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Free all political prisoners, free Burma.

Tin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com>., [NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] Burma Related News - Dec 23, 2011

Suu Kyi's party registers to run in Myanmar polls

AP - <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gn9kiaVxE_AOCfiTvlmoQyYZpOg?docId=00cc3cfd4b2426f8e3e1a757d8039f8>

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar (AP) — Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi formally registered her party Friday for any upcoming elections, returning the Nobel laureate to the political arena and winning plaudits from her political rivals in Myanmar's military-dominated parliament.

Suu Kyi decided last month to formally rejoin politics after recent reforms by the nominally civilian administration that took power this year. Suu Kyi, National League for Democracy leader Tin Oo and other party members registered the party at the Union Election Commission in the capital, Naypyitaw.

The party boycotted last year's general elections because of restrictive rules that among other things prevented Suu Kyi from being a candidate. The government has since lifted many of those restrictions.

The government had taken the NLD off the list of legally recognized political parties because of the boycott.

NLD spokesman Nyan Win said that the party would contest all vacant seats in an upcoming by-election and that Suu Kyi would soon announce in which constituency she will run.

No date has been set for that election, but Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye said last week that the government would announce it three months before the by-election, giving candidates time to campaign.

After registering, Suu Kyi met separately with Khin Aung Myint and Thura Shwe Mann, the speakers of the upper and lower houses of parliament, who both said they welcomed her action. Both had served under the previous military-led government, which kept Suu Kyi under house arrest for much of the past two decades.

"All parties should join hands and work together" at a time when Myanmar is promoting the spirit of democracy, Khin Aung Myint told reporters.

Allowing Suu Kyi's party back into the political fold will likely give the government greater legitimacy at home and abroad. It has already won cautious praise from international observers and critics, including the United States, for introducing reforms.

During her visit to Myanmar early this month, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said she wants to ensure that future elections are "free, fair and credible in the eyes of the people."

The polls in November 2010 were Myanmar's first since the NLD overwhelmingly won a general election in 1990. The military junta at that time refused to honor the results.

The regime kept Suu Kyi under house arrest during different periods for a total of 15 years. She was released just after last year's elections and is now free to move about and meet people.

The government continues to hold hundreds of other political prisoners, and Suu Kyi has said the NLD will continue to work for their release.

zin linn <zinlinn@yahoo.com.au>, [NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, Tue, 13. Dec 2011.

The Nation - <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Burma-allows-registration-of-Suu-Kyis-opposition-p-30171747.html>>

Burma allows registration of Suu Kyi's opposition party

December 13, 2011 3:48 pm

Rangoon - Burma on Tuesday allowed the registration of the opposition National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, ahead of upcoming by-elections, a news report said.

Suu Kyi, the country's renowned opposition leader, has indicated her intention to contest the polls, possibly in a

constituency in the old capital Rangoon.

The Union Election Commission "allowed the formation of National League for Democracy" (NLD) as the application to register was in accordance with the law, the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported.

The NLD was dissolved after boycotting the November 2010 general election in protest at new rules which effectively prevented it from running with Suu Kyi as a member. It applied for re-registration on November 25.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate who spent 15 of the past 21 years under house arrest, confirmed two weeks ago her plan to run, in a video conference with the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington.

The by-elections, whose date has not been announced, are to cover 48 seats vacated by representatives who stepped down to take up cabinet positions after last year's polls, the first in two decades.

The current government consists mainly of ex military men from the former junta, but has instigated a number of changes, raising hope in the international community of further democratic reforms. //DPA

zin linn <zinlinn@yahoo.com.au>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, Wed, 21. Dec 2011

The Irrawaddy - Today's Newsletter for Wednesday, December 21, 2011, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

Suu Kyi Says Becoming an MP will 'Enhance Cooperation'

By THE IRRAWADDY Wednesday, December 21, 2011, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22696>



Aung San Suu Kyi explains to activists why she decides to become a member of parliament. (Photo Messenger)

Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi said her decision to compete for a seat in the national Parliament is aimed at enhancing cooperation and understanding among the stakeholders in the country.

She made the remark in a meeting in Rangoon on Tuesday with a group of political activists representing the 88 Generation Students' group, which publicly declared in a recent statement that its members will not participate in the coming parliamentary by-elections, for which a date has not yet been set.

Suu Kyi said that politics inside and outside the parliamentary system will continue to exist even after she joined the Parliament, according to Soe Tun, a leading member of the group that met with Suu Kyi.

Soe Tun is a former political prisoner who had been in hiding inside Burma since the violent government crackdown in 2007 against monk-led pro-democracy protests. He recently joined public political events following overtures to the opposition by Burma's new quasi-civilian government.

