties are still under scrutiny by the UEC.

NEW POLITICAL PARTIES TO START WEBSITES

At least two new political parties in Burma will launch a website as a strategic part of their election campaign, according to party leaders. Leaders of the Union Democratic Party (UDP) and the Peace and Diversity Party (PDP) said that they will seek approval from the authorities to launch their websites. To receive permission to publish material, a political party must pay 600,000 Kyat (US \$600) to the Scrutiny and Registration Division. "To have a website will be important for a political party during the election campaign," said Nay Myo Wai, the PDP Secretary. During the 1990 elections, campaigning mainly relied on pamphlets, posters and political gatherings and thus the introduction of party websites will become a new addition to the Burmese political landscape. Phyo Min Thein, the Chairman of the UDP, said that he planned to seek technical assistance from friends and supporters outside of Burma to help set up his party's website. According to the 1962 Printing and Publishing Act, a registered political party can publish election-related materials such as

¹ Application for formation, registration scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2010

² Applications for registration as political party scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 June 2010

³ Applications for registration as political party scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 June 2010

pamphlets, journals and booklets without the approval of the Press Censorship Division. The law requires that a political party must not oppose the ruling State Peace and Development Council or criticize the armed forces, and it must comply with existing laws.⁴

SHAN NATIONALITIES DEMOCRATIC PARTY OFFICE INAUGURATED IN NAMKHAM

The opening ceremony to inaugurate the office of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) was held in Namkham township, Shan State (North) on 9 June. The SNDP office situated in Pauk-lay ward in Namkham was attended by party Chairman Sai Ai Pao, SNDP members and invited guests. The party has designated U Sai Cho Oo as Chairman and U Sai Saing Wun as Vice-Chairman of Namkham Township respectively. Election campaigns had been on-going prior to opening of the SNDP party offices in Namkham. The SNDP plans to contest in 39 out of 55 townships in Shan State; 2 in Sagaing Division; 6 townships in Kachin State; 3 in Kayah (Karenni) State as well as in Rangoon and Mandalay Divisions.⁵

NUP AND USDP SEEK CANDIDATES IN KACHIN STATE

The junta-backed National Unity Party (NUP) and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have heightened their election campaigns in Kachin state, according to local residents. With the aim of gaining the support of locals, NUP and USDP members are now targeting and urging prominent local community leaders from the Shan and Kachin communities in Myitkyina to join and run as candidates for the two parties. Many of the Kachin community leaders initially had plans to contest the polls as candidates of the Kachin parties in order to promote the interest of the Kachin people. However, due to the delay in the registration process by the Election Commission of the Kachin parties, many of their members have become unhappy and disillusioned and some have even signed on to junta-backed parties as an alternative option to take part in the elections. Although no concrete explanation has been given with regards to the registration of the three Kachin national parties, many observers believe it to be linked to the transformation of the (KIO) into a Border Guard Force. The delay has thus far proved to benefit the NUP and USDP in the Kachin state.⁶

UEC MEMBER EXPLAINS ELECTORAL PROCESS IN MONYWA

On 2 June, UEC member Dr Maung Htoo gave a briefing session on electoral work at the hall of Monywa University of Economics. Dr Maung Htoo also donated cash assistance for the development and upgrading of libraries in Zalot (West) Monywa, Kyaukka, Sitar, Yekansu and Kanma villages.⁷

COURSE ON ELECTORAL WORK CONVENED IN SINGU TOWNSHIP, MANDALAY DIVISION

Singu Township Election Sub-commission convened an Electoral Course for sub-commission officials at the meeting hall of Township General Administration Department on the morning of 4 June. Member of Mandalay Division Election Sub-commission U Ye Aung Myint and member of Pyin-Oo-Lwin District Election Sub-commission U Maung Ko delivered opening addresses. After the opening address, members of Township Election Sub-commission Daw Tin Tin Nu and Daw Nwe gave briefings on matters related to electoral works to members of Ward and Village Election Sub-commissions.⁸

⁴ New political parties to start websites - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18653 (Irrawaddy) 8 June 2010

⁵ Shan nationalities democratic party office inaugurated in Namkham - <http://www.mongloi.org/burmese/2008-08-01-03-22-02/85-2008-08-01-03-14-40/900-2010-06-09-10-28-01> (Mongloi) 9 June 2010

⁶ NUP and USDP seeks candidates in Kachin state - <http://www.khitpyaing.org/index.php?route=detail&id=2202> (New Era Journal) 9 June 2010

⁷ UEC member explains electoral process in Monywa - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 June 2010

⁸ Multiplier course on electoral work opened in Singu township - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-06-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 June 2010

ANALYSIS

The initiative by the Union Democratic Party (UDP) and the Peace and Diversity Party (PDP) to launch party websites is a positive sign in Burma's election landscape. The aim to provide voters and the international community with party policies and election campaign strategies by the two parties will encourage others to follow suit and enable voters to access information readily and easily, and thus provide them with a choice. The process of launching party websites will not be easy and will naturally be administered under tight and restrictive measures. The parties will be obliged to adhere to the 1962 Printing and Publishing Act. Furthermore, financial implications will also need to be taken into consideration if they are serious in launching party websites when some parties are already confronted with the daunting task of providing support for their would-be candidates.

With the number of registered parties reaching 33 and applications to form parties remaining at 42 during the past week, focus has now turned to the issue of registering list of members as required by Announcement No.64/2010 dated 28 June 2010. Those unable to provide the list of members within the prescribed 90 days will run the risk of having their registration cancelled and the party being abolished. Such restrictions will no doubt cause many parties difficulties and the likelihood that some parties may fall victim under the present circumstances. Such stringent and restrictive measures implemented by the UEC are clear signs of the strategies used by the SPDC in its step-by-step approach to dismantle the opposition ahead of the polls. Based on the approach taken by the election watchdog, the next likely direction for the UEC will most probably be to focus on scrutinizing the nominated candidates and their financial resources.