

RANGOON — The censorship board in military-ruled Burma, the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), has said that media may not publish or air reports about nationwide vote rigging in Sunday's election, according to sources.

An editor from the PSRD reportedly said opposition candidates told domestic media about vote rigging in the election, which was dominated by the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), but the PSRD will not allow media groups to carry such reports.

“The PSRD told us that with regard to election news, we would be allowed to carry only official news issued by the Union Election Commission (EC). A PSRD editor said that even news about voters casting their ballots wouldn't be permitted, or if we said the turnout was low,” said a production editor at a private news journal.

On Monday, Weekly Eleven, a private news journal in Rangoon, carried an apology to its reader saying that the journal regretted not being able to publish a 12-page special report on the election as it had planned.

The Weekly Eleven website, which has published timely information on the election, was reportedly inaccessible on Monday evening..

Reporters inside Burma said that based on unofficial election results, the USDP seems to have won the vast majority of the seats in parliament, and the domestic media will likely face more censorship challenges in the future.

“Since the USDP-led government will rule the country, it is pretty sure the PSRD will remain active. There will be no freedom of information and literature, and the journalism situation in Burma could be worse,” said a reporter in Rangoon.

Many domestic reporters confirmed that they were not allowed to report freely on polling day and media and private citizens were prevented from entering polling stations across the country while the ballot count was underway.

An independent candidate for a parliament seat told The Irrawaddy that news journals should be permitted to carry extensive information about the election in the post-election period.

“What really happened on election day must be revealed. Otherwise, it is meaningless to say we are marching towards a new democratic country. In this election, vote rigging took place throughout the country. We were very wrong to trust the regime,” he said .

He said Aung San Suu Kyi predicted such a turn of events, and it is time for the general public, political parties and candidates who lost in the election to firmly stand behind Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy in order to oppose the military dictatorship in Burma.

A total of 3,071 party and independent candidates contested in the election, the first in 20 years, on Sunday. Reports of vote rigging were widespread throughout the country.

Meanwhile, there has been a news blackout on the current fighting underway between the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and Burmese troops in the border city of Myawaddy. No reports have appeared in junta-run media.