

RANGOON —Burma's state-controlled media warned pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's disbanded party on Saturday that criticism of controversial upcoming elections could lead to long jail terms. A commentary in *The New Light of Myanmar* newspaper said criticizing the Election Commission for having dissolved the party was "an irresponsible act and could cause misunderstanding among the public."

The commission is overseeing Nov. 7 general elections, the first in the military-ruled country in 20 years.

Under new election laws, any party that does not register for the balloting is automatically dissolved. The laws also prohibit Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, from running or even remaining a member of her own party.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) has decided to boycott the elections, calling them undemocratic and unfair.

The NLD overwhelmingly won the last elections in 1990, but the military refused to relinquish power.

The commentary did not specifically name the NLD, but said "an old party that has been dissolved automatically in accord with the existing law is inciting the people to boycott the elections."

It warned that a 1996 law provides for five to 20 years in prison for anyone who makes statements that "undermine the stability of the state, community peace and tranquility and prevalence of law and order."

Suu Kyi, who has been detained for about 14 of the past 20 years, has said the Election Commission has no authority to dissolve parties registered under a 1988 registration law.

She also has said that people have the right not to vote and told supporters that they could refrain from voting since her party is boycotting the elections.

Nyan Win, an NLD spokesman and Suu Kyi's lawyer, said she plans to file a lawsuit contesting the party's dissolution.

The commission announced last week that 37 political parties will contest the elections. It said five existing parties, including the NLD and the party that came in second in the 1990 polls—the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy—had been dissolved because they had failed to reregister.

The commentary said that "inciting the people to protest the elections and not to cast votes...amounts to violation of the election law" and is punishable by up to a year in prison and a fine of 100,000 kyat (\$100).