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Burma's two largest ethnic parties have said that they will claim their seats in Parliament when it is formed sometime next year, despite their allegations of cheating by the junta-backed party that has been declared the winner of the country's Nov. 7 election.

Leaders of the two parties, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) and the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), said that they would join the Parliament for the sake of their people.

“We will take our seats in Parliament even if other parties boycott it,” SNDP Chairman Sai Aik Pao told The Irrawaddy on Friday. “We want to use our position inside Parliament to improve the living standards of our Shan people.”

The SNDP, also known as the White Tiger Party, fielded 157 candidates in the election, of whom 57 won.

Concerning widespread allegations of vote-rigging by the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), regarded as a regime proxy, Sai Aik Pao said that his party had no plans to call for an investigation.

“We are well aware of the USDP's cheating, but we don't see any point in disputing the results

of the election,” he said. “If we sue them, we will have to pay one million kyat (US \$1,150) for every constituency that they stole. We don't want to waste our time and money on this.”

The RNDP, which enjoyed strong support in Arakan State, also said that it would not boycott the Parliament, but intended to challenge the results in some constituencies where the USDP was accused of ballot stuffing.

RNDP Chairman Dr Aye Maung told The Irrawaddy recently that the party is “collecting evidence of cheating by the USDP during the election. When we are finished, we will send it to the Election Commission (EC).”

He also said that his party intended to work to promote the equality of the ethnic Rakhine people and wanted to discuss the government's gas projects in Arakan State.

The RNDP won in 35 of the 44 constituencies it contested.

Another ethnic party, the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP), said that it would boycott the new Parliament if other parties also did so.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Friday, AMDP Chairman Naing Ngwe Thein said that his party also had evidence of cheating by the USDP, but the EC has refused to acknowledge the problem.

“We told them the USDP used advance votes to fix the election results, but the EC dismissed our complaints,” he said.

The AMDP, which had 34 candidates in the election, won 16 seats.

According to China's Xinhua news agency, the USDP won 883, or 76.5 percent, of the 1,154 seats contested in the election. The pro-regime National Unity Party came in second with 63 seats, followed by the SNDP and the RNDP, with 57 and 35 seats, respectively.

The National Democratic Front, a party formed by a breakaway faction of the National League for Democracy, which won 80 percent of the seats in Burma's last election in 1990, matched the AMDP with 16 seats.