"She explained that her joining the Parliament is because she believes it will further increase friendship and cooperation among all of us and also speed up the process of dialogue leading towards national reconciliation," said Soe Tun,

The overtures, which included a private meeting between Suu Kyi and President Thein Sein, resulted in the decision of

the NLD to join the by-elections despite the fact that it boycotted last year's parliamentary election, which observers

The 88 Generation Students group was formed by student activists involved in the country's popular democracy uprising in 1988.

The group previously said in a statement that it will not consider joining the election until group leaders such as Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, both influential dissidents who began serving 65-year prison sentences in 2007, are released.

The statement was announced following the decision by Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) to participate in the parliamentary system.

"We explained to Daw Suu that our group will not field any candidate for the coming elections as long as our leaders are not released. But we have no objection whatsoever to any one joining the elections on an individual basis. And Daw Suu said she has an understanding of it," said Soe Tun.

He added that Suu Kyi still invited them to join the election workshops and training which the NLD will conduct. The purpose of the events will be to educate the public so that people can vote in the election with an awareness of election issues such as the suspicious advanced ballots that helped the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party win a dominating majority in the current Parliament.

A group of exiled dissident Buddhist monks also issued a recent statement saying that it would not support elections until political prisoners in the country, which include Buddhist monks, are released.

Meanwhile, government sources reportedly said that the Burmese government will release all the political prisoners on Jan. 4, marking the 64th anniversary of Burma's independence from British colonial rule.

The Irrawaddy, Newsletter for December 7, 2011, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22613>

'Concrete Action' Needed on Rights in Burma: US Lawmaker



Congressman Joseph Crowley (Photo: crowley.house.gov)

WASHINGTON — A top US lawmaker on Tuesday said the Burmese government needs to show the world it is serious about reforms by taking concrete actions, including an immediate end to ongoing human rights abuses.

"Secretary Clinton's trip turned the global spotlight on Burma, but the onus for change ultimately lies in the hands of those who hold the levers of power—the ruling government of Burma and its military," Congressman Joseph Crowley told The Irrawaddy in an interview.

"If there is going to be genuine change, one thing is clear: It must start with concrete action that includes an immediate end to ongoing human rights abuses," said Crowley, who has been leading congressional efforts in imposing sanctions on Burma.

Crowley, who spearheaded the passage and subsequent renewal of the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act, expressed skepticism over the steps being taken by the Burmese government, given the bitter experience of the past in this regard.

“What I have heard and read from news reports, these are welcome changes. But I have seen similar changes before, and after a while they revert back to repression. So I think my observation of the junta and its cruel relationship to its own people has a long way to go before I would be convinced that the present Burmese government is in fact on a different path and on a path towards democracy and respect for the human rights of all its people, especially of the ethnic minorities,” the New York lawmaker said.

“I think it is premature to be talking about lifting sanctions and I do not believe it’s been suggested by the Secretary of State. The regime and the military are repressive. It is engaged in rape, murder, ethnic cleaning and crimes against humanity in Burma. They have a long way to go before they will convince me that they are in fact on a path towards democracy,” said Crowley.

Crowley, who had authored legislation to award Aung San Suu Kyi the Congressional Gold Medal in 2008 and was a leading voice calling for her release, was the first member of Congress to speak with the popular Burmese leader on the phone after her release last year.

“The recent release of prisoners, relaxing of the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, allowing her to participate in the elections is all new. How long it will last, unless there is a permanent change in the structure of the government—that is not yet clear,” he said.

However, he said he supported Clinton’s recent trip to Burma—the first by a secretary of state in more than five decades.

“I support the Secretary’s trip. I have tremendous respect for Secretary Clinton. I know she is capable of delivering a very strong message to all the fronts involved in Burma. She is able to carry a very long and powerful stick and, at the same time, show that carrots are available. That’s important,” he said.

“This visit could be one off or this could be potentially the beginning of a really serious transformation within this junta government—the civilian government that still needs to be seen,” he said.

Referring to the recent statement by the US president, Barack Obama, that there has been a “flicker of progress” in Burma, Crowley said: “I think the US is there to blow a little oxygen onto it and add some kindling to it, to demonstrate the willingness of the United States to move Burma towards democracy.”

Crowley has also been a strong voice against the military regime and its brutal practice of committing crimes against humanity and led the call for the US to call for a UN Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity committed by the Burmese regime.

