

MANDALAY—"I did not vote for the 'Lion,'" the symbol of the junta's proxy political party, she whispered to her friends. Then Tin Thein looked around the poll station to see if anyone was watching her as she put her ballots in the white plastic box. She felt as if she had completed her mission.

Polling Station No.1 was located in a community between Street No. 30, No. 31 and Shwe Mandalay Chanayetharzan Ward Street No. 77, which is well-known for its political background and activism.

"Hey, who did you vote for? I hope you voted for someone who will work for the people," said a voter waiting in line as Tin Thein left the station. She worried that the USDP workers at the station were giving her bad looks.

Many Mandalay residents went to polling stations on Sunday looking forward to voting for pro-democracy parties who might bring change to Mandalay.

The Democratic Party (Myanmar), Wunthanu National league for Democracy (WNLD), Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics, National Democratic Fore (NDF), 88 Generation Student Youths (Union of Myanmar), National Unity Party (NUP) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) all competed in Mandalay Division.

It was past 4 p.m when the poll station closed. Tin Thein said she observed the poll officers preparing to count the ballots. Tin Thein took in all the positive news and was happy. "I can now sleep well," she said. "The USDP is not on top of the list."

Tin Aung Aung, an NDF candidate who competed in Aungmyaytharzan, Chanayetharzan and Patheingyi townships, was also optimistic on Sunday. He said, "We are getting good results from two townships. We only need to wait and see what will happen in Patheingyi Township. We are doing well in all of Mandalay Division."

But on Monday morning, she couldn't believe what people were saying.

They told her, "The USDP won the election with advance votes."

"What?" she said to herself, "It's impossible."

Tin Aung Aung heard the same news. He had left on Sunday thinking his party had won in many constituencies, only to learn that 32 NDF candidates who had contested in both of upper and lower houses in Mandalay lost.

Voting lists which had been used on election day disappeared one day after the election, said Tin Thein.

Tin Thein, as well as many other Mandalay residents, had joined in the election seeking a better

and brighter day.

Now she is going forward with the knowledge that she will live under same environment with the same set of junta leaders as before.