

ELECTION MONITOR NO. 32

NEW APPROVED APPLICATIONS TO REGISTER AS A POLITICAL PARTY

The Union Election Commission (UEC) has granted permission to the following parties to register:

1. Khami National Development Party 9 July 2010 (Date approved)
2. National Democratic Force (NDF) 9 July 2010 (Date approved)

To date, 43 parties have applied to form or continue existence as political parties. Of that total, 39 parties have been given permission to be established and 38 parties have been permitted to register.¹

POLITICAL PARTIES SUBMIT MEMBER LISTS TO UNION ELECTION COMMISSION

The following parties have submitted lists of their party members to the UEC in accordance with Article 13 (a) of the Political Parties Registration Law:

1. All Mon Region Democracy Party - 15 July 2010 (Date Submitted)
2. Pa-O National Organization (PNO) - 12 July 2010 (Date Submitted)
3. Wa National Unity Party - 15 July 2010 (Date Submitted)²

ETHNIC LAHU PARTY WILL ONLY CONTEST IN 6 TOWNSHIPS IN SHAN STATE

The Lahu National Democratic Party (LNDP) will only contest in 6 townships across the Shan State in the upcoming general elections, according to a Lahu elder. The party is based in Quarter #1 Tineyone Road, Lashio, Shan State North, and is led by Chairman Jaha Shay and Secretary Joseph. The LNDP will contest in Shan State North's Tangyan Township and in Maing-ton, Mongpyin, Monghsat, Mongphyak and Tachilek townships in Shan State East. In the 1990 elections, the party's advisor, Daniel Aung, won the most votes in Mongpyin. Despite the large Lahu populations in these townships, there are also other ethnic nationalities such as Shan and Wa, therefore the LNDP will have to compete with the parties of these ethnic groups as well as with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Although many Lahu people also live in the Wa controlled areas, the LNDP said they will not contest there due to instability and the continued resistance of the Wa to transform their forces into Border Guard Forces. "The party has never had an officially recognized MP and its aim, should they win enough votes, is to create a space for its own people and to have a representative for the Lahu people," according to an elder.³

WA DEMOCRATIC PARTY TO CREATE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES TO RAISE FUNDS

The Wa Democratic Party based in Lashio, which is planning to contest in all three tiers of parliament, has decided to create business enterprises in order to raise funds needed to support the party, said party Chairman Khun Tun Lu. The party will contest in Hopang, Kunlon, Tangyan and Mawpha townships. The party has gained the attention and interest of local residents. Initially, the party will establish business enterprises through which political activities will be funded said party

1 Registration of political parties scrutinized, passed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-07-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 July 2010

2 Political parties submit member list to Union Election Commission - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-07-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2010

3 Ethnic Lahu will only contest in 6 townships in Shan state - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3099:ethnic-lahu-party-will-only-contest-in-6-townships-in-shan-state&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 13 July 2010

central executive committee member U Saing San. Under the 2008 constitution, five autonomous administrative regions have been designated within the Shan State of which the Wa region is one. The party's leaders came to prominence for their involvement in negotiating the peace agreement between the junta and the Wa cease-fire group which took place in 1989 and thus the party already has the support of the many local residents within the region, said Khun Tun Lu. Currently, the Wa population is estimated to be between 700,000 and 800,000 - the majority of which are said to reside within Hopang, Maingmaw, Panwaing, Narpham, Metmann and Pensang Townships. The Wa Democratic Party intends to run in four townships initially and will consider the possibility of campaigning in other townships at a later stage.⁴

MON PARTY URGENTLY NEEDS CAMPAIGN FUNDS

The All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP) expects to gain seats in the Mon area in the upcoming 2010 General Election, says Nai Ngwe Thein, the party leader during the first round of his party's campaign. The AMRDP's Chairman said that he felt encouraged after talking with local people and Buddhist monks who warmly welcomed them during the party's first public campaign held last month in June. Nai Ngwe Thein explained that the party's platform is to work for democratic and ethnic rights and social development while creating opportunities for those who wish to develop a free market economy. According to another leader, Dr. Banya Aung Moe, the AMRDP will face an uphill challenge in trying to raise the funds which are needed to run a political campaign. They will need to cover the travelling costs as well as pay for the rent of the head and local offices. "This is a huge logistic task to run all these activities before the election. We hope to raise these [funds] from membership fees and donations from the local business community. There are about three million Mons who speak the Mon language, and also many who do not speak Mon. If only one percent become members, we will be able to raise the funds needed for the party easily," he added. The AMRDP plans to contest outside of Mon State in Bago, Taninthayi (Tenasserim) Divisions and Karen State. 42 candidates will contest in Mon State and 13 in Bago, Taninthayi Divisions and Karen State. AMRDP will contest in three legislative bodies: the People's Parliament, the National Parliament and the States/Regions Assembly.⁵