“I think that the motivation is [to do this] for the people of Burma—55 million people who have been shunned by the rest of the world, [in a country] shut by its own government, who have been brutalized by their own government—I think that is the motivation. In fact, that is the best foot of American diplomacy—to free the people from the bondage of [their] own government,” Crowley said.

“We [Congressmen] all hope that this is really the beginning of change for Burma, particularly for its people. But I would have to say there is a lot of skepticism. I am not convinced yet and I think there’s probably a likelihood that the majority of us are concerned about it right now,” said the top US lawmaker.

Between news <burmaonlinecentre@gmail.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] UN: Cultivation of opium in Myanmar rises, Fri, 16. Dec 2011

Between – News about /Myanmar – Burma, <<http://www.betweenonline.com/2011/12/16/un-cultivation-of-opium-in-myanmar-rises/>>

UN: Cultivation of opium in Myanmar rises

December 16, 2011 | Filed under: News | Posted by: Between News

This year’s rise in cultivation of opium in Myanmar specifically the states of Kachin and Shan has a outstanding record of 14 per cent while the country of Laos has recorded a sudden rise of 37 per cent, the UN report said.

About 91 per cent of the country’s crop is located at the north eastern part of Shan State. The plantation area covers around 13 per cent as compared from the past years.

According to the survey made by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime’s annual South East Asia Opium Survey this 2011, in just another part on the north of **Kachin State** they have recorded opium crops up to **27** per cent.

While in **Laos** the increase of opium cultivation was seen at 3,000 hectares in 2010 to 4,100 hectares and increase of **37** per cent. In the year 1990 Myanmar top the world’s largest opium producer and the worlds.



Opium farm in Shan State. @dictatorwatch

Planting opium is considered as the most profitable form of agriculture in Myanmar's remote areas. Imagine an ordinary farmer earning 6,300 dollars of a hectare of opium poppies which is nine times more compared to the same hectare of legitimate crop, said in a news report by Monster and Critics.

Since there are no other replacement for crops to be planted especially in these remote areas, the cultivation of opium has been their target which causes them high demand for these illegal drugs.

There are various donors and beneficial programs initiated by the government to back up the crop replacements instead of growing opium but it's so saddening that most parts are planted with opium and is controlled and heavily guarded by Myanmar's ethnic minority armed groups whom we know are staging long standing feud against the government.

The war between the Myanmar government and the Kachin rebel groups has recorded around 30,000 refugees who fled their homes because of heavy fighting and safety for their lives is their primary concern.

President Thein Sein called for a truce with the rebel groups. During his first days when he seated office last March 31, he has initiated peace talks with insurgents coming from Shan, Karen and Chin expressing high hopes that these uprising insurgency can be resolved and can benefit from development fund in the coming years.

Between news <burmaonlinecentre@gmail.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra met Suu Kyi for half-hour, 21. Dec 2011

Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra met Suu Kyi for half-hour -

December 21, 2011 | Posted by: **Between News** - <<http://www.betweenonline.com/2011/12/21/thai-pm-yingluck-shinawatra-met-suu-kyi-for-half-hour/>>

Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra met Myanmar democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Tuesday in Yangon, said the news reported by Associated Press.



Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra met Suu Kyi

This is the first time that the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader has met the Prime Minister from Myanmar neighbouring country like Thailand and other ASEAN countries since Suu Kyi release from house arrest a year ago.

Ms Shinawatra met Suu Kyi at the Thai ambassador's residence in Yangon for about half-hour but the details of the discussions were not immediately available, the AP news report said.

Myanmar hosts a two-day regional leaders' summit in Naypyidaw, the new capital city of Myanmar starting from Monday.

Myanmar opposition leader Ms Suu Kyi has met a number of top foreign leaders since her release last year and after the country has been ruled by the military regime for more than five decades.

Last month the United State Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar for the first time in five decades and Clinton met Suu Kyi at her lake side resident in Yangon.

Since the Thein Sein government came into power from the controversial elections last, a series of change has taken place. Then Suu Kyi has many chances to meet foreign top leaders like Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba, Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague and the China's ambassador to Myanmar Li Junhua.

zin linn <zinlinn@yahoo.com.au>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, Sat, 03. Dec 2011

Bangkok Post - Published: 3/12/2011 - <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/269060/suu-kyi-gives-green-light-to-us-engagement>>

Suu Kyi gives green light to US engagement

RANGOON : Aung San Suu Kyi voiced guarded hope Friday that democracy will come to Burma as the opposition leader warmly welcomed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the home that was her prison for years.

In scenes unthinkable before Burma's recent reforms, Suu Kyi took Clinton by the arm and escorted her through the garden of her crumbling lakeside villa in the commercial hub Rangoon where she was locked up until a year ago.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner said she supported Clinton's trip a day earlier to Burma's remote capital Naypyidaw and believed that the country had reached a "historic moment".

