

The head of the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in Kachin State criticized links between the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), an armed ethnic cease-fire group, Kachin sources said.

During the USDA's annual meeting on June 2, Duwa Mading Zung Ting, the head of the USDA in Kachin State and the chairman of the Kachin Literature and Culture Committee, said, "KSPP and KIO are the same and they take the same stance of opposing the junta."

Duwa Mading Zung Ting is close to the Burmese generals and is influential in Myitkyina, where he is heading up the USDA efforts to campaign in Kachin State on behalf of the United Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)—which is composed of former generals who remain ministers and senior officials in the military government.

"He used the opportunity to campaign for the election and attacked the KSPP. His words impact the KSPP because he is the chairman of the Kachin Literature and Culture Committee," said Lapai Naw Din, an editor with the Thailand-based Kachin News Group.

"It is difficult to say the KSPP and KIO are the same because the KSPP party leaders have already resigned from the KIO. But, they [Burmese authorities] view the KSPP as KIO," he said.

The KSPP is led by Tu Ja, the former vice chairman of the KIO. He formed the KSPP in March 2009 and officially introduced the party in July.

Although the KSPP registered with the Union Election Commission (EC) in Naypyidaw in early April, the EC has yet to approve its registration to compete in the upcoming election.

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."

Although Duwa Mading Zung Ting did not refer directly to the PPRL in his comments, observers said that the EC has delayed the KSPP registration—and is now signaling the party's potential disqualification under the PPRL—to put pressure on the KIO to join the junta's border guard force (BGF).

The regime has failed to persuade the KIO to join the BGF despite several rounds of talks on the matter, causing rising tensions between the junta and the KIO.

The International Crisis Group, a global think-tank based in Brussels, reported on May 27 that the delay by the EC in approving the KSPP registration is likely due to the KIO's refusal to agree to the BGF proposal, and that the EC may rely on Section 12(a)(3) of the PPRL to reject the KSPP, the Northern Shan State Progressive Party and the United Democratic Party (Kachin State).

“There are two main reasons why they delayed the [KSPP] party registration. One is because the KIO rejected the border guard force proposal, and the other is that some former KIO leaders are involved in the party,” said Awng Wa, a Kachin ethnic who lives on the Sino-Burmese border.

“They will give [the KSPP] party registration approval when the time is almost ended, or they may force the party to oust KIO leaders,” said Lapai Naw Din.

KIO leaders have said they will talk to the new democratic government about the BGF issue at an undefined time following the election.

The KSPP has opened an office in Myitkyina and previously launched a widespread election campaign in Kachin State. The party suspended its campaign, however, after filing the party registration at Naypyidaw, and now only the USDP is campaigning in Kachin State.

Thus far, 32 political parties have filed registration applications at the EC and 28 have been

approved.