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By Dr. S. Chandrasekharan

Despite suggestions from various parties but not the Ruling Party for postponement due to the spread of Wuhan Virus, the Union Election Commission declared that the Elections will take place on November 8th as scheduled.

As of today, the total number of incidence of Wuhan Virus in Myanmar is 6471 with 1445 recoveries and 100 deaths. However of late, the incidence of Virus is spreading fast, doubling every week. It is true that the country is in the grip of Wuhan Virus (Covid 19) with hundreds of cases being reported each day.

Many political parties had sought postponement of elections. The first to do was the party of the 88s, the People's Party whose leader Ko Ko Gyi sought postponement of elections in view of the Pandemic on 8th of September.

On 15th of September, 24 political parties led by the Army supported USDP sent an open letter to the Union Election Commission to reconsider the polling dates for the General Elections. Besides the USDP other parties are of no consequence.

The NLD Spokesman, Dr. Myo Nyunt said that the Ruling Party feels that the Elections ought to go ahead as scheduled.

On 21st, one UEC member declared that the General Election will not be postponed due to the Covid crisis. He added that all necessary measures to prevent spread of Virus were being taken for the safety of both the voters and the polling Station personnel and that the number of Polling Stations has been increased from 40000 to 50000 to allow social distancing etc.

Some other measures taken in this connection were

* Money spent on Covid prevention by the Parties like distribution of protective equipment need not be shown as election expenses.

* Political Parties have been banned from campaigning in townships where the Government had issued “stay at home” orders. 17 townships in Rakhine and 28 townships in Yangon will come under these orders.

The political parties kicked off the Election Campaign on the 8th of September. There was a flag raising ceremony at Napyitaw to mark the start of the elections.

Campaigning had to be stopped in Mandalay, Sagaing, Pegu and Ayeyarwady regions due to the incidence of Virus. Suu Kyi had to cancel her first election meeting on the 8th.

However the parties are campaigning on line and elections stickers are being used every where.

Suu Kyi made a televised speech seeking unanimous support of the people to form the Government. She said that they are allowed to contest only 75 percent of the seats and would need at least 67 percent to form the Government by themselves and appealed to the voters to vote overwhelmingly for her party. Curiously she said that the people should vote not for her but for her Party- but the reality is that people would only vote for her.

Suu Kyi vowed that her party will continue to work for peace, security guaranteed by the rule of law, the establishment of democracy, Federal Union and sustainable development.

Other parties had also taken to televised campaigning. This would include the USDP, National Democratic Party, Shan Nationalist Democratic Party and National Unity Party

The Army (Tatmadaw) had suggested as early as 5th September, that the Union Election Commission should not hold elections in five townships of Wa and the Northern Rakhine State for security reasons.

One can understand about the northern Rakhine where no election can be held even if the Government wants to, because of the intensified civil war going on in that area but one cannot understand about Wa State where everything is peaceful. The Tatmadaw seems to have virtually given up the Wa State to the Chinese.

On September 11th, the UWSA (Wa Group- the Chinese Proxy) opened its first army cadet training school in Pangshang with a class of over 100 Recruits. This academy was inaugurated by the Wa Chief Baa Youxiang and other leaders of the group were also present. Though it is

said to be exclusive as mentioned by the Liaison Officer Nyi Rung at Lashio, it is a question of time before other Recruits from the seven Party FPNCC including the Arakan Army are also trained in this school.

This opening of the school and open declaration of the existence of such a school is an affront to the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of the Myanmar Army. This could not have been done without approval or acquiescence from the Chinese. This appears to be part of the overall Chinese strategy of keeping Myanmar under its total control!

According to the Election Commission of the 94 political parties registered, over 60 belong to ethnic political parties. The issue is whether these ethnic political parties will make a decisive impact on the results of the elections? It is too early to say.

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