

Political parties and candidates of 2020 election and their campaign promises



A case study of Yangon Region

About Another Development

Another Development (AD) is a local Myanmar think-tank and a non-profit organization. AD's work focuses on five main thematic areas: Human Rights; Multiculturalism; Decentralization and Federalism; Rural Economic Development and Social Enterprises; and, E-government and E-citizen.

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SUMMARY

Elections, one of the key elements of democracy, are of importance and so do promises made by political parties and candidates contesting in the elections. Those promises are policies to be implemented by the newly-elected administration and elected representatives in the next five years. In addition, those promises can also be regarded as a social contract that citizens could monitor and review performances of the elected representatives in the same given years. This paper studies the numbers of political parties and candidates contesting in the election in Yangon region and their election promises via compiling data on the internet from July 1st to October 18th.

There are 801 candidates contesting in 2020 general election in Yangon region, accounting for 769 candidates from 41 political parties and 32 independent candidates. The candidates are running for 12 Amyotha Hluttaw seats, 45 for Pyithu Hluttaw seats and 92 for Yangon region Hluttaw (including Ethnic Affairs Minister seats) in their respective constituencies. Contesting parties comprise policy-based parties as well as ethnic-based parties. Out of 801 candidates, men make up for 616 (76.9%) while women 185 (23.1%).

There are 801 candidates contesting in 2020 general election in Yangon region, accounting for 769 candidates from 41 political parties and 32 independent candidates.

There are 41 political parties contesting in Yangon region and 13 of them put out their election manifestos. The manifestos cover political, economic, and social aspirations; 7 parties incorporate environmental issues in their manifestos. There is one political party, that provides separate section solely for Yangon region. Candidates running for Ethnic Affairs Ministers prioritize many issues for their ethnic groups, comprising socio-economic development, job opportunities for young people and equality. Moreover, some candidates from political parties and independent candidates have made election promises deriving from the needs of their constituencies.

INTRODUCTION

Being paramount, free and fair elections are one of the key elements of a democracy. It can be said that democratic transition in Myanmar starts with 2010 general election. By 2020, there have been three general elections. Elections are principal for a democracy and so do election promises made by candidates for citizens. Those promises are policies to be implemented by the newly-elected administration and elected representatives in the next five years. In addition, those can also be regarded as a social contract that citizens could monitor and review performances of the elected representatives in the same given years.

It is of benefit for think-tanks to conduct research on to what extent candidates and political parties take into consideration the challenges and needs of people in their constituencies in their election promises. Therefore, this paper will study election promises made by candidates and political parties contesting in Yangon region. Rational for selecting Yangon region for this study is that Yangon Region is a commercial hub as well as a crucial region for social and economic development of the country. Furthermore, the city of Yangon contributes 20 % to the country's GDP¹. People from neighboring regions, other states/regions have migrated to Yangon for better job opportunities, higher education, and economic and commercial reasons. Hence, along with increased population and economic development, Yangon region is faced with subsequent problems and challenges.

Rational for selecting Yangon region for this study is that Yangon Region is a commercial hub as well as a crucial region for social and economic development of the country. Furthermore, the city of Yangon contributes 20 % to the country's GDP.

1 Doing Business in Myanmar 2018." 2018. Yangon: PricewaterhouseCoopers Myanmar Co., Ltd.
https://www.pwc.com/mm/en/publications/assets/yangon-business-guide-2018.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2rv25Sb3Coh2jh13C8SLAtPIWrrcpGy3eqvlabK_zjV5GDDUaEcsAp62c

For instance, challenges remain in the areas of food and living conditions, transportation, job opportunities, security, recreation, sports, public health, public services, climate change, environmental protection and others. Those challenges await candidates and political parties contesting in the 2020 general elections to be met. Therefore, a study should be done as to which areas candidates and political parties contesting in the elections prioritize in their election promises. This paper studies which political parties and candidates are contesting in the election in Yangon Region and their election promises via compiling data on the internet.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS (PART A) : CANDIDATES' INFORMATION

Political parties and candidates contesting in Yangon Region

Total number of constituencies in Yangon region for Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Yangon Region Hluttaw (including Ethnic Affairs Minister) is 149². More specifically, there are 45 constituencies for Pyithu Hluttaw, 12 for Amyotha Hluttaw, and 92 for Yangon region Hluttaw (including Ethnic Affairs ministers). There are only two constituencies for Ethnic Affairs Minister seats in Yangon Region – Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister and Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister. There are 801³ candidates contesting for 149 seats of respective constituencies. 769 out of 801 candidates represents 41 political parties while the rest of 32 candidates are independent. In other words, 801 candidates will contest for the seats of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Yangon Region Hluttaw, Yangon Region Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister and Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister⁴.

