

Several registered political parties say they appreciate the Burmese media in exile and their coverage of the political process in Burma.

Several political parties that have registered to contest the upcoming election have said they appreciate the role of the Burmese media in exile and their coverage of the political process in Burma.

Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Friday, several party leaders expressed the importance of a free press, and noted the advantages the exiled press have over local journals and news publications which are severely censored by the military government.



“The contribution of exiled media is effective to the political process. We’ve seen such good potential from the exiled media,” said Ohn Lwin, the spokesman of the Rangoon-based National Political Alliance League, which registered for the election on April 1.

“The exiled media have a wider vision,” he added. “Their analysis is stronger than the local media.”

After the election laws were announced last month, the military government's notorious censorship board, the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), began banning

comments and analysis, and censoring articles related to the election in local journals. Rangoon journalists said that any analysis of the election laws or the 2008 Constitution is censored.

On March 17, the censorship board announced that, according to the 1962 Publishing Act, all party documents and records, including the party's platform and statements concerning its ideology, that the party intends to distribute publicly, must be approved by and registered at the censorship board.

On top of that, each party must pay 100,000 kyat (US \$100) for a “publishing license” and 500,000 kyat (\$500) as a deposit, which can be withheld if the party distributes any documents without the permission of the PSRD.

“The rights of the press between the exiled and local media are very different,” said Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, a leader of the Democratic Party. “Whatever we want to say or print has to pass through the censors. We don't use any offensive words. We speak intelligently. But our words are banned by the censorship board.”

“Media are most important in politics,” said Nan Shwe Kyar, the spokesperson of the Nationalist NLD. “We thank the exiled media, because they can widely and freely broadcast news so that the public understands a situation. We see the exiled media as being effective, not only for the Burmese people, but for the international community at large.”

The PSRD is powerless to prevent exiled Burmese media, such as *The Irrawaddy*, which is based in Thailand, from broadcasting and reporting updates, news, political analysis and commentaries about the military government's policies and election laws.

On the other hand, the military-controlled newspapers constantly criticize and try to discredit the exiled media.

Currently, state-run newspaper *The New Light of Myanmar* runs with a box on its back page every day with bullet points reading: “VOA, BBC—sowing hatred among the people”; “RFA,

DVB—generating public outrage”; and “Do not allow ourselves to be swayed by killer broadcasts designed to cause troubles.”