

Two political parties—the 88 Generation Students of the Union of Myanmar and the Union of Myanmar National Political Force—became the first to register in Naypyidaw.

Two political parties—the 88 Generation Students of the Union of Myanmar (GSUM) and the Union of Myanmar National Political Force (UMNPF)—were the first to register on Monday to participate in the planned general election.

Representatives of the two parties traveled from Rangoon to the Burmese capital, Naypyidaw, to register at the Election Commission office there. The GSUM was the first to hand in its registration application.



UMNPF Chairman Aye Lwin told *The Irrawaddy* on Monday: “Our country lags behind in comparison to others. I feel we have a chance to solve that problem in a political way.”

The UMNPF and the GSUM have close associations. Aye Lwin's younger brother, Ye Htun, is expected to be named chairman of the GSUM.

The GSUM is distinct from the original 88 Students Generation group led by prominent former students—including Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi—who are now in prison.

Aye Lwin, a 46-year-old former political prisoner, started his own political group in 2005. His close contacts with regime officials (he had a meeting with Rangoon's mayor, Maj-Gen Aung Thein Lin, five months ago) have made him unpopular with young activists, who accuse him of accepting substantial financial support from them.

Several other parties say they will register before the 60-day deadline expires. Democratic Party leader Thu Wai said his party's central executive had decided on Sunday to send a representative to Naypyidaw to register.

Han Shwe, executive member of the National Unity party, said: "Our party will also register within the fixed date."

A number of ethnic groups also say they are preparing to register as political parties.

Manam Tu Ja, joint chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), who resigned to form the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), said the KSPP would register before the annual Water Festival in April.

Shwe Ohn, a prominent Shan leader said his party, whose name has not yet been confirmed, also intended to register within the next 10 days.

The newly promulgated election laws require parties to pay a registration fee of 300,000 kyat (\$300) and 500,000 kyat (\$500) for each candidate fielded in the election.