"I am very confident that if we work together... there will be no turning back from the road to democracy," Suu Kyi said next to a beaming Clinton on a back porch surrounded by potted plants.

More needed to be done by the new military-backed government, "but we hope to get there as soon as possible", Suu Kyi added.

Clinton, who is the first US secretary of state to visit Burma in more than 50 years, nodded in agreement and said she saw "openings" during her three-day trip that "give us some grounds for encouragement".

The wife of former president Bill Clinton has spent decades hobnobbing with the world's most powerful but was visibly excited to meet Suu Kyi, repeatedly embracing the democracy champion and kissing her on the cheeks.

Clinton and Suu Kyi, two of the world's most prominent women, also met away from aides for an expansive dinner Thursday night at the US diplomatic mission whose chef prepared foods especially chosen to please Suu Kyi.

Clinton's aides said she even brought from the United States a chewy toy for Suu Kyi's small but energetic dog. Suu Kyi nonetheless gave Clinton a friendly warning that her dog was sometimes aggressive towards strangers.

Clinton on Thursday hand-delivered a personal letter from President Barack Obama that thanked Suu Kyi for her "inspiration" to people around the world and said the United States would stand by her "now and always".

Despite the warm atmosphere at their meetings, Clinton and Suu Kyi both warned of serious worries in Burma. Activists say anywhere from hundreds to more than 1,500 political prisoners remain jailed and that rape and forced labour remain common in ethnic enclaves torn by decades of war.

"All hostilities must cease within this country as soon as possible," Suu Kyi said.

Suu Kyi repeatedly urged the rule of law, demanding that all political prisoners be released and "that no more are arrested in the future for their beliefs".

The Burmese military seized power in 1962 and ruled until March, when the ruling junta nominally handed power to civilians.

President Thein Sein, while a former general, has surprised both the United States and the opposition for speaking the language of reforms and initiating dialogue both with Suu Kyi and ethnic minorities.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy swept 1990 elections but the military junta never allowed her to take power. She enjoys wide support across the political spectrum in Washington and her blessing is seen as critical to any future US move to ease sweeping sanctions.

Suu Kyi did not mention sanctions but welcomed the small incentives that Clinton offered on Thursday after her talks with the government, including support for international financial institutions to assess Burmese needs.

The opposition leader has indicated that she hopes to run in by-elections early next year, in a major test for how far the government is willing to tolerate political change.

Wrapping up her visit, the top US diplomat announced US\$1.2 million in new aid aimed at civil society to support microfinance, healthcare and help for the victims of landmines in the war-torn country.

Clinton said she told the country's leaders that the United States was assessing progress by the new leadership before it considers ending sanctions.

"We will match action for action, and if there is enough progress, obviously we will be considering lifting sanctions,"

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Clinton said, but added: "We are still at the very early stages of this dialogue."

In a further sign of a softening of the US stance, Clinton stepped back from a previous call for a UN-backed war crimes probe.

"We are going to support the principle of accountability and the appropriate mechanism to ensure justice and accountability will be considered," she said.

"But I think it's important to try to give the new government and the opposition a chance to try to demonstrate they have their own approach toward achieving that."

Prof Win - bt w <bathannwin@gmail.com>, „An Analysis of President Obama’s Speech in the New Cold War“, Sat, 26. Nov 2011 23:48:41

Between- news about Burma, Myanmar - Between news <burmaonlinecentre@gmail.com>, burmaonlinecentre@gmail.com, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK]

An Analysis of President Obama’s Speech in the New Cold War -

November 27, 2011 - By Opinion & Perspective, A Burmese Perspective

Kanbawza Win - <<http://www.betweenonline.com/opinion-article/an-analysis-of-president-obama%E2%80%99s-speech-in-the-new-cold-war>>

The rise of China in every respect in today’s geopolitical situation has created a new bipolar world compounded by the fact that in 2000 years China, for the first time has access to the Indian via Burma due to the Burmese Junta’s survival tactics, seems that Burma will be one of the hot spots in the new impending Cold War. Admittedly neither China nor US has any real desire for a ‘New Cold War’ to start, but deep suspicion and an unwillingness to break the mould of relations are leading to the emergence of these increasingly robust hedges and weakening of moderate forces on both sides. Until now, neither the US nor China has been fully prepared to face up to the underlying divisions because they imply some difficult choices. The corporate and economics still sees China as a major new commercial opportunity, while still far short of the power to represent any sort of a challenge to the world order.

