Burma's election results, to some degree, will be predictable by Sept. 10, when the Election Commission formally approves political party candidates who will seek parliamentary seats in the election.

The latest data suggests that of the 1,187 seats in the national and regional parliaments, opposition parties will be able to contest less than 500 seats, because of budget, time and other constraints.

On the other hand, the junta's largest proxy parties, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP), are now prepared to contest in all seats nationwide and will automatically win in the uncontested seats under the election laws.

“There will be no ballot box in those areas where there is a single candidate for the USDP,” said Than Min Soe, the spokesperson for the Union Democratic Party (UDP). “We'll know the results on Sept. 10.”

With the candidate registration deadline expiring on Monday, three pro-democracy political parties in Rangoon—the National Democratic Force (NDF), the Democratic Party (Myanmar) and the Union Democratic Party (UDP)—have so far drawn up a combined list of 230 candidates. Both the NDF and Democratic Party (Myanmar) now claim to have 100 candidates, while the UDP has 30.

Despite its list of 30 candidates, the UDP might field only three candidates if the regime does not respond by Wednesday to its recent request for clarification on how the 2008 Constitution

would function following the election.

“Without being clear about that process, it is pointless to compete for many seats in the election,” said a UDP spokesperson, adding that its decision to field only three candidates would be to prevent the party from being abolished according to the election laws.

With a list of 100 candidates, the NDF leaders, who are former members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party (NLD), are still waiting for the response of the EC for its request to postpone the candidate registration deadline so that it can field more candidates, according to party chairman Dr. Than Nyein.

“The election commission has not responded to our request yet,” he said. He also said there's a growing possibility that the junta's largest proxy party, the USDP, could end up with a sweeping victory nationwide.

Asked if he regretted his decision to run in the election, Than Nyein said: “Not at all. We will face whatever challenges lie ahead.”

Currently, many opposition political parties are worried about the candidate registration process. The chairman of the Democratic Party (Myanmar), Thu Wai, said that a candidate who seeks to represent a particular constituency must live in the constituency.

“I live in Shwepyithar Township, but because I wish to run in Pazundaung Township, I have to change my address so that I can register myself as a candidate for that area,” he said.

The residency restriction was not included either in the election laws or the latest rules announced by the election commission.

Most areas in which the Rangoon-based pro-democracy parties will not seek to compete are in ethnic areas. There is little hope that local ethnic parties not aligned with the government will be

able to field many candidates to compete against the USDP, due to financial and other constraints.

Potentially the largest ethnic party, the Shan National Democratic Party (SNDP), will compete for 150 seats while the Rakhine National Development Party (RNDP) will contest in 15 townships in Arakan State, where the election commission designated a total of 17 constituencies. This week, RNDP leaders complained that members of the party have been harassed by local authorities this month.

“My sister and brother were questioned by the local police although they are not involved in politics,” said Khine Pyi Soe, the secretary of the RNDP.

A number of ethnic parties will not challenge the USDP candidates because they were organized by either retired regime military or civilian officials, including the Kayin Peoples Party led by Saw Htun Aung Myint, a former navy colonel; the Chin Progressive Party (CPP) led by Hlung Kyae, also a former police colonel; and the Kachin Party led by Kya Hting Nan, a former organizer of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in Myitkyina.

On Monday, state-run newspapers reported that the regime Prime Minister Thein Sein, who leads the USDP, asked voters to “prevent any destructive acts so the election will meet with success.”

The remark followed the official announcement by NLD officials last week that they would boycott the election. Ethnic leaders who were elected in the 1990 election, but who decided not to run in the election this year, also said they would conduct a campaign to inform local people of their legal right not to vote.

“Starting next month, I will go back to Chin State to explain that to our people,” said Chin Sian Thang, the chairman of Zomi National Congress, a Chin political party which contested in the 1990 elections.

Forty-two political parties have been approved by the Election Commission to compete in the

Nov. 7 election.

In a press conference on Sunday, the chairman of the Democratic Party, Thu Wai, said: “By creating obstacles to other political parties before the election, it won't be necessary to cheat or rig votes in the election because the USDP now has the upper hand. Thus the voting itself could be free and fair."