2 Union Election Commission, Regions or State Hluttaw election law.

3 The Union Election Commission announced the list of candidates on August 31. Following the announcement, a candidate (of 70 Amyotha Hluttaw candidates) representing Mro National Democracy Party passed away on September 2, 2020. Union Election Commission also announced his death. Moreover, on October 13, U Hla Win representing Democratic Party for a New Society contesting for Thingangyun township Constituency 1, was removed from the list by East Yangon District Election Commission on the basis that his parents were not Myanmar citizens in the time of his birth. Mizzama, <http://www.mizzimaburmese.com/article/74453>

The Union Election Commission issued that United Democratic Party was dissolved in accordance with political party registration law 12 A, 4 and political party registration Rules 12 B. https://www.uec.gov.mm/news_preview_detail.php

4 In the time of writing this paper, number could vary due to dissolution of United Democratic Party, deaths of candidates and removal of candidates

There are 250 candidates running for 45 constituencies of Pyithu Hluttaw and 58 candidates for 12 constituencies of Amyotha Hluttaw. 482 candidates will contest for 90 constituencies of Yangon Region Hluttaw, 6 for Yangon Region Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister seat, and 5 for Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister seat. (See table 1)

Table 1 – Number of candidates and constituencies

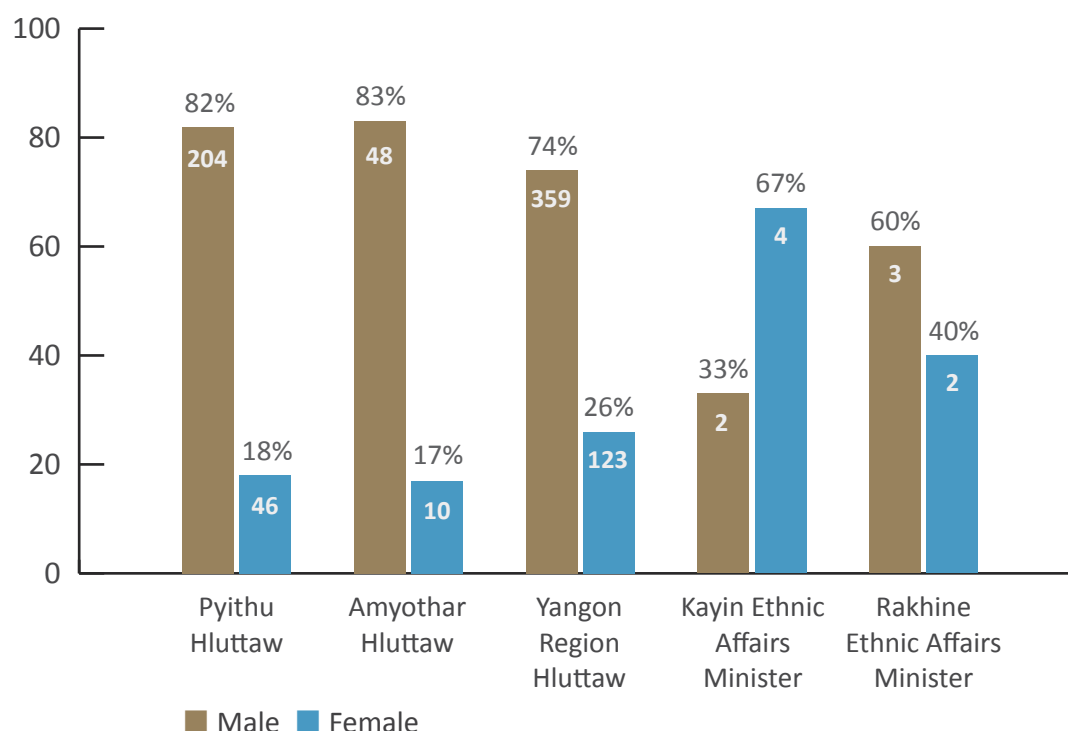
No.	Name of Hluttaw	Constituency or seat	No. of candidates
1	Pyithu Hluttaw	45	250
2	Amyotha Hluttaw	12	58
3	Yangon Region Hluttaw	90	482
4	Yangon Region Hluttaw (Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister)	1	6
5	Yangon Region Hluttaw (Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister)	1	5
Total		149	801

