

Faced with the high cost of running a campaign, several newly formed political parties in Burma try to find ways to cooperate with each other.

Short on funds and with limited manpower at their disposal, several political parties in Burma are looking to pool their resources ahead of this year's election.

The parties, among the dozens that have so far received permission to run in the election, say they are facing severe financial constraints that limit their ability to function effectively. Among other things, they say they can barely afford to publish campaign materials such as political pamphlets and journals.

"Our weak point is our lack of time, money and human resources. That's why we need to cooperate with other parties," said Phyo Min Thein, the chairman of Union Democratic Party (UDP), adding that his party is now discussing possible tie-ups with ethnic and democratic parties.

Some parties said that registration fees are especially onerous. In addition to the 300,000 kyat (US \$500) that parties must pay to register, there is an additional fee of 500,000 kyat for each candidate that the party fields in the election.

The UDP has released a statement calling on the government to subsidize the candidate registration fee.

Than Than Nu, the general secretary of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), said she welcomed cooperation between parties, but added that forming alliances would likely take a lot of time.

"If we cooperate in the election, democratic forces can be successful. It is difficult to reach agreements on cooperation, but we are all friends. We also welcome other parties' offers to

work together,” she said.

Nan Shwe Kyar, the spokesperson for the Wuntharu [Patriotic] National League for Democracy, said that finding common ground is the key to forming a successful alliance.

“We are ready to negotiate with parties that share our goals and point of view. Right now we are learning about the political ideologies of other parties,” he said.

So far, 42 political parties have applied for party registration, of which 33 have been accepted. Except for the pro-regime National Unity Party (NUP), none of the major parties from the last election in 1990 will be running.

Both the NUP and the National League for Democracy, which won the 1990 election by a landslide, formed alliances with smaller parties.