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FORCE RECRUITS CANDIDATES IN 50 TOWNS

A senior member of the National Democratic Force (NDF) said last week that the party had organised candidates in about 50 towns across the country and was optimistic that it would attract more when the party was officially registered. U Khin Maung Swe, one of the party's founders, said the NDF candidates include a mixture of former National League for Democracy (NLD) members, politicians from other parties and "new faces". He said the party had made contact with the potential candidates - from Magway, Mandalay and Bago divisions, eastern Shan State and Mon State - primarily through former NLD members. "If we get approval to start campaigning, I am sure we will get more candidates who want to run under the NDF umbrella," he said. "Most of the candidates will pay the registration fee themselves to contest the seats. [The party headquarters] will finance some needy candidates." According to party Chairman Dr Than Nyein, funding would become a major challenge for the party, since the party is aiming to contest most seats across the country at all three legislative levels of government. "Our funds are quite limited so we can't possibly help all our candidates. They will have to supply their own funds for registration as well as for campaigning," Dr Than Nyein said. The NDF applied to register with the Union Election Commission

⁴ Wa democratic party to create business enterprises to raise funds - <http://myanmar.mmtimes.com/2010/news/474/news04.html> (Myanmar Times) 12 July 2010

⁵ Mon party urgently needs campaign funds - <http://www.kaowao.org/2010news-july-11.php> (Kaowao) 11 July 2010

on 24 June and received approval on 9 July. Many of its 19 founding members, like U Khin Maung Swe and Dr Than Nyein, were formerly with the NLD.⁶

THREE PROMINENT PARTIES POLITICAL PARTIES EYE ALLIANCE

Three prominent opposition parties contesting Burma's elections this year have agreed to the idea of forming an alliance to increase their presence in the new parliament. The spokesperson for the National Democratic Force (NDF), Khin Maung Swe, said that "democratic parties would rather not compete or face against each other". The NDF includes former members of the defunct National League for Democracy (NLD), headed by Aung San Suu Kyi. Included in the alliance will be the Union Democratic Party (UDP) and the Democratic Party. Both belong to the so-called 'third force' in Burmese politics, outwardly allied to neither the NLD nor the incumbent. The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), the Rakhine [Arakan] Development Party and other ethnic Mon and Chin parties have also been approached. "We all agreed to negotiate with each other to avoid gaps and overlaps in the parliament," Khin Maung Swe continued. "But I think that according to the law we can only settle on a joint action committee before the elections take place."⁷

CHIN PROGRESSIVE PARTY'S FIRST CONFERENCE IN YANGON

The Chin Progressive Party (CPP) will hold its first conference in Yangon, where it has established its headquarters in preparing for the 2010 general elections. "The conference will be held on 21 July and will be the party's first conference, but there is no official information about how many representatives will attend the meeting," said a member. "In the conference the future work schedule of the CPP for the forthcoming general election will be discussed. The agenda of the conference will include party organizational work as well as nomination of party candidates. One of the most recent developments is the formation of the township level working committee in Thantlang Township in May 2010, while locals in the towns of Tawnzang, Tedim, Hakha and Falam are awaiting organizational activities to take place in their respective townships by the party. Presently, parties that have registered with the UEC and are preparing to contest the elections in the Chin state are the CPP, the Chin National Party (CNP), the Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP), the Union Democracy Party (UDP), the National United Party (NUP) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).⁸

USDA "ABOLISHED": OFFICIAL

The regime-sponsored civic organization Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) has begun the process of "abolishing" itself after transferring all its property to the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) led by the regime's Prime Minister Thein Sein. "The USDA is no more as an association. Only the USDP will exist as a political party," said USDA spokesman Myint Oo. "We are now in an ongoing process of abolishing the association on a gradual basis," he said. The USDA official said that the association, whose principal patron is military chief Than Shwe, received the regime's approval on 6 July to abolish itself, paving the way for the USDP to contest the upcoming election as a full-fledged political party. The state-controlled media has yet to make any official announcement of the news. Myint Oo also confirmed that all USDA assets have been transferred to the USDP. The transfer of USDA assets to the regime's proxy party confirms the speculation of political observers that since the USDA's assets belong to the state, any use of the association's

