

Though the election law forbids government officials from taking part in the poll, regime ministers are starting to organize their campaigns.

Led by Prime Minister Thein Sein, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has assigned constituencies to several regime ministers who recently left their military posts to contest the upcoming election.

Foreign minister Nyan Win will be representing Zigon Township in Pegu near Rangoon and Minister of Industry-1, Aung Thaung, who is close to regime chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe, would contest Taungtha township, his hometown in Mandalay division, according to one of the party's organizers who spoke to The Irrawaddy anonymously on Friday.

“Decisions have been made for which minister to compete for which township. But it won't be officially announced until near election,” he said.

According to the party organizer, Rangoon mayor Aung Thein Linn would be a candidate for Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township; labor minister and liaison minister Aung Kyi for Rangoon's Mingalartaungnyunt Township; minister for forestry Thein Aung for Bogale Township in Irrawaddy Division; and minister for economic planning Soe Tha for Twantay Township in Rangoon Division.

Deputy ministers including Soe Naing, Phone Swe and Dr. Mya Oo will be candidates for Pyapon Township in Irrawaddy Division, Maungdaw Division in Arakan State and Natalin township in Pegu Division respectively.

All the ministers have started regular organizing activities for the USDP in their assigned constituencies, the organizer said.

Although the regime election laws forbid government employees from being members of political parties, the ministers who will run in the election as USDP candidates have not yet given up their civilian posts.

The military regime created the USDP on April 29, when Thein Sein and 26 ministers and senior officials officially formed the party out of the regime's mass civic organization called the Union Solidarity and Development Association, which was disbanded.

The party has outlined a wide range of tactics—including the use of cadres of hardcore criminals—aimed at achieving a landslide victory in the election, according to party documents leaked this week.