There seems to be some major conflict drivers such as (1) Taiwan, (2) Energy, disagreement over the future of the Asia Pacific, in which Burma is placed in the cross road because of the main middle east oil pipeline will be dumped in Arakan (West coast of Burma) and be piped to central China. (3)Trade relations on whom a substantial degree of accord would drastically mitigate and possibly eliminate the risk of conflict and the currency exchange rate that seriously affect trade. But there is another important aspect of deep-rooted factors, sited more unequivocally at the level of ‘ideas and identity’ which make it improbable that any grand bargain over these conflict drivers – or preparedness to let economic forces gradually transform the context – is really feasible, as they touch on underlying attitudes towards the global role that each side should assume; regime threats and ideological conflict; fundamental trust in the other side’s intentions; and basic understanding of what major shifts in the global and regional balance of power imply for policy.

China, meanwhile, is inclined to see, US democratisation efforts in the rest of the world as part of a hegemonic strategy and calls on China to press ahead with political reforms as manipulative attempts to destabilise the country. On the other hand China is showing increasing willingness to lend support to authoritarian regimes throughout the world , particularly Burma. Hence there is the danger for the US, is that, it may engender a situation where China, not only throws up the defences internally but is making serious efforts to stem the global democratic tide. For China, the danger is that, if it cannot tell a story that it is moving forward politically, and pursues a path of providing ostentatious support to corrupt and dictatorial regimes like Burma, it risks tainting its own political system by association, weakening the hand of international supporters who are keen to point to signs of progress, and harden an across-the-board resistance to China’s role in the world . This is an ideological dividing line that could become ever more sharply defined and is likely to be the defining feature of a new Cold War if a stable consensus cannot be reached.

President Obama in his speech at the Bali summit on Nov.18th said. “I’ve underscored America’s commitment to the future of human rights in the region. Today I’m announcing an important step forward in our efforts to move forward on both these fronts.” this clearly depicts not only the American values but also of the civilized community, when the word Burma was used instead of Myanmar indicating that dictators cannot change the name of the country according to their whims and fancies without the consensus of the people.

But will the quasi civilian Burmese administration (အရေးကြီးအုပ်ချုပ်ရေးအဖွဲ့) admit its denial of human rights, the persecution of democratic reformers and the brutalities against the ethnic nationalities? Even now the puppet President Thein Sein is uttering that there is no political prisoners in Burma, when indeed the international community and the people of Burma already know that there are over 1,700 prisoners of conscience. This explicitly proves that the Thein Sein administration just like the previous Junta is bent on its age old trick of “Lying the very concept of truth.” What more proof is wanted than to hoodwink the US and the world to categorise these political prisoners including political activist and the Buddhist monks as criminals? And yet a de facto Diaspora leader and leading opposition figures who had visited him dared to describe Thein Sein as sincere, tan amounting to mockery, if not a laughing stock of the world.

Although the current Burmese administration has recently made some tentative political and economic reforms, there

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has been no change in their collective attitude of the country's leaders toward the decades-old ethnic issues and is no different from that of the several military backed regimes. Separate peace talks with the different ethnic armed groups are a divide-and-rule strategy to sow discord among the respective ethnic leaders. What little democratic space has been opened is confined only to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party in order to get recognition from the international community and of lifting of sanctions. Hence even though democracy prevails, but there will be no peace and Suu Kyi glaubt, als Parlamentarierin die „Zusammenarbeit fördern zu können“ development in the country because there is no sincerity from the government.

President Obama said that “We remain concerned about Burma's closed political system, its treatment of minorities and holding of political prisoners” What sort of political system is still to be spelled out with a fake, dubious constitution and a sham election? The regime treatment of the ethnic nationalities makes it crystal clear that this quasi military administration has refused to recognise the Union of the country (authentic proof is not respecting the Panglong Concordat 1947) but rather is bent on Myarmarnization of the ethnic nationalities and is waging an all out war against the Kachin nationalities in the north?

The US strategists and policymakers will have to understand that all major ethnic nationalities fight against the central government in one way or another up to this day. The ethnic Karens have been fighting against the Burmese government since 1949, why? What is the rationale of taking up arms against the central government is a fundamental question that needs to be addressed for Burma to achieve peace and stability, as even now there is no ceasefire agreement between the KNU and Thein Sein Administration in spite of the informal talks. It must be remembered that Gen Aung San the architect of the Union of Burma was fully aware that a unified Burma could not be established if equality was not guaranteed for all ethnic nationalities, which were ruled under different administrative units by the British colonial administration. He solved this problem when he said “If Burma receives one kyat, Shan will also get one kyat.” and the end result was the Panglong Concordat the basis on which the Union of Burma was formed in February 1947. The quasi government has not recognized this and this is an unmistakable proof that the current administration is insincere.

