

The Union Democratic Party (UDP) on Thursday called for the military government not to affiliate itself with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) party led by current Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein.



The UDP, led by Phyo Min Thein, released a statement which also called for the release of all political prisoners so they can participate in the election, freedom of the media and announcement of an election date. Phyo Min Thein is a former political prisoner who took part in the 1988 demonstrations.

Phyo Min Thein, speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Thursday, said that the USDP and the state-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) “are all muddled up.”

Burma's prime minister and 26 ministers and senior officials formed the USDP on April 29 to contest in the election later this year.

All of the ministers are also members of the USDA, a mass civic organization formed by the junta in 1993, with more than 24 million members nationwide including government civil service personnel and members of the military.

“These two organizations are mixed up, sharing government workers and the military,” he said. “For example, state and division military commanders are following up political trips by members of the ministry. Ministry officials are campaigning along with the military. Military commanders are also chairmen of state and division bodies.”

“USDP members are public service personnel, who cannot participate in political parties,” said Phyo Min Thein, citing articles in the electoral laws.

The Political Party Registration Law Chapter (2), 10(c) states that civil service personnel may

not take part in political parties.

On May 9, the chairman of the Union Election Commission, Thein Soe, told visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell that the formation of a political party by the government's current ministers, who are also expected to be candidates in the election, is "in conformity with the law" because they are considered political appointments not civil service personnel.

Thu Wai, the chairman of the Rangoon-based Democratic Party (Myanmar), said, "USDP representatives said that the USDP and USDA are not mixed up together. But USDP members and USDA members are mixed together. "

The statement also called for the government to subsidize the 500,000 kyat (US \$500) candidate registration fee, saying it is too high and prevented candidates from taking part in the political process.

Nay Myo Wai, the secretary of the Peace and Diversity Party, noting the UDP statement, raised the question of what the UDP would do if the regime ignores their requests.

"Our party will not make demands like that," he said.

There are now 33 political parties registered to participate in the election. The UDP is the first party to release a statement criticizing the regime's role in the election process.