

Some NLD leaders will break from the NLD and form their own party to contest the election.

Some leading members of Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), who disagreed with the party's decision to boycott this year's general election, have said they will announce the founding of a new political party in the coming days that will contest the polls.

The party, to be called the National Democratic Force, will be registered at the Election Commission sometime in the middle of this month, and will be headed by several members of the NLD, according to Dr. Than Nyein, a former political prisoner and a member of the NLD, who is expected to lead the new party.

"We are not in opposition to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," he said. "We just wish to continue our political activities. If we don't do this, we won't be able to achieve anything."

The NLD will automatically cease to exist at midnight on Thursday as that is the deadline for all existing political parties in Burma to register under the junta's election laws. In March, the party and its detained leader Suu Kyi decided against the party registering under what it called "unjust and unfair" election laws.

Dr. Than Nyein said that leading party members Dr. Win Naing, Thein Nyunt, Sein Hla Oo and several others will join the new party. Another prominent NLD leader, Khin Maung Swe, said that at least 20 Central Committee members will join the new party, to which he would serve as an adviser.

*The Irrawaddy* could not independently verify how many NLD members were preparing to join the new party.

Asked how much public support his party can expect without pro-democracy icon Suu Kyi at the helm, Dr. Than Nyein said that he is positive the new party will win the support of the people. He said the leaders of the new party will meet to decide how many constituencies the party will contest.

Recently, Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein and more than 20 military generals resigned their posts in the army and registered the government-backed Union Solidarity Development Party as a political party without giving up their civilian posts in the junta's cabinet. This has exacerbated the fear of many people that the military will continue to seek a leading role in a future civilian government.

To date, more than 30 political parties have applied for registration at the Election Commission.

“Without a doubt, a USDP led by the government prime minister will be the leading party in the elections,” said Dr. Than Nyein. “But it depends on the government how level the playing field will be for the other political parties.”