Source – 2020 general elections constituencies, Union Election Commission, “Region/ State Hluttaw Election Law” website

Out of 801 candidates contesting in the election, men account for 616 (76.9%) while women for 185 (23.1%). (See graph 1)

In addition, out of 250 candidates running for Pyithu Hluttaw seats, 204 are men and 46 women while men make up 48 and women 10, out of 58 candidates competing for Amyotha Hluttaw. Among 482 candidates running for Yangon Region Hluttaw, men constitute 359 and women 123; men make up 2 and women 4 out of 6 candidates contesting for Yangon Region Kayin Ethnic Minister seat while men account for 3 and women 2 among 5 candidates running for Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Minister seat. Please see graph 1 for the detail of gender composition in number and percentage.

Graph 1 – Number and percentage of candidates contesting in Yangon Region based on gender



Source – Constituencies of 2020 general elections, Union Election Commission website

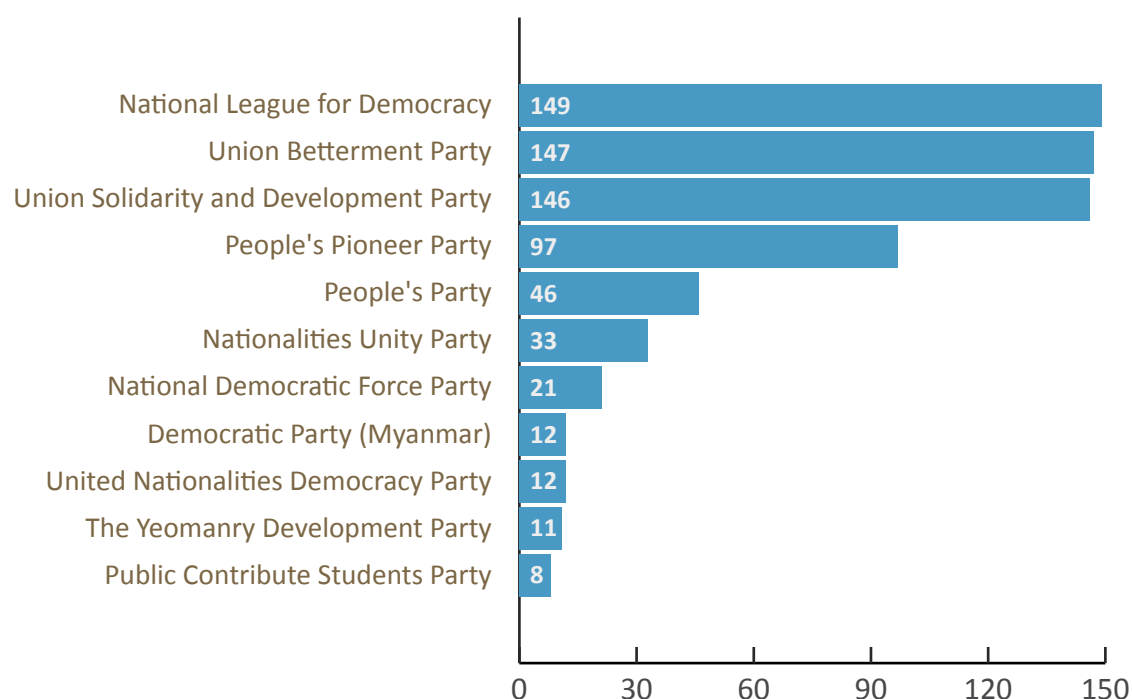
Political parties contesting in Yangon Region

There are 41 political parties competing in Yangon region⁵. Out of 41 political parties, there are 11 parties, including 8 of ethnic-based, that have published manifestos⁶. Therefore, 20 % of parties are ethnic-based. National League for Democracy Party is competing for every seat in Yangon Region Hluttaw. (see graph 2 and 3).

