

The Burmese regime's announcement that detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi will be permitted to vote in the Nov. 7 election is merely a cynical ploy to confuse the Burmese public, according to one of her closest political colleagues.



"I don't welcome this at all," said Win Htein, an aide to Suu Kyi, in response to reports on Friday that the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader and her two live-in maids were officially registered on the voters list in Rangoon's Bahan Township.

"The regime is playing a trick. Daw Suu has already said that she is boycotting the election. So this is deliberately meant to confuse people," he said.

It also raises questions about Suu Kyi's status as a political prisoner. According to election laws enacted in May, detainees are barred from voting or belonging to political parties. The same laws also forced her party to disband for refusing to register for this year's election.

The 65-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate is due to be released from house arrest on Nov. 13, a week after the election, when she completes an 18-month sentence for violating the terms of her previous five-year period of house arrest.

According to media reports, officials said that Suu Kyi will not be allowed to go out on polling day, but might be given permission to vote in advance.

Aye Thar Aung, the secretary of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament, an umbrella group of political and ethnic groups that won in Burma's last election in 1990, said that the announcement was probably a political trap.

"Daw Suu would decline to vote even if the regime offered her a chance to do so," he said. "Then the regime could accuse her of not fulfilling her duties as a citizen. But no matter what they say, the public knows what they're up to."

Political dissidents in Rangoon said the news was an example of how arbitrarily the regime applies its own laws.

“Breaking its own laws is what the regime has been doing all along,” said one dissident.