⁶ Democratic Force recruits candidates in 50 towns - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2010/news/531/news010.html> (Myanmar Times) 12 July 2010

⁷ Burma political parties eye alliance - <http://www.dvb.no/elections/burma-political-parties-eye-alliance/10718> (DVB) 13 July 2010

⁸ Chin progressive party's first conference in Yangon - <http://www.khonumthung.org/news.php?readmore=245> (Khonumthung) 14 July 2010

property by the USDP would constitute a violation of the regime's Political Parties Registration Law—the law that bans political parties from using state-owned properties. One observer said: “This is neither the abolishment of the USDA nor its assets transferred to somewhere else. This is just a name change from USDA to USDP.”⁹

ELECTORAL COURSE OPENED IN KUNGYANGON

Supervised by Kungyangon Township Election Sub-Commission, an electoral course was opened for members of Ward/Village-tract election sub-commissions of the township at Kungyangon Basic Education High School No. 1 on 4 July 2010. Member of Southern Yangon District Election Sub-Commission District Law Officer Daw Nyo Nyo (in charge of Kungyangon Township) delivered an opening speech and Chairman U Hla Win of the Township Sub-commission explained the purpose of the course.¹⁰

MANDALAY DIVISION ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION MEETS

Mandalay Division Election Sub-Commission held its work coordination meeting No. 6/ 2010 at the meeting hall of Division Election Sub-Commission Office on 9 July. At the meeting, they discussed the selection of ward/village polling stations, the approval of the lists of eligible voters, the conditions for conducting returning officers and deputy returning officers and electoral works. The meeting was attended by Chairman of Division Election Sub-Commission U Aung Htut and other members.¹¹

ELECTORAL WORK COURSE CONDUCTED IN THONGWA TOWNSHIP OF YANGON DIVISION

Yangon South District Election Sub- Commission opened an electoral work course for members of ward/village-tract Election Sub-Commission in Thongwa Township at No.1 Basic Education High School in Thongwa Township on 10 July. Chairman U Myat Soe of the District Election Sub-Commission explained the purpose of opening the course. Members of District Election Sub-Commission and Chairman of Township Election Sub-Commission U Zaw Weik discussed election laws, regulations and duties of the sub-commission, returning officers and members, and conducted demonstrations on voting process. The course was attended by altogether 406 members from Ward/Village-tract Election Sub- Commission in Thongwa Township.¹²

ANALYSIS

With party registration coming slowly to a halt, focus on the electoral process has now shifted to the submission of the lists of party members, as well as raising funds to finance would-be candidates. Parties such as the All Mon Region Democratic Party (AMRDP) and the Wa Democratic Party are now creating business enterprises to finance the much needed funds to support their candidates. They are also counting on cash donations from their own communities. Many parties will encounter difficulties and those found to contravene existing Election Laws will have to answer to the UEC. Parties are also considering the possibility of forming alliances not only to solve their financial issues but also to be able to compete with junta-backed parties, namely the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP). Some parties have resorted to contesting only in State or Regional assemblies and thus need fewer funds for their candidates. Furthermore, the decision by many ethnic parties to only contest the polls within their own

⁹ USDA “Abolished”: official - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18980 (Irrawaddy) 16 July 2010

¹⁰ Electoral course opened - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-07-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 July 2010

¹¹ Mandalay division election sub-commission meets - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-07-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 July 2010

¹² Electoral work course conducted in Thongwa of Yangon Division - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/NLM2010-07-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2010

states/regions will allow them to focus more on promoting the interest of their own people as well as their regions. Whatever the decision may be, the much needed party funding will no doubt become an issue for many parties in the coming months with the exception of the USDP and the NUP.

The recent transformation of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) into the USDP and the acquisition of government funds and properties by the USDP highlight the importance of strong financial backing to contest the elections.

While the junta insists that the USDA and the USDP are separate entities, the transfer of assets clearly indicates that the USDA and USDP are one and the same. What is of serious concern is that this asset transfer may constitute a violation of the regime's own Political Parties Registration Law that bans political parties from using state-owned properties since the USDA's assets were state assets. This violation is similar to the fact that USDP leaders are all serving members of the current administration – civil servants – who are technically banned by the law from being members of political parties. These violations of the SPDC's own laws and the fact that former USDA members are being appointed as members of election sub-commissions clearly indicate that the SPDC does not intend to make the elections free and fair.