

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) discussed five options for securing advance votes from government staff, soldiers and junta-backed civic organizations to ensure their victory in the upcoming elections, according to a USDP township official.

The order to secure advance votes came from party headquarters after Township and quarter-level leaders held a meeting in Rangoon on Monday.

“We discussed how to take advance votes from members of 30 civil societies in Rangoon,” said a USDP official from Alone Township, Rangoon, on Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The meeting focused on five options that included taking advance votes from adults more than 50-years-old and from civil service personnel who support the party. They also discussed cooperating with ward authorities and sub Election Commissions in order to get votes for USDP candidates.

Votes would also be sought from families who live in areas where the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), the forerunner of the USDP, had paved roads.

Finally, the order included taking advance votes from families who are member of government-sponsored civic organization such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, the Myanmar Red Cross Society and the Myanmar Fire Brigade and other government-sponsored groups.

The junta formed these civil organizations to build up strong civilian backing in the government. Most of the junta leaders' wives are patrons or have taken active leadership in the organizations.

Meanwhile, ward authorities took family lists at the beginning of the month in Tarmway Township in Rangoon but have not given documents back to the families, said another local resident.

“The USDP created a community-based organization in our street and they began paving the road but then stopped, requesting the head of the organization to sign at least 100 members for the party if they wanted the paving to be completed,” said a Tarmway township resident speaking on condition of anonymity.

According to local authorities pressure is being put on people to vote USDP but the junta-backed proxy party has an infamous reputation among the public.

The USDP originated from the USDA, which was formed in 1993. Snr-Gen Than Shwe was patron and most junta chiefs played important roles in the organization. In April, the USDA was transformed into the USDP, which inherited all the assets of the former mass organization.

USDA members participated in the deadly attack on pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy near Depayin in May 2003 as well as the brutal crackdowns on monks and

demonstrators throughout September 2007.

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