

Election posters urging people to vote for the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) are being defaced in some parts of Rangoon, apparently by activists objecting to their “People First” slogan.



The posters are on display throughout Rangoon constituencies, particularly at traffic junctions. Smaller parties contesting next month's election complain they often can't find room for their own posters.

The “People First” slogan carried by the USDP posters has sparked anger in many quarters.

One businessman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he had been angered during a trip downtown on seeing an election poster featuring USDP candidate Aung Kyi, the current labor minister who gave up his military rank of major general in order to stand for election.

“The slogan 'People First' angered me but also made me laugh,” the businessman said. “Their real slogan should be 'People Last, Military First.'”

An editor with a well known Rangoon publication drew attention to the large portrait of Aung Kyi that appears on the USDP poster. “I found it strange,” he said.

The editor said there was a mood of despondency rather than anger as the Nov. 7 election approaches. “Most people are in a dejected mood,” he said.

Election posters of other political parties are not much in evidence in Rangoon.

There are several reasons for their absence, according to Thein Tin Aung, the candidate of the Union Democratic Party in Rangoon's Tamwe Township.

“If you want to put up a campaign billboard, first you have to get permission from the election commission, and then you need to pay a municipal tax,” he said. “The tax is 100 kyat (10 US cents) per square foot, for a period of 18 days before the election. I can put up only one billboard.”