

The candidate nomination period for Burma's 2010 election closed on Monday. The deadline for candidates who want to withdraw their application is September 3, according to the timetable set by Election Commission.

Although Monday was the deadline for candidate nominations, it can also be translated as the deadline for the registration for new political parties as well, because no party can exist without fielding at least three candidates in the election, according to Article 16 of the Political Party Registration bylaw.

Out of 47 new and existing political parties which submitted their registration applications to the EC, 42 parties were approved as of Sept. 30. Five parties, including three Kachin parties, have been rejected because their party registration had not been approved by the EC within the time limit.

Regarding the case of the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) led by Dr Tu Ja, a former vice-chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), the EC repeatedly told KSPP leaders to continue their endeavors, and it never gave clear-cut answers when party officials went to Naypyidaw to question their lack of approval.

This follows the EC pattern of highhandedly exploiting the pre-election steps to create barriers for opposition political parties and to favor the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) at each step.

The EC failed to allow sufficient time for political parties to carry out all the necessary steps, but instead compressed the time to be able to hold the election on Nov. 7, a week ahead of the release of democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi on Nov. 14.

Also, the EC could have issued a timetable of pre-election steps in March, but it failed to do so intentionally so as not to allow the parties to get access to the right information and enough time to prepare the required documents.

Now, the junta has a fairly accurate way to predict the election on Nov. 7 by analyzing the candidate nomination lists for all the parties. The USDP plans to contest in all constituencies in the national and regional parliaments. The democratic opposition parties will field less than one hundred candidates each.

Meanwhile, the military carried out a major reshuffle last week, another major step leading to the resignation of many high-level generals who will seek seats in parliament. It was designed to be completed before the deadline for candidate registration. In April, the entire cabinet led by a former Gen Thein Sein also resigned to form the USDP.

These well-planned moves which have occurred since the promulgation of the electoral laws in March were strategically important for Snr-Gen Than Shwe and his generals to retain their grip on power in the post-election political structure of the country.

The people of Burma are not witnessing a transition from a military to civilian administration, but a transition within the military to form a pseudo-civilian branch of former military officers who will play a dual-function role to support the military in the new parliament.