

As Burma's election campaign hots up, the competing political parties are dressing down—donning T-shirts emblazoned with slogans and party logos.



Among the most striking T-shirts are those worn by supporters of the regime-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which feature an image of a lion, the party's logo, on the front and the party's name on the back.

Not all the T-shirts on display urge people to vote, however. The National League for Democracy (NLD), which refused to register for the election and is thus now officially banned, carries the message: “Citizens of the country have the right to vote as well as the right not to vote according to the law.”

The NLD T-shirts, which are being distributed by members of the party's youth movement, also feature portraits of the party leaders Aung San Suu Kyi, Tin Oo and Win Tin.

In a statement on Tuesday, the NLD said it was boycotting the election in the interests of the country and the Burmese people.

The statement also pointed out that people had the right not to vote if they so chose. “It is against the law if someone is forced to vote,” the NLD said. “If you don’t like parties in the absence of the NLD, you can stay at home [on election day].”

The NLD T-shirts were very much in evidence at “Thadingyut” (Festival of Light) celebrations in Zegon Township, Pago Division, said one NLD youth member.

For the pro-election nongovernmental organization Myanmar Egress, T-shirts are an effective

way of raising funds. Myanmar Egress T-shirts with the message “iVote” are selling for 2,000 kyat (US \$2).

Balloons carrying election and anti-election messages are also being used in the campaign, as are copies of cartoons drawn by The Irrawaddy illustrator Harn Lay.

The state-run daily “The New Light of Myanmar,” meanwhile, warned in an editorial on Wednesday that any attempt to persuade people not to vote would result in the loss of voting rights.