

Only two junta proxy parties will contest for constituencies in Naypidaw in the upcoming election as opposition parties say they cannot hope to win there because most of the voters work for the government.



The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by the Prime Minister Thein Sein, and the National Unity Party (NUP), a pro-regime party in the 1990 election, will contest for seats in Burma's remote capital, according to Naypidaw sources.

With an estimated population of more than 900,000 people, Naypidaw is designated as a "union territory" and it is under the direct administration of the president, according to the Constitution.

Thein Sein will run in Zabu Thiri Township, one of the eight townships in the capital, while the regime's No.3 Shwe Mann, who resigned from his military post as joint chief-of-staff last month, will run in Zeyar Thiri Township in the capital.

It remains unclear whether the NUP, an offshoot of former dictator Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party, will contest in the same constituencies with USDP candidates in Naypyidaw. NUP's party policies mostly reflect the current regime's policy.

"We will run in Naypyidaw. But I cannot give you details," said Kyaw Win, an NUP official. Perhaps alluding to the recent reshuffle in the regime leadership, he said, "Things can change at anytime."

After the deadline for candidate registration for political parties expired on Monday, the USDP has clearly emerged as the largest political party with 1,100 registered candidates while the NUP follows with 975 and the National Democratic Force (NDF) ranks third with 161 registered candidates.

"We had four candidates who planned to register for Naypyidaw, but at the last minute they

canceled their plans due to some difficulties,” said NDF political leader, Khin Maung Swe. “Also, it would not be easy to reach out to the population there. Many are government staff.”

Sources said the USDP has a membership of 10,000 people in Naypyidaw. Local people are reportedly being forced to join the party ahead of the election, especially in villages near the capital.

Thu Wai, the chairman of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), which registered a total of 50 candidates due to financial constraints—half the number the party had hoped to field—said, “We know that Naypyidaw is an important place. But we won’t compete there.”

Detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party has boycotted the election citing unfair election laws. Suu Kyi recently advised people not to vote in the election if they have no party to support in the absence of the NLD.

On Wednesday, the authorities briefly detained an NLD organizer in Dala Township in Rangoon for distributing pamphlets which carried Suu Kyi’s statement that people have a right not to vote.