

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), a Bangkok-based independent organization for monitoring elections in the Asia region, issued a statement on Tuesday calling for the Association of Southeast Asian Nation to review the credibility of Burma's election on Nov. 7.



The statement was signed by ANFREL's 12 member organizations from regional countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, The Phillipines, South Korea and Thailand.

The statement said the Burmese election will not be credible due to four factors: “First, the military is too involved in the election; Second, the media is not free and under total control and censorship; Third, the lack of transparency in absentee voting, advance voting and counting ballot papers especially the restriction on local observers; and Fourth, the absence of a mechanism in checking the voter list to prevent phantom voting, double or multiple votes.”

Furthermore, it pointed out that the election date was intentionally set before the release of the democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi and said: “[this] has also led to leading election observation groups raising serious questions about the credibility of the ensuing election.”

Evaluating Burma's Union Election Commission (UEC), it said it is not able to work independently or freely due to its composition of 17 commissioners selected by the junta.

“The UEC of Burma must stop all attempts by political parties to misuse state resources in their favour and ... the UEC’s actions cannot be considered neutral and non-partisan,” the statement said.

Among the causes of ANFREL's negative assessment is the unfair advantage the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) led by the incumbent Prime Minister Thein Sein, which it describes as a proxy of the military, has over other rival parties.

The USDP has much more opportunity than other parties in introducing their members to the electorate and that “their political status and powers to recruit members either by manipulative tactics or by force” is unacceptable, it said.

It also expressed concern that the USDP enjoys unfair advantage in being able to utilize state resources to contest the election.

The statement concluded: “the military junta is doing everything but holding a democratic election. The objective of the military seems to be clear, that is to win the coming election at all costs.”