

USDA transformed to political party

Tuesday 30 March 2010, by [Kyaw Kha](#) (Date first published: 29 March 2010).

The much anticipated transformation of the junta backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) into a political party, has come through. It will contest the 2010 general elections under the same nomenclature.

The information was disclosed by a high ranking party official.

The USDA has been converted into USDA party and all government staff and students and youths under 25 years of age have been expelled from the organization. The rest are being issued party membership cards since last week, the official said.

“We have started the ground work to contest the election. The organization is converted into a party. We have already formed division and district level branches and all the assets and ownership have been transferred. There are now no more government property and assets,” he told Mizzima.

Though the USDA party has not yet been registered with the Election Commission, it is preparing to contest the election.

While the military regime is trying to blackout news of the steps being taken for the conversion, all the USDA members interviewed by Mizzima confirmed the news.

Party sources disclosed that they do not need to do special organizational work because they have been doing regular work by building roads and bridges for the people.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) set up the USDA on 15 September 1993 after seizing power by a coup in 1988. The five top generals of the ruling ‘State Peace and Development Council’ (SPDC) including Senior Gen. Than Shwe are patrons of the organization.

The USDA has 17 State and Division level branches, 66 district level branches, 320 township branches and 24 million members, according to an official statement issued in 2007. Agriculture Minister Maj. Gen. Htay Oo is the General Secretary.

According to the Party Registration Law, government staff members and all persons under the age of 25 years are barred from being party members. But the exact number of current members of the USDA minus the barred members is not yet known.

Serving generals and serving ministers of the cabinet will contest the general election as candidates of the USDA, the opposition group in exile, the ‘Forum for Democracy in Burma’ (FDB) Secretary General Dr. Naing Aung said.

“Military personnel will contest the election through the USDA. Many senior leaders will resign from their army posts and will contest,” he said.

Naypyitaw, the new capital has instructed blacking out the news on the current status of the USDA, which is considered the pillar of the military regime. Earlier, Burmese analysts speculated that USDA would assume a new name to contest the election and may be broken up to more than one

party.

USDA members have been building roads and distributing drinking water as part of its organizational work along with serving military party members. But the image of the USDA was tarnished after the pre-meditated attack on NLD members and leaders in 2003 in Depayin and its involvement in the brutal crackdown on protesters in the 2007 saffron revolution.

The source in Naypyitaw said, some serving cabinet ministers and serving military officers will announce their resignation from their posts soon.

The NLD party of Aung San Suu Kyi, who narrowly escaped being killed in the Depayin attack, decided today not to register the party with the Election Commission.

Mizzima learnt that USDA leaders monitored the NLD meeting on the issue, held today.

P.S.

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