

Twenty candidates of three of the parties that contested Burma's general election have launched a nationwide action calling for a new vote, on the grounds that Sunday's polling was neither free nor fair.



The candidates stood for election in Pegu Township for the National Unity Party (NUP), National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Union Democratic Party (UDP).

The whole election procedure had been “full of rigging,” said UDP Chairman Thein Htay.

Thein Htay said the demand for a new election would be sent to junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe and Election Commission Chairman Thein Soe.

“We'll widen our action nationwide in coming days,” Thein Htay said.

The regime proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has claimed receiving nearly 80 percent of the votes cast in Sunday's election. The claim is being challenged by many candidates who stood for opposition parties.

“We will not recognize the official result,” said Kyaw Myo Win, an NDF candidate from Pegu Township.

UDP Secretary Thein Tin Aung said it would be necessary to gather evidence to support claims that the election was rigged and to back any legal challenge against the result.

“The vote we got is very precious because we never forced people to vote for us,” Thein Tin Aung said.

Nay Myo Wai, secretary of the Peace and Diversity Party, said it would be difficult to hold a

fresh election, although he would support the call for one.

Evidence of malpractice in counting the ballots continued to arrive from frustrated candidates and voters.

One resident of Maung Phone, Tarmway Township, said that although only 500 votes had been cast by the time one polling station closed on Sunday afternoon, counting continued through the night.

A Rangoon voter, Myo Yan Naung Thein, said he and other residents had been told they could watch the ballot counting from outside the polling station—"but we had no chance to look because the station was on the second floor and had no balcony.

"At another polling station, in Rangoon's Kamaryut Township, I saw that the NDF was leading at 10 p.m., but a new box of ballots arrived after 2 a.m. and the USDP were declared the winners," Myo Yan Naung Thein said.

NDF candidate Soe Win told The Irrawaddy that although he had won in Rangoon's Sangchaung Township the Election Commission had told him the ballots would have to be recounted because many of them had been invalid.

One independent candidate benefited from a recount. Dr Saw Naing, who ran for a seat in the Rangoon Division Parliament, was at first told he had lost, but on Monday the Election Commission told him he had actually beaten the USDP candidate by six votes.