

Analysis

On Myanmar Junta's Planned 2023 General Election

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Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has yet to announce a date for a general election that he plans to hold in August this year amid armed conflict across the country.

But Min Aung Hlaing appears determined to secure the presidency and is expected to push ahead with an election by any means.

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) would only require 26 percent of parliamentary seats to form a majority with 25 percent of seats designated for military officers under the 2008 Constitution.

What Min Aung Hlaing has said about an election?

In an interview [1] with Russian news agency RIA, Min Aung Hlaing said an election depends on peace, economic recovery and stability. In his New Year's message and Independence Day address on January 4, he promised to hold an election and transfer power to the winning party.

The regime's governing body, the State Administration Council, says it will abide by the 2008 Constitution and hold an election at the end of emergency rule.

The regime might hold a staggered election because of numerous armed conflicts across the country. After independence, three general elections were held between 1951 and January 1952 because of the civil wars that came with independence.

When will the regime announce election day?

The election law does not say how early a date must be announced, only that constituencies must be announced one month prior to voting.

Election days were announced between three to six months before the 1990, 2010, 2015 and 2020 elections. When emergency rule is due to end this month, the National Defense and Security Council is constitutionally obliged to hold a general election within six months. An announcement can therefore be expected by April or May.

An election could take place in May before the rainy season.

The previous State Law and Order Restoration Council regime held the 1990 general election in May. The referendum on the military-drafted 2008 Constitution was also held in May 2008 despite catastrophic Cyclone Nargis claiming more than 100,000 lives days before the referendum.

The junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) says it will use proportional representation

(PR) rather than the first-past-the-post electoral system. It has also amended the 2010 Political Parties Registration Law, updated voter lists and trained electoral staff. It has invited tenders to supply voting materials.

On January 9, UEC chairman U Thein Soe told a training session of election commission officers to ensure there are no electoral errors.

The regime is asking Yangon residents to attend ward administration offices with their household registration certificates to allow the UEC to update voter lists.

The voters' choices

The USDP has been meeting party members and other pro-military parties and nationalist groups.

The National League for Democracy will boycott any junta election but the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party led by Sai Ai Pao and the Arakan Front Party led by U Aye Maung as well as Mon, Kachin, Chin and Karen parties are keen to run because of the introduction of PR.

New political parties are also likely to emerge.

The NLD, the civilian National Unity Government and some EAOs oppose any regime election.

The US has urged the international community to reject any "sham election", saying it will be neither free nor fair. Malaysia has urged fellow ASEAN members to reject any election.

An election will not be free or fair and not take place nationwide due to fighting but the final decisions will be made by Min Aung Hlaing.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/on-myanmar-juntas-planned-2023-general-election.html>
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Footnotes

- [1] <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-leader-hints-at-possible-delay-in-2023-election.html>