

Burma's opposition party will decide on March 29 whether or not to register as a political party and participate in the election planned for this year.

Burma's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) will decide at a meeting of its Central Committee on March 29 whether or not to register as a political party and participate in the general election planned for this year.



If it does so, the NLD will have to expel its co-founder, Aung San Suu Kyi, because the newly published election law prohibits political parties from admitting prisoners as members. Suu Kyi is under house arrest and is not expected to be freed before the election.

The election law gave the NLD and other political groups until May 7 to decide whether to register and participate in the planned election.

NLD representative Ohn Kyaing told *The Irrawaddy* that the NLD's Central Committee and Central Executive Committee had discussed "the NLD's current political situation and the election law enacted by the military government" at the party's Rangoon headquarters on Monday. They had agreed to meet again on March 29 to "decide the future of the party," he said.

NLD Spokesman Khing Maung Swe told *The Irrawaddy*: "We discussed [the question of] continuing to exist as a party."

The NLD stance until now has been to adhere to last April's "Shwegondaing Declaration," calling for a review of the Constitution, political dialogue and the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Suu Kyi.

The declaration, however, is ignored by the election law, which states: “A person convicted by a court and currently serving a jail term or the person in the process of a legal pursuit against the jail term for a review of it at a court are not eligible to found a political party.”

The election law is seen to have been crafted to make sure that all political prisoners, including Suu Kyi, the 88 Generation students leaders and Khun Htun Oo, the leader of Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), which won the most seats in the 1990 election after the NLD, will be excluded from the 2010 election.

After promulgating the election law, the regime permitted about 300 NLD branch offices across Burma to reopen. They had been closed since a regime-friendly gang of thugs attacked Suu Kyi's motorcade in Depayin in upper Burma in 2003, killing scores of NLD supporters.