

Burma's Election Commission has approved the registration of the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State (UDPKS), which is allegedly backed by the junta, while the Kachin Independence Organization's led by Tu Ja and a further two still await a decision.

State-run newspapers on Saturday reported that the registration of the UDPKS has been approved. It is the first Kachin political party to be approved by the commission.

Tu Ja's Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) applied for registration on April 5, but is still waiting for a decision.

The UDPKS made its application in June. The UDPKS is led by Kya Hting Nan, a former organizer of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State.

"He doesn't really have a political background. He formed the party because ministers Thein Zaw [of post, telegraph and communication] and minister Aung Thaung [of Industry 1] urged him to form a political party," said Naw Ding, editor of the Kachin News Group, based in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Tu Ja told The Irrawaddy on Monday: "We wish to have only one party to represent our people and state. But it is also his [Kya Hting Nan's] right to do so. He seems to be an active person."

Tu Ja served as vice chairman of the Kachin Independent Organization (KIO), but resigned in 2009 to lead the KSPP. He said the Election Commission was still reviewing the party's registration application, allegedly because of concern over the connection between the party and the armed group of the KIO. Tu Ja has repeatedly rejected any such connection.

Naw Ding accused the Burmese regime of following a "divide and rule strategy" in Kachin State. "The SPDC wants to destroy the unity of our people," he said.

Tu Ja said if his party is allowed to compete in the election "I believe people will vote for us."

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