Action speaks louder than words when it demonstrated that it is still bent of ethnic cleansing with the threat of genocide to the ethnic nationalities with chemical if not nuclear weapons. So from this hypothesis, the most basic question could be asked. Is it reconciliation between the Myanmar dictatorial regime with the Myanmar prodemocracy forces head by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi only? Why it does not include the non Myanmar (ethnic nationalities) when the struggle of Burma is both for democratic reforms and ethnic nationalities rights? One has to remember that a coin contains both head and tail as one cannot be distinguished from the other. Every country in the world has its own ethnic communities living peacefully but why the Burmese regimes are bent of ethnic cleansing? Democratic and ethnic rights must be approach simultaneously. Although individual ethnic organizations can organize informal and preliminary meetings with representatives of the Burmese regime, the political solutions will have to be discussed and sought through collective effort and representation of the ethnic nationalities, including the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). In other words it must be what the lady (Daw Aung San Suu Kyi) proposed the second Panglong Conference.

Hillary Clinton will be getting a pop star treatment, in visiting Burma for the first time, will not shy about raising these issues even though the longyi (Burmese sarong) wearing ex brass will not like to hear about such as the release of remaining political prisoners, the end of hostilities toward ethnic nationalities and deepening of the country's democratization process, North Korea connections etc. But one should recollect the visit of Madeleine Albright in Nov 1995 who goes back empty handed. Obviously we have some doubts whether she can achieve anything substantial in her two days trip because this puppet quasi civilian government cannot get rid the mindset of the Junta being themselves part and parcel of the system. It should also be remembered that since 1988, many political prisoners have been released in occasional amnesties, only to be locked up again when the political climate shifted. Will this window dressing be repeated with the end of Clinton visit is just another open question?

President Obama's description of, “We've seen flickers of progress in these last several weeks,” hits the nail on the head for a flicker of progress is not enough to suggest that the country is on the road to major and sustained political reforms. But at the same time in this new Cold War the US has strategic and national interests in Burma in undeniable besides the issues of democracy and human rights. Clinton will want to talk about drugs with so many narco related companies in Rangoon, the country's shady relations with North Korea (of making nuclear weapons not to use against the US or other powers but ostensibly to use against the strong major ethnic groups like Wa, Kachin and the likes) and the non-proliferation issue including China's growing influence and how to counter with the help of the United States. To repeat President Obama's words “However, we have always had a profound respect for the people of Burma, and the promise of their country—a country with a rich history, at the crossroads of East and West; a people with a quiet dignity and extraordinary potential. For many years, both the promise and the persecution of the Burmese people have been symbolized by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As the daughter of Burma's founding father, and a fierce advocate for her fellow citizens, she's endured prison and house arrest, just as so many Burmese have endured repression... Last night, I spoke to Aung San Suu Kyi, directly, and confirmed that she supports American engagement to move this process forward.” So a clear message that more substantial reforms must be followed for people of Burma, whose hopes are now higher than they have been at any time in recent decades. But the regime's sincerity is still far from the standard as seen by their actions and even though they want to repair the country's relationship with the US and normalize diplomatic ties should not happen anytime soon.

The Secretary of State is going there in person to encourage towards change in a positive direction and the US is ready

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to forge new era in US Burma relations which acknowledge that positive changes that are underway. President Obama said, "For decades, Americans have been deeply concerned about the denial of basic human rights for the Burmese people. The persecution of democratic reformers, the brutality shown towards ethnic minorities, and the concentration of power in the hands of a few military leaders has challenged our conscience, and isolated Burma from the United States and much of the world" proves that there genuine interest in helping to improve the lives of people of the country in concrete ways. While it is too early to embark on the change of the mindset of the Generals, we believe that it is important to seize a political opening in the reclusive country as the Generals crave for legitimacy and recognition and Clinton's visit will lend a helping hand to it. But she should also emphasize that the ex generals must at once stop the war against the ethnic nationalities and particularly humanitarianism and must not construe it as undermining the government's task. It must open the door for international relief organizations to assess the situation of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) especially ethnic nationalities in the conflict zones

China handling of Spratly Island crisis had scared the ASEAN countries out of their wits and that is one of the main reasons of why they brought in the US especially in the Bali summit where the two superpowers glared at each other. Burma seems to be the only stumbling bloc vis a vis China and now with the awarding of the chairperson of ASEAN in 2014, the ASEAN used its triumph card to prove to the world that ASEAN Chairperson is the highest stage of Constructive Engagement and will be happy to continue to exploits Burma's natural and human resources, the whole of Southeast Asia, the most densely populated part of the globe will be on the side of America and the West against the ever growing Chinese.

