

RANGOON — Reports are emerging from Arakan State and Shan State that voter lists for the Nov. 7 general election have been tampered with, setting the stage for massive ballot-stuffing on election day.

In the two ethnic areas, where the pro-military government party is not expected to be able to match local nationalist parties for support, sources have told *The Irrawaddy* that more than twice the number of voters' names appear on the lists than eligible voters in the respective townships.

Burma's voter registration lists were drawn up by local Election Commissions (ECs) around the country. Appointed by the Union Election Commission in Naypyidaw, all local ECs are administered by pro-junta staff, say observers.

Tin Hlaing Win, a candidate representing the Kaman National Progressive Party in Thandwe Township in Arakan State who is contesting a lower house (In Burmese: pyithu hluttaw) seat in the elections, told *The Irrawaddy* on Friday that the names of non-eligible voters were on the lists that were recently released by the local EC.

"I asked to check the voter list for the purposes of my campaign," he said. "I found it severely flawed. There was twice the number of names on the list than the actual number of ID cardholders in the town. The majority of residents in Thandwe are ethnic Kaman and many do not have national IDs, so they are not entitled to vote. However, I saw all their names on the voter lists."

He said that he filed an official complaint to both the regional and state ECs.

Tin Hlaing Win said the fraudulent voter lists he saw represented the townships of Sin Gong, Thapyuchaing and Hlaygyichaing in Arakan State. He said he did not have the opportunity to inspect other voter lists.

In Sin Gong village alone, he said, the voter list issued by the Township EC shows about 3,000 registered voters. However, he estimated that there are no more than 1,000 ID cardholders in

the town.

He said the Kaman National Progressive Party would expect to win by a landslide a free and fair election in these areas.

The Kaman is one of several ethnic groups in Arakan State. Of the 400,000 Kaman who live in Burma, less than 200,000 hold national identification cards.

In northern Shan State, a resident of Kyauk Mae district who requested anonymity told *The Irrawaddy* that he had seen the voter list for his constituency of Naung Pai village, and that he did not recognize many of the names on the list.

"I found a lot of false names on our village's voter list," he said. "The EC's list shows 2,000 voters' names, but we only have 700 eligible voters in our village. I questioned this with the EC staff and they told me they were just following the list given to them by the district election commission."

When *The Irrawaddy* called the township election commission, a staff member said neither the township nor the village election commissions were at liberty to make any changes to the voter lists.

"The military government has planned this out," said Thu Wai, the chairman of the Democratic Party (Myanmar). "They think they can do whatever they want. Complaining to an election commission about the voter lists is a waste of time."

Thu Wai said the regime is creating a parliament that will be dominated by the military when it transforms to a civil administration.

Meanwhile, local villagers in Pakokku District in Magwe Division said that the local authorities

have been working alongside members of the pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), and were going door to door aggressively collecting "election contributions" and distributing party membership cards to the villagers.

"They were collecting between 500 kyat and 1,000 kyat (US \$0.50 - \$1) per household, " a man from Kama village said. "When we complained, they said the money was for jatropa cultivation. Any villagers who resisted were threatened."

Another villager said the USDP was forcibly recruiting party members.

"Each local member of the USDP is given 20 membership cards on which all credentials can be written—name, ID number and addresses. Then they make a door-to-door visit and ask villagers to fill in and sign the cards," he said.

Meanwhile, in Mandalay, a female teacher said that every teacher from her school in Pakokku Division was taken to the township administrator's office and told to cast their vote on Thursday.

"I picked a party at random, because I did not know which party I should vote for," she said. "But when I saw that the officials were reading each ballot and taking down each teacher's details—his or her name, school, position and address—I went back and took a new ballot and voted for the USDP."

The Union Election Commission has officially announced that there are more than 29 million eligible voters out of a national population of 54 million.