

Dr. Manan Tuja, the former KIO vice chairman, discusses the policies and goals of the newly formed Kachin State Progressive Party.

The Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), based in Myitkyina, was formed in March 2009 by former leaders of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), which has a cease-fire agreement with the Burmese military regime.

Saw Yan Naing, an Irrawaddy correspondent, talks with KSPP leader Dr. Manan Tuja about the party's policies, tactics and the current situation in Kachin State. Manan Tuja is a former KIO vice-chairman.

Question: *What are your immediate plans in terms of the KSPP?*



Answer: We have already set up party committees in every township in Kachin State. We are beginning organizational activities among the people in all townships.

Q: *Will you campaign outside of Kachin State?*

A: At the moment, our activities will only be in Kachin State.

Q: *What are the KSPP's policies?*

A: We support and encourage a multi-party democratic system. We prefer a system in which democracy is practiced as a middle way, in a liberal tradition. We want to develop our state. When all the states become developed, the whole Union will be developed. We will work within our capacity. Now, we can see that the political door is opening a bit. On that basis, we will work realistically. We will promote education, health, the economy, religion, culture and literature for the people in Kachin State. We will also preserve peace, unity, the environment and protect human rights. Our party will represent all walks of life in Kachin State. All people regardless of race and religion can participate in our party.

Q: *Will the party contest all areas of Kachin State?*

A: We will contest all constituencies in Kachin State. We will contest all three assemblies: the Upper, Lower and State levels.

Q: *How many seats do you expect to win?*

A: It is hard to say how many seats we will win. I hope we will win most of the seats, because all of us in Kachin State want to develop our state. The people will support those who are developing the state.

Q: *How many executive members and party members do you have?*

A: Before we submitted our party registration to the election committee, we had a meeting of headquarters and township representatives. All township representatives attended the meeting, not only Kachin, but also Shan and Burman attended. Our central committee is comprised of 150 members. We also formed a central executive committee. According to our current list,

we have about 3,000 party members. There will be more party members in the future.

Q: *What is your opinion on the NLD decision not to register to participate in the election?*

A: Every political party makes its own policies and decisions. Within a given situation, our aim is to form a political party and contest in the election. If you want to continue your political activities, you have to do that.

Q: *What do think the NLD should do?*

A: Well, the best way is to contest in the election. But it's their decision. I can not say more than that.

Q: *The KIO has rejected the border guard force order. Do you think the regime will move militarily against the KIO?*

A: It is difficult to say exactly what will happen. The government wants to continue to negotiate for a peaceful resolution.

Q: *What is your perspective on the building of hydro dams in Kachin State?*

A: Well, people are discussing that, and we hear people's views all the time. If the dams are going to be built, they shouldn't add to the people's problems.