5 Union Election Commission website

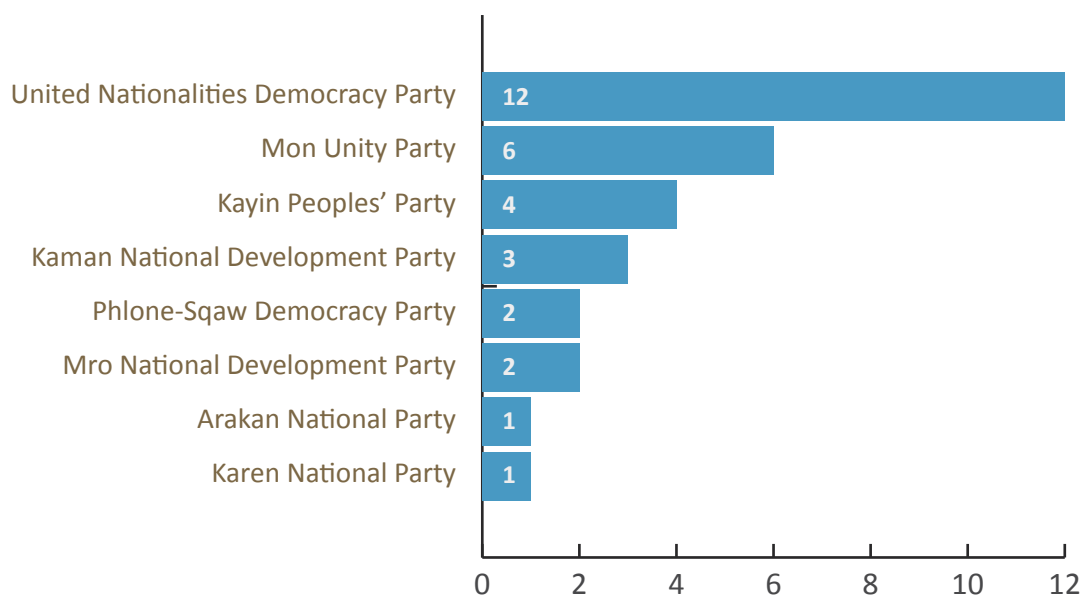
6 They are United Nationalities Democracy Party, Mon Unity Party, Kayin Peoples Party, Kaman National Development Party, Phlone-Sqaw Democracy Party, Mro National Development Party, Arakan National Party, and Karen National Party.

Graph 2 – Political parties with highest number of candidates⁷



Source – Constituencies of 2020 general election, Union Election Commission website

Graph 3 – Ethnic-based political parties and their candidates



Source – Constituencies of 2020 general election, Union Election Commission website

⁷ Only 10 parties with most candidates are mentioned.

Yangon Hluttaw Ethnic Affairs Ministers candidates

6 candidates, representing political parties, will compete for Yangon Region Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister constituency (1). Similarly, 5 candidates – two representing political parties and three independent – will contest for Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister constituency. (*see table 2 for detail*)

Gender composition of Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister candidates is male (2) and female (4) while that of Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister candidates is male (3) and female (2).

Table 2 – Candidates for Kayin and Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Ministers

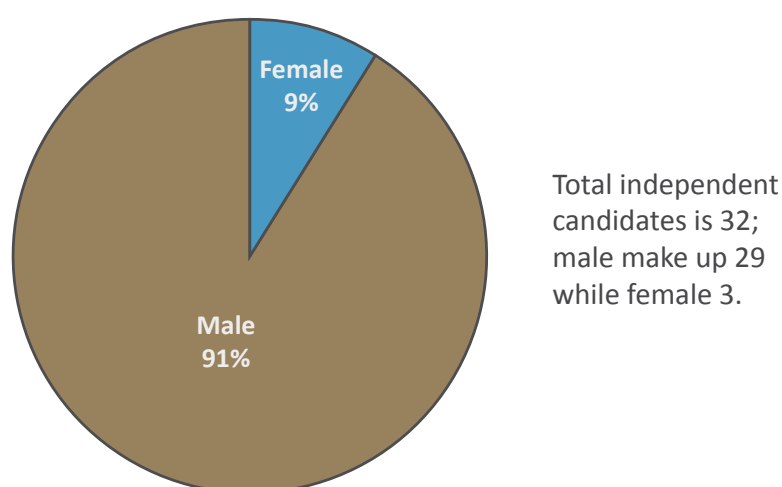
No.	Candidates for Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister	Representing party or independent	Candidates for Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister	Representing party or independent
1	Saw Jack Kawt Htoo	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Daw Khin Myo Oo	National League for Democracy
2	Naw Lin Theingi Tun	People's Pioneer Party	Dr. San Hla Kyaw	Independent
3	Naw Hla Hla Soe or Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe	National League for Democracy	U Tin Htoo Aung	Independent
4	Naw Ohn Hla	United Nationalities Democracy Party	Daw Htoot May	Independent
5	Mahn Than Win Oo	Kayin Peoples Party	U Oo Kyaw Myint	Arakan National Party
6	Daw Thin Thin Khine	Union Betterment Party		

