

Thein Sein, Burma's incumbent prime minister and head of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), recently sent a directive speech to ministries, universities and colleges, and army battalions, asking them to vote for the USDP alone in the Nov. 7 election.



The speech, which focuses on electing USDP candidates, was reportedly read out by heads of departments in the ministries. In universities and colleges, rectors were told to relay its contents to teachers and students.

In Naypyidaw, the capital of military-ruled Burma, the PM's speech was read out on Aug. 31 in ministries and some universities including those for forestry and agriculture, according to a number of civil servants based there.

“Vote for the USDP because only the USDP can bring peace and tranquility to the country—only vote for the USDP, don't vote for the wrong people,” the PM said in his speech, according to a civil servant in Naypyidaw who heard it from his head of department.

The scene the official described is one that will be repeated in government offices, universities and colleges throughout the country this month.

Thein Sein's urgings to vote for the USDP extend beyond government employees to their families, who are also being told to vote for the regime-backed party.

Meanwhile, electioneering for the USDP in army battalions is taking place.

A township USDP chairman in Rangoon said the party will obtain millions of advance votes from army personnel and their families.

Thu Wai, the chairman of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), said he inquired about advance voting at the Union Election Commission (EC) and was told that only sick people and those who had plans to travel on polling day could vote in advance.

An official from a political party inside Burma said the advance voting system was an undercover way to ensure a USDP election victory.

“It will be impossible to know how many advance votes a candidate gets before election day,” the party official said.

Led by incumbent ministers, the USDP is believed to have been using state funds in its election campaign activities.

The USDP has reportedly printed millions of campaign leaflets at state-owned printing-presses controlled by the Ministry of Information (MOI).

“Candidate leaflets, party campaign brochures and stickers with small USDP flags have been produced at state-owned printers,” an anonymous MOI official said.

The junta's Political Parties Registration Law (PPRL), however, prohibits any party from using state-owned property and funds for electioneering.

Chapter III of the PPRL states, “A party shall not have the right to subsist as a political party if it is found that the organization obtained and used directly or indirectly money, land, houses, buildings, vehicles or property owned by the State.”