Everybody agreed that the goal of the visit is going to continue the momentum toward greater respect for human rights, greater movement on political reform in Burma, and also, critically, greater respect for ethnic nationalities in the context of national reconciliation. But until and unless the Generals mindset change, there can be no progress. Contemporary history has proved that these sordid Generals understand punitive actions and so Sanctions must continue to remain. Another simple logic is if they themselves have put several domestic sanctions on the people of Burma why show the US lift its sanctions.

The hush hush agenda of the ex generals being on the wrongs side of the 70s or 80s, crave to have their ill gotten wealth to be put in the Western Banks (particularly Swiss banks) as they could not trust China/ Only then they would be in a position to pass it to their off springs. Here Sanctions become a stumbling block. Of course we welcome Hillary Clinton's visit and understand that it is in the interest of the US and the world to keep the Chinese power and influence in check in the impending New Cold War but at the same time the US should continue to set benchmarks for normalizing relations with the Burmese government as they seem to understand only punitive actions like sanctions and de-recognition to drive them to the reasoning table.

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The New York Times - HT Magazine | Global Agenda 2012

The Essential Flame - By AUNG SAN SUU KYI

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Why does change seem so desirable and so exhilarating in our times? Barack Obama's presidential campaign was fueled by the promise of change. In Burma today there is continuous debate on whether the new government means real change or whether it is no more than the old army dictatorship in new civilian garb. Almost every day I am asked if I believe that measures taken by the new administration should be seen as mere window dressing or as signs of genuine change in the right direction. After 23 years under authoritarian rule, impatience to see and to experience change is understandable. It has been sharpened by events in other parts of the world during 2011.

The political upheavals of the Arab Spring have been of such proportions that fundamental and irreversible changes are expected throughout the Mideast and Arab Africa in 2012, with possible copycat effects elsewhere. Whether such expectations will be fulfilled will depend on many factors, not least the degree of commitment by those who wish to create a brave new future. I'm thinking of commitment here as passion, in the social theorist Max Weber's sense of passionate dedication to a cause.

Were the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya led to topple seemingly indestructible regimes by such passion, or were they merely moved by what Weber denigrated as "sterile excitement?" It would surely be sophistry to label as sterile an outcry that led to such convulsive results. It might be argued, though, that the emotion fueling the Arab Spring was the kind that burns itself out speedily, after setting off the first sparks of defiance.

If the original impulse needed some help to turn those first sparks into a full-scale conflagration, another more effective catalyst must have been at work. Could that have been power? People power, or IT power or the power of global democratic solidarity or, simply, in the end, military power, either the use of it or the decision to refrain from using it?

Power is by nature latent until a force sets it in motion. What starts up the engines of power, whether they be tanks and fighter jets and nuclear weapons or diverse individuals linked by a shared cause and modern technology? The means to

unleash power that could change frontiers or crush men and their aspirations can become active only when an initial force sweeps away irresolution and inhibitions. The power of defiance, too, needs that first impulse to encourage passive individuals to put aside the inaction fostered by decades of fear or by natural human caution.

So then, is it "passion vs. power?" Does it have to be versus? Are passion and power natural opposites, or mutually exclusive in promoting political change, either of the ordinary variety brought about through constitutional processes in established democracies, or of the revolutionary brand that reshapes the destinies of peoples and nations?

There is also the kind of change that defeats easy categorization. The U.S. presidential election of 2008 was certainly not ordinary, but whether the election of Barack Obama should be regarded as a seismic event in the history of the United States or just a political landmark is a matter of opinion. There can, however, be no controversy about the outcome of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa; it changed the political landscape of the nation, and it changed perceptions with regard to race and color the world over.

What prevented the now toppled regimes of Tunisia and Egypt from using all their administrative and military might? What convinced the despots of Libya and Syria to make war on their own people? And what made the anti-government forces of Libya and Syria persist even after it was clear the fight would be prolonged and brutal?

Is there not, behind the iron mask of autocracy, the flesh and blood of human will, just as there is a steely, collective will behind a motley, unarmed crowd determined to exercise its right to cry out its woes and perhaps even to take up arms to assert that right? And is not will --- which is, after all, deliberate, controlled purpose --- closely joined to passion? It may be joined either as an intense, transitory emotion, which may well be no more than "sterile excitement," or as a long-term, firmly rooted dedication to principles or a cause --- something as broad as freedom or as limited as self-preservation.

