Burmese voters are under increasing pressure from local authorities and members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) to cast advance ballots before the upcoming election, according to a letter of complaint sent to the Election Commission by the chairman of the Democratic Party (Myanmar) (DPM).

“With the help of the authorities from the Ward Peace and Development Council (WPDC), the USDP is persuading, threatening or bribing the voters to cast advance votes for them,” said party chairman Thu Wai.

Thu Wai's letter complained that this contravened the Election Commission's decision that “except voters who are unable to go to the polling station on election day, no voters are allowed to cast an advance vote.”

Despite this ruling, the party's letter of complaint charged, government personnel, including Dagon University staff, and Rangoon factory workers had been forced by their superiors to sign declarations that they had cast advance votes. They had been told they need not turn up at polling stations on election day, the letter said.

In another case, the letter charged that the USDP had promised residents of Ward 10 of Rangoon's Shwepyithar Township that a local road would be paved in return for advance votes.

Article 66, chapter 14, of the Pyithu Hluttaw [People's Assembly) Electoral Law defines malpractices as “giving or taking bribes; interfering with the electoral right; impersonation; making false verbal or written declaration; and admitting and false signing of statements.”