

Although the date of the Burmese election is now known, three Kachin political parties are still waiting for a decision on their application for registration.

The leader of one party, Tu Ja of the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), said he hoped to receive the green light from the Election Commission within a week. He said he was nevertheless unhappy about the long delay in dealing with the party's application, which was submitted in April.

The other two parties still waiting for a decision by the Election Commission are the United Democracy Party (Kachin State) (UDPKS) and the Northern Shan State Progressive Party (NSSPP), which is led by Kachins.

Tu Ja said the delay in processing his party's application handicapped party activities such as campaigning and collecting funds, which can only be undertaken when a party has successfully registered.

He told The Irrawaddy on Monday: "At first, we thought the process would be smooth. But, when we face such inconvenience we are not happy."

Despite the Election Commission regulation banning campaigning and fund raising until a party is registered, Tu Ja said the KSPP is holding regular meetings and informing the public about the party. Preparations are also being made to appoint candidates, he said.

Tu Ja said that when his party is registered it will campaign throughout Kachin State with the exception of areas controlled by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), a cease-fire group that has refused the regime's order to transform its troops into a border guard force.

Sources said that the delay in registering the KSPP may be due to suspicions that the party is in contact with the KIO. Tu Ja is a former vice chairman of the KIO. He formed the KSPP in March 2009 and since then it has won wide support among the Kachin people, whose only other options are parties dominated by ethnic Burmans.

Some observers said the Election Commission will probably delay registering the KSPP and other Kachin parties until shortly before the election in order to prevent them from carrying out campaign-related activities. In the meantime, the government-backed Union and Solidarity Development Party (USDP), which has many Kachin members, is free to conduct its activities and campaign in Kachin State. The USDP is also understood to be planning the establishment of an alternative, pro-government party led by Kachin who are members of the USDP.