

Restrictions on political parties assembling and giving speeches have again been published by the Burmese Election Commission in a state-run newspaper in Rangoon on Thursday.



The restrictions, similar to a directive issued on June 23, reiterated that parliamentary candidates and election representatives must receive permission at least seven days prior to gathering at a designated place and giving political speeches.

The EC announcement, which appeared in the junta's mouthpiece "New Light of Myanmar," outlined 13 requirements, including providing the specific place, date, start and finish time, and the names and addresses of all speakers.

The EC said a local sub-EC authority would be designated to issue permission or reject the request at least 48 hours before the event date.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Thursday, Thu Wai, the chairman of Democratic Party, said, "It is very restrictive. It's my understanding that a guard will also be there for 'security.' So who will dare to attend the gathering? Also it may be difficult for us to get to the place where they authorize permission."

Thu Wai asked how would candidates feel, and what would happen if a candidate said something offensive and was arrested by the security force?

The announcement said: "Coordination shall be carried out in order that the Peace and Development Councils and security forces can safeguard assemblies giving public talks."

The directive was similar to Directive No.2/2010. It also emphasized that if necessary "the rules and regulations enumerated in the permit may be amended or the permit may be revoked for the sake of security [or] the rule of law and peace."

The restrictions also prohibit the act of marching to the designated gathering point or venue while displaying party flags or chanting party slogans, and parties must disperse without any slogan-chanting march at the end of the assembly and speeches.

Political parties must also agree not to say or publish anything critical of the military, government service personnel or misuses religion or education for political gain, according to the directive.

The regime has scheduled the election for Nov. 7. The Election Commission called on political parties last week to submit a list of candidates between Aug. 16-30.

So far, 47 political parties have applied to the EC for party registration and 40 have been approved. Eighteen parties have submitted a list of their members. The Union Solidarity and Development Party, led by Prime Minister Thein Sein, submitted a list of its members to the EC on Wednesday.