

The former leader of the Kachin Independence Organization who formed the Kachin State Progressive Party invites students and women in Myitkyina to campaign for the party.

The former leader of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) , Tu Ja, who resigned to form the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), on Wednesday invited dozens of women and students in Myitkyina to a briefing on how to campaign for the party.

Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Thursday, a participant, Marry, a Kachin student at Myitkyina University, said that Tu Ja targeted students and women because they are often in key locations such as markets, schools and other public areas, and they can spread information about the KSPP and the national election.

Tu Ja and five other high-ranking Kachin leaders resigned from the KIO in September 2009 to work full time for the KSPP, which he founded in March 2009 to contest in the 2010 election. However, the party, like others in the country, has not been able to register because the regime has yet to announce the electoral laws.

The electoral laws will be probably be made public in May, say observers.

According to a report by the Thailand-based *Kachin News Group* quoting a student, Tu Ja told the group that the Burmese regime is scheduled to hold elections sometime in mid-2010, perhaps between August and September. He told the participants that they can actively campaign for the party without fear.

Awng Wa, a Kachin source on the Sino-Burmese border, told *The Irrawaddy* on Thursday that Tu Ja has campaigned for his KSPP in Myitkyina, Bhamo, Tanai and Mohnyin in Kachin State.

Awng Wa said many people agreed with Tu Ja that it would be better for the Kachin people to participate in the election process, fielding their own candidates, while others have decided not to take part because they believe the election will not be free and fair.

Tu Ja officially introduced the KSPP at the KIO's headquarters near Laiza on the Sino-Burmese border in July 2009. The meeting was attended by about 800 people, including civilians and members of the KIO, the New Democratic Army-Kachin and the Kachin Consultative Committee.

The KIO is now under pressure to transform its army into a regime-led border guard force. The latest deadline for the cease-fire group is the end of February.