As a member of a movement that has been engaged in a long struggle to effect change through nonviolent means, I have learned to value above all other attributes in colleagues and supporters disinterested, active commitment. Such commitment is seldom given to pyrotechnic display, but it is always there, and it provides constant assurance that the essential flame that keeps our cause vibrant will not die out. It is passion, not of the sterile breed, but passion that moves hearts and minds and makes history. It is passion that translates into power. When such passion is brought to bear on public issues, it is a potent instrument for political and social change.

In Burma, again and again, the most active members of our party and other forces committed to the struggle have been placed under detention, their voices silenced, their faces almost forgotten by the public. Again and again they have emerged, arousing the world to their cries. In 2002, after I was released from my second term of house arrest, I toured the country, and the commitment of our supporters translated into large, enthusiastic rallies that made the authorities feel the power of our passion. Quite recently, concern over the fate of our Irrawaddy River united peoples from all walks of life. Our passionate appeal for a reappraisal of the dam project was so powerful that the president announced the suspension of the project for the duration of his term.

Can the process be reversed, can power become passion? Power that effects political change cannot be defined as an isolated, unique brand different from all other powers. Party power, money power, media power, pressure group power and many other powers strongly influence political evolution and revolution. Power as the authority of the ruler(s) backed by the machinery of state might, however, be considered a contrast to passion. The distinction between despotic power and democratically invested power is relevant here.

When do those in authority wish to work for political change? The impulse of those who hold the powers of state is generally toward conservation, not transformation. Only when problems arise, and not always then, do rulers begin to consider the need for change. Intelligent rulers are quick to grasp when change becomes unavoidable. But realizing the need for change is not the same as having the means to make it possible.

In pluralistic societies, government alone cannot bring about change. Many other players are involved. The bipartisan negotiations to push through the U.S. debt deal that did not seem to please anybody demonstrated that the president of the United States does not have sufficient means to effect the change that not only he but many of his countrymen consider necessary.

If presidential power can be considered an impetus toward change, it is one that is easily dissipated by other powers. Commitment, perseverance, persuasion, the ability to win hearts and minds can be counterweights to these opposing powers. Passion can fill in the gaps when power alone is not enough.

It is easier for an authoritarian government untroubled by counteracting powers or passions to act in accordance with its own will. A ruthless despot allowed to proceed unchecked can change not just the political scene but the very psyche of a nation. For a time. Under Stalin's brutal absolutism, terror seeped into the very bones of citizens and made them unrecognizable to themselves. For a time. Then the despot died, and the country woke from its nightmare. People began to ask what had happened and why. Did power alone transform a whole society? What enabled Stalin to exercise power with such single-minded brutality?

Whether Stalin was fired by dedication to a cause or whether personal ambition motivated him, it could be said the

element that initially fueled his ruthless machine was passion, albeit of the worst kind. As his iron rule continued, an all-consuming preoccupation with the preservation of his inviolability, obsession rather than passion, moved him to commit some of the greatest political crimes in history.

Stalin was not alone in establishing his reign of terror. Vast numbers collaborated, and some of those who did so consciously and willingly were fired by passion: as commitment to the political and social changes they believed Stalin would achieve for their country or as dedication to the man himself. Power can generate passion; and power needs passion as its agent.

In all its might, power is less self-sufficient than passion; passion generates its own power. Passion is in itself a kind of power that is by its very nature a kinetic force.

Power, on the other hand, tends naturally toward entrenchment. When power moves in the direction of political change, it usually does so because external forces --- from popular uprisings to poll predictions --- have become irresistible.

Passion is more effective than power as an impetus for political change. Meaningful political change, however, needs to be sustainable. For that, passion and power must work together as mutually supportive partners.

We all wish for change, but there is no guarantee that change will take place or that it will live up to expectations. There is always an element of risk when we step out into the unknown. The greatest challenge for Burma and the countries of the Arab Spring, as well as all peoples who hope to enjoy the flowers and fruits of their endeavors in 2012, will be to bring wisdom to bear on passion and power, to create a blend of the two that is both effective and wholesome.

Aung San Suu Kyi was born in 1945 in Burma, now called Myanmar. Her father, the nation's independence hero, was assassinated when she was 2. She left the country as a teenager when her mother was named an ambassador, then returned from Britain in 1988 and became a pro-democracy leader. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, one of 15 years she spent under house arrest.

Ten Years On

The Life and Views of a Burmese Student Political Prisoner

by **Moe Aye**

(Former Burmese Student Political Prisoner)

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