Source – Constituencies of 2020 general election, Union Election Commission website

Independent candidates

32 independent candidates are running for seats of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Yangon Region Hluttaw and Yangon Region Ethnic Affairs Minister⁸. 29 (91 %) out of those independent candidates are male and 3 (9%) female. (See graph 4)

Graph 4 – Number of independent candidates and gender composition in percentage



Source – Constituencies of 2020 general election, Union Election Commission website

8 Union Election Commission, "2020 general election"

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS (PART B) : ELECTION PROMISES

Election promises by political parties

The policies, the processes for those policies - in other words, election promises - can be found in the manifestos of political parties. 13 out of 42 political parties contesting in Yangon Region has published their manifestos⁹. Those manifestos cover the whole country. Although all manifestos consist of political, economic and social matters, only do 7 parties include environmental issues (*see Annex II*).

All 13 manifestos, in general, cover peace, changes to legislation, rule of law, federal union aspiration, ethnic groups affairs and citizen rights with regard to political aspect. As to economic sector, those manifestos encompass taxes, economic system, private businesses, farming, animal husbandry, land issues and export/import. Education, health, youth, women rights, living conditions and transportation are incorporated on the subject of social affairs. 7 political parties include the issues of environmental protection, disaster prevention and management, forestry, natural resource management, energy and biodiversity in their manifestos.

13 out of 42 political parties contesting in Yangon Region has published their manifestos, only do 7 parties include environmental issues

9 Only manifestos released from July 1 when election date were announced to October 18th are included.

Election promises for Yangon Region

Only has one political party released a manifesto with specific focus on Yangon region, which is People's Pioneer Party – a recently formed party. In its manifesto, People's Pioneer Party titled it as "Greater Yangon Policies to revive New City dream". Rather than stressing on New City projects, they focus on current Yangon. "Policies are to prioritize a revival of industrial zones and ports in Yangon for movement of commodity and people (passenger); to improve efficiency of Mingalardon airport and public transportation; to advance education, infrastructure, and public service to make Yangon a smart city by dubbing it as "brain"; and to implement ten social pillars encompassing electricity, water, garbage collection, low-cost housing, prevention of flooding, ever-green areas, reduction of crime, increased efficiency of public services, management of state-owned and public-owned immovable resources and preservation of cultural heritage¹⁰."

Only has one political party released a manifesto with specific focus on Yangon region, which is People's Pioneer Party – a recently formed party.

Candidates for Yangon Region Affairs Minister seats prioritize and pledge for socio-economic development, job opportunities for the youth and equality. Daw Htoot May, an independent candidate running for Rakhine Minister seat, has pledged for socio-economic development of people she is representing, development of human resource, job security and human rights¹¹. The candidate of National League for Democracy contesting for Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister has promised socio-economic development of Kayin people in Yangon, equality, federal aspirations, peace, job opportunities for young people, trainings for job quality improvement. Similarly, candidates from Kayin People's Party and United Nationalities Democracy Party have stressed on human rights, literature, culture and history of their representing population¹².

10 People's Pioneer Party, "Key Initiatives for people lives"

11 Nyan Lin Htun, "Interview with Daw Htoot May running for Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Affair Minister seat"

12 Nyein Nyein, 'Election 2020 | Karen Ethnic Affairs Minister Candidates in Myanmar's Yangon Square Off in Online Debate'.

Independent candidates as well as candidates from political parties have made their campaign promises based on the needs of their constituencies. A candidate of Karen National Party contesting for Taikkyi constituency (1) promised in the pamphlet saying “Social Development for Taikkyi township¹³.” Some candidates running for Hlaing Tharyar (west) township constituencies have promised to implement issues such as water, electricity, roads, labor rights, workers’ salary and benefits, housing for workers, low-cost housing, accommodation and identity cards for the squatters, welfare clinics, space for hawkers to reduce traffic jam, legalization for motorbiking, expansion of the city, rule of law, rights of the peoples, making peoples’ voices heard by bringing issues to the parliament, peasants’ rights, expansion of police station and police force to maintain rule of law¹⁴. Moreover, candidates running for Tharkayta township have promised to undertake construction of buildings for education, legalization of motorbiking to maintain rule of law, urban draining system, garbage cleaning in the back of houses, economic problems experiencing by all walks of life, women’s rights, attaining grant for land, bringing corruption cases as to land and farmland tax, law amendment, new legislation, dissolution of laws¹⁵. A candidate of Kaman National Development Party running for Yangon Region Parliament Mingalar Taung Nyunt constituency has promised to improve minority rights, and public health (especially the issues of stray dogs)¹⁶.

