

Several leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Burma's recently dissolved main opposition party, are traveling in Kachin State with a prominent ethnic leader to meet with local party members and lobby for a boycott of next month's election.

NLD central executive committee member Ohn Kyaing told The Irrawaddy that he and several other senior party members visited the state capital of Myitkyina on Friday with ethnic Arakanese politician Aye Thar Aung to brief NLD members on the party's stand on the Nov. 7 election.



Ohn Kyaing, who is a spokesperson for the NLD, said that the meetings were held in the homes of party members and were also attended by local people with an interest in Burma's current political situation.

“Local party members actively discussed the election boycott and how to make the NLD stronger,” said Ohn Kyaing. “Some Kachin young people who are not NLD members also came to listen to us speak and to discuss these issues.”

Aye Thar Aung, who is the chairman of the Arakan League for Democracy and also the general secretary of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament, a group consisting of parliamentarians elected when Burma last went to the polls in 1990, spoke about the need for unity and solidarity among Burma's ethnic peoples and the NLD's future plans, according to Ohn Kyaing.

Aye Aye Mar, another leading member of the NLD, discussed detained party leader Aung San Suu Kyi's message to the Burmese public, while other speakers covered a range of issues, from the role of young people in the election boycott to the decision of some senior party members to break away from the NLD to form a new party, the National Democratic Force, to run in the election.

The senior NLD members also visited several other townships in Kachin State on Thursday to brief local party members on the NLD's position on the general election. Around 400 members attended the briefing on Thursday, said Ohn Kyaing.

The NLD leaders arrived in Myitkyina on Friday and are scheduled to visit other parts of Kachin State on Saturday. It was not clear if they planned to meet with ethnic Kachin politicians or the leaders of Kachin cease-fire groups.

NLD leaders have been touring Burma to meet with party members for the past several months and have continued their activities despite being banned by the junta-appointed Union Election Commission on Sept. 14 for failing to re-register their party to contest the election.

On Oct. 5, Suu Kyi filed a lawsuit against the Burmese military regime at Rangoon Supreme Court, accusing the junta of illegally dissolving her party.

The NLD won the 1990 election by a landslide, but was never allowed to take power. Instead, its leader Suu Kyi has been detained for more than 15 of the past 21 years. Her latest term of house arrest is due to end on Nov. 13, just days after Burma's first general election in 20 years.