



After previously rejecting the registration application of the Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP), Burma's Election Commission (EC) has now rejected the applications of 14 leading KSPP members, including its founder Tu Ja, who alternatively applied to run as individuals.

Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Thursday, KSPP Secretary Tu Raw, said: "I feel the refusal is unfair and we have not been given the right that every citizen should have to compete in the election. We will now have no opportunity to debate issues on a political stage like the new parliament."

"We have a chance for appeal to the Division Sub EC. There may be one or two candidates who make an appeal, but I personally will not appeal," said Tu Raw, who had hoped to compete for the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Parliament) in Waingmaw Township in Kachin Division.

The KSPP is the most popular political party in Kachin State, receiving the support of almost all local organizations and residents, including local authorities, and so the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) attempted to block the KSPP registration, said Tu Raw.

"The USDP knows that it is impossible for them to compete with the KSPP in Kachin State, and so it tried to stop our party from being registered," he said. According to one of the KSPP candidates, the USDP also tried to stop the fourteen individual candidates from receiving EC approval.

Tu Ja, the former vice-chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) who formed the KSPP in March 2009, said the other reason the EC didn't approve its registration was because it believed the KSPP had ties with the KIO.

"The second reason they won't allow us to register as a party or as individual candidates is the party's alleged ties with the KIO," he said.

The KIO is an armed cease-fire group. The military junta has ordered the KIO to transform its troops into a border guard force, but the KIO has thus far refused.

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."

Tu Raw said that while the party does not have direct ties with the KIO, it does receive support from all influential organizations in Kachin State.

"We have ethnic ties with the KIO, but not political ties and not the same agenda. If we don't get support from that group, it would make it difficult for our party movement in the region," he said.

At present, the only political party running an election campaign in Kachin State is the Unity Democracy Party of Kachin State (UDPK), a pro-junta ethnic party allied with the USDP.

However, the USDP, the Shan Nationals Democratic Party (SNDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP) have said they will compete in Kachin State as well.

So far, out of the 42 political parties that have applied, the EC has allowed 39 parties to register, including ethnic Karen, Mon, Palaung and Pa-O parties, according to the state-run The New Light of Myanmar newspaper.