13 Can be found at Karen National Party’s official facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/1634017250219468/posts/2706471219640727/>

14 Interview on facebook by Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation, a community-based organization
<https://www.facebook.com/SNPFBMyanmar/>

15 Interview on facebook by Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation, a community-based organization
<https://www.facebook.com/SNPFBMyanmar/>

16 Nan Lwin, ‘Election 2020 | Rival Candidates Spell Out Goals, Dreams as Myanmar Election Nears’.

Furthermore, Pyithu Hluttaw candidates has made campaign promises related to legislations and constituencies' needs. A candidate from People's Party running for Pyithu Hluttaw Kamaryut township constituency has promised to make changes to education system and to be able to elect a mayor for each township¹⁷. A candidate of National League for Democracy competing for Pyithu Hluttaw Dagon Myothit (North) township constituency has stressed on job opportunity and vocational trainings for young people¹⁸. People's Party's candidate contesting for Dagon Myothit (north) township constituency has pledged for rule of law and urban draining system¹⁹. Likewise, Democratic Party for a New Society's candidate running for Pyithu Hluttaw Pabedan township constituency has promised for social justice, social welfare and minority rights²⁰. Similarly, National League for Democracy's candidate for Pebedan township constituency has made campaign promises on rule of law, minority rights and traffic jam²¹.

17 Nay Yan Oo facebook:<https://www.facebook.com/nayyanoo2020>

18 Mya Thida Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/1568360566/videos/10223556310847053/>

19 Nan Lwin, 'Election 2020 | Rival Candidates Spell Out Goals, Dreams as Myanmar Election Nears'.

20 Eithinzar Maung Facebook:<https://fb.watch/1oJNAvFhXT/>

21 Nan Lwin, 'Election 2020 | Rival Candidates Spell Out Goals, Dreams as Myanmar Election Nears'.

CONCLUSION

Campaign promises by candidates running for Yangon Region is of great importance for Yangon city (especially for Yangon residents). However, most 2020 election campaign promises are less clear and general, and development issues of the region are overlooked in the promises. Election manifestos by political parties lack environmental matters and only one party has released a section with specific focus on Yangon Region. Moreover, it is questionable that campaign promises of a political party can reflect development challenges of Yangon city. Therefore, political parties should release separate section on Yangon region in their policies and campaign promises. It is few and far between to see data-based research conducted by policy institutes on state or regional-level election campaign promises. Hence, this should be taken into consideration in future research.

Annex I : Research methodology

For this paper, data are collected on the internet from July 1st to October 18th when Union Election Commission announced the date for third general election. Data are sourced from online-based media and social media to the best of our ability. There has been changes to the number and percentage of candidates running for Yangon Region due to termination of United Democratic Party, deaths of candidates and removal of candidates at the time of writing this paper. Number of candidates has reduced to 801 and gender composition has become male 616 (76.9%) and female 185 (23.1%). Being unable to analyze campaign promises of individual candidate, general analysis was made for this paper.

Annex II : Election manifestos by political parties

No.	Political party	politics	economic	social	environ- ment
1	National League for Democracy	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Union Betterment Party	✓	✓	✓	
3	Union Solidarity and Development Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	People's Pioneer Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	People's Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	National United Party	✓	✓	✓	
7	Democratic Party (Myanmar)	✓	✓	✓	
8	The Yeomanry Development Party	✓	✓	✓	
9	Democratic Party for a New Society	✓	✓	✓	
10	Mon Unity Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	New Society Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Arakan National Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Karen National Party	✓	✓	✓	

Source – manifestos of political parties are sourced from social media

Annex III : Sources

1. Union Election Commission website
2. Facebooks of political parties
3. Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation facebook page
4. The Irrawaddy
5. Mizzima Burmese
6. Eleven Media
7. Yangon Business Guide – 2018, publication

Which political parties and candidates are contesting in Yangon Region?

This paper is conducted via compiling data on the internet as to what campaign promises has been made by those parties and candidates.



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