

Burma's Union Election Commission recently organized a two-day training in Naypyidaw for government officials who are to be appointed polling station officials. Burma's newly formed Union Election Commission recently organized a two-day training in Naypyidaw for government officials who are to be appointed polling station officials, sources in the remote capital said.

The training was scheduled to be held from April 7 to 9 and was to involve 252 officials from the government departments of court, immigration and general administration. The commissioner of the Union Election Commission, Thein Soe, officially opened the training course.

"The training course is aimed at polling station officers at district and township level. Village and quarter level polling station officials will be appointed by the township authorities," said a source in Naypyidaw who is close to the commission.

"All polling station officers in the country have to be government staff. They learn the laws of Burma, the Political Party Registration Law, tactical laws and the official guidelines," he added.

On Wednesday, the Union Election Commission announced the formation of a sub-election commission across the country at state and division levels as well as at district levels. The commission announcement noted: "Offices of the sub-commissions will be opened at the respective State and Division General Administration Department offices."

Since the Burmese junta issued the election law in early March—which effectively bars pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in the election process or retaining membership with her party, the National League for Democracy—it has faced substantive international criticism. The international community, including China and Southeast Asian countries, have called for an inclusive free and fair election in Burma.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) called on Burma's military government to open up the election process at the bloc's 16th summit in Hanoi this week.

"The elections should be free and democratic, with the participation of all parties," said Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who chaired the Asean summit, at a press conference on Friday.

At the summit, Asean leaders offered to organize international observers for the election.