

Former army generals, who are candidates in this year's election for the Union of Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), have distributed mobile telephones valued at 1.5 million kyat (US \$1,570) in order to attract voters in Naypyidaw, according to sources. Influential residents in Zayathiri, Pobbathiri, Ottarathiri, Zabuthiri and Dhakhinathiri townships in Naypyidaw reportedly received CDMA 450 MHz phones and were asked to vote for the USDP.

"We were given CDMA mobile phones with SIM cards," a man in Zayathiri Township told *The Irrawaddy*.

Locals in Naypyidaw, Burma's capital, said officials from sub-election commissions at the ward level were offered the same phones.

Political parties have criticized the USDP's distribution of mobile phones, and other inducements, as a violation of the Political Parties Registration Law. Article 12 (A-5) of the law says a party shall not have the right to exist as a political party if it obtains and uses directly or indirectly money, land, houses, buildings, vehicles or property owned by the state.

"There are a lot of cases where the USDP has misused state-owned buildings, the budget, vehicles, so on and so forth. The government itself violates its own laws, so how can the election be free and fair," said one politician.

The regime's incumbent Prime Minister Thein Sein has reportedly instructed government employees to vote for the USDP, apart from using various other state privileges to attract voters.

Naypyidaw residents said only the USDP, the National Unity Party and the National Political Alliance party will contest the election in the capital, and the USDP is likely to sweep the election there.

Even though many voters said they are indifferent to the election, they said they will likely vote for USDP candidates because of pressure by the authorities.

"Villages and wards around Naypyidaw have become much developed in terms of road conditions and electricity and water access. Those who live there have been pressured by authorities so they will have to cast their ballots for the USDP," said a reporter in Pyinmanar Township near Naypyidaw.

Gen. Thura Shwe Mann of the USDP will reportedly compete with Chit Sein of the NUP in Zayathiri Township while PM Thein Sein will challenge Kyaw Aye of the NUP in Zabuthiri. Likewise, ex-Gen Tin Aung Myint Oo will compete with Hla Shwe in Pobbathiri Township and ex-Gen. Myint Hlaing will challenge Mya Han in Dhakhinathiri.

According to the party candidate lists submitted to the Union Election Commission, the pro-government USDP and NUP are the only political parties that will contest the election in all constituencies across the country.