

Several Burmese embassies across the world are open for advanced voting, but only a handful of selected Burmese citizens have been informed.

Many overseas Burmese have complained that they did not receive invitations to vote and that embassies made no effort to alert Burmese expatriates that they could vote ahead of the Nov. 7 general election.

Burmese embassies in Thailand, the UK, Japan and India have allowed Burmese citizens to mark advanced voting ballots but have taken few if any steps to ensure that Burmese are notified that the electoral procedure is in place.

An employee from the Burmese embassy in New Delhi said that advanced voting ballots and a voters' register had already been sent back to Burma, and that the embassy was no longer accepting advanced voting.

"I didn't receive any notification from the embassy about voting for the upcoming election," said a Burmese citizen who lives in New Delhi speaking on condition of anonymity.

"I know of a few government-sponsored students who received written invitations to vote," said Kyaw Lynn Oo, who is living in Bangkok, Thailand. "The rest did not get any information about voting. Some Burmese contacted the embassy by themselves to enquire."

He said that embassy staff asked voters for their names and addresses, then handed them a ballot marked with a list of candidates in their home constituency.

On Tuesday, the Burmese embassy in Japan opened for advanced voting, but again only selected Burmese citizens were invited.

"They didn't inform the Burmese community in Japan," said Phone Myint Tun, who took part in a "Don't Vote" campaign in front of the embassy in Tokyo on that day. "Very few of my Burmese friends received invitation letters from the embassy."

In Oct. 16, the Burmese embassy in London sent invitations to a handful of Burmese citizens, none of whom are members of NGOs or exile pro-democracy groups.

The Burma Liberation Front in the UK said they sent some of their members who hold Burmese passports to the embassy demanding that they be allowed to exercise their rights to vote.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, there are 32 Burma embassies in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.