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RANGOON — The majority of people in Burma seem to welcome the National League for Democracy (NLD) decision not to register as a political party and take part in this year's election, but they also say they may have fewer choices in the election.

*The Irrawaddy* interviewed a score of people on how they felt about the decision by the country's most influential political party not to take part in the first national election in 20 years in Burma. The military regime has yet to announce a date for the national election, which will create a parliament which will meet in Naypyidaw.



A 65-year-old lawyer, said, "I believed the NLD should stand aside with the people for justice and oppose the unfair election rules, which are just a way for the regime to maintain power."

A university student in Rangoon said, "It's a good decision because the Burmese regime is just trying to legitimize itself, but there will be political crisis in the country."

Another student said, "The government will dissolve the NLD. The political turmoil will go on."

Some people expressed sadness that the party, which has fought for democracy for more than 20 years, will be dissolved by the regime.

A 70-year-old high school teacher said, "It's sad, but the people will not forget Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party."

Many people said they are unsure now how to vote in the upcoming election without the

guidance of the NLD party, and they were not sure if they would vote.

“I always considered voting for the NLD first, but now there will be no NLD,” said a journalist in Rangoon.

Others said they disagreed with the decision to sit-out the election.

“There are many people who would have voted for the NLD,” said one man. “Without the party, what are these people going to do? What should we do?”

Some analysts expressed caution about what will transpire now that the party will be dissolved by the military government, noting that leaders and members could be more easily arrested and they will not have a platform to express their views.

“They [the regime] will find it easier to do whatever they want with the NLD gone,” said a news editor in Rangoon.

One observer said that without an improved, stable government, the US, European and Western countries might impose more economic sanctions on Burma, further weakening the country's struggling economy.

“The government says that they will privatize the market,” said an economics professor in Rangoon. “But if the United States and Europe impose more sanctions, the economic situation will become worse.”

A businessman said, “If there is an economic crisis, there will be another uprising like in 1988.”

Others saw more opportunity ahead following the election, because of the regime's huge privatization of many state-owned industries and markets, creating a more open economy and greater opportunities for businessmen.

“Even if the United States and European countries impose more sanctions, the economy will still be running. After the election, there will be an improvement in in economy,” said a rice merchant in Rangoon.

A journalist in Rangoon predicted that the government will continue applying pressure on ethnic armed groups to transform their troops into border guard forces before the election.

“There will be bloody attacks, and there will be political conflicts,” he said.