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Issue N° 85

Free all political prisoners, free Aung San Suu Kyi, free Burma.

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter, May 13, 2010 – news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

NLD Focuses On Electoral Rights

By MIN NAING THU Thursday, May 13, 2010 - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18461

Members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in parts of central and eastern Burma have been distributing leaflets among the public, conveying the message: "Citizens have the right not to vote in the coming election."

NLD members told The Irrawaddy that the distribution of leaflets, together with the NLD's letter of appeal to the general public, has taken place in Mandalay, Sagaing and Magwe divisions, as well as in Karen State.



A member of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy leaves the party's headquarters on May 6 after the party decided to disband. (Photo: AP)

Khin Saw Htay, an organizing committee member of the NLD in Magwe Division, said they distributed the leaflets not because they were directed to by the party's headquarters, but because they were trying to let people in their areas know about the NLD's activities.

"The NLD headquarters didn't give us any instructions related to these leaflets," he said. "We are engaged in politics so we do what we have to. People in Magwe are wondering about whom they should vote for without the NLD in the election. So, in our leaflet, we also explain about a voter's right—to vote or not to vote."

An excerpt from Chapter 1 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Electoral Law was inserted in the text of the leaflet, which states that an element of one's electoral rights is the right to vote or the right to

choose not to vote.

So far, 5,000 leaflets have reportedly been distributed in Mandalay and Sagaing divisions.

"People are interested in our leaflets," said Myint Zaw from the NLD's Mandalay office. "They ask who they should vote for in the coming election. We explain to them their electoral rights."

The NLD on March 29 announced its decision not to