

Independent Kachin leaders have launched a third appeal to the Election Committee to register the Kachin State Progressive Party.

Leaders of the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) traveled to Naypyidaw, Burma's new capital, on Tuesday, to launch a third appeal to the Union Election Commission (EC) to allow the party to register and contest the election in Burma.

Speaking with The Irrawaddy, Lapai Naw Din, an editor with the Thailand-based Kachin News Group, said, "Three leaders including Dr. Tu Ja, the head of the party, went to Naypyidaw for what seems to be a final appeal."

Tu Ja, the former vice chairman of the KIO formed the KSPP in March 2009 and officially launched the party in July. Although the KSPP registered with the EC in Naypyidaw in early April, the EC has yet to approve its registration because the Burmese authorities accuse the KSPP of having ties with Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).

Section 12(a)(3) of the Political Parties Registration Law (PPRL) denies registration to any party that is involved with groups launching armed rebellions or involved with associations declared to be "unlawful associations."

James Lun Dau, a KIO central committee member and the deputy official responsible for the party's foreign affairs, said, "They [the EC] are not allowing the KSPP to register because they know the party has majority support in Kachin State.

"They don't wish to repeat the experience in the 1990 election when they lost to the National League for Democracy (NLD), so they won't allow any party to contest that could beat them," he said.

To date, the EC already have approved registration of more than 20 ethnic political parties to participate in the election, but not the KSPP.

Tu Ja told the Irrawaddy in an interview on July 2: "I think the authorities will equally consider the applications of different ethnic groups and that we won't be left out alone. That's why we are still waiting to hear from the EC with our utmost hope."

Having opened an office in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, and launched a widespread election campaign in the state, the KSPP had to suspend its campaign after the party failed to register at Naypyidaw.

At present the only political party running an election campaign in Kachin State is the Unity and Democracy Party for Kachin State, a pro-junta ethnic party allied with the state-sponsored mass civic organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA).

The Unity and Democracy Party for Kachin State represents the United Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in the campaign in Kachin State.

The USDP is the main political party representing the USDA and is composed of former high-ranking army officers who are senior officials in the military government.

Two USDP leaders, Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, minister of Post, Communication and Telegraphs, and Aung Thaung, minister of Industry-1, reportedly told USDP members on a trip to Kachin State in June that the EC will not register the KSPP as it has ties with the KIO.

The junta-supported Unity and Democracy Party for Kachin State is led by Duwa Mading Zung Ting, the head of the USDA in Kachin State and the chairman of the Kachin Literature and Culture Committee.

In June, Duwa Mading Zung Ting accused the KSPP and KIO of being the same and taking the same stance of opposing the junta.

Kachin observers suggest the EC has delayed the KSPP registration—and is now signaling the party's potential disqualification under the Political Parties Registration Law—to put pressure on the KIO to join the junta's border guard force.

The regime has failed to persuade the KIO to join the border guard force despite several rounds of talks on the matter, causing tensions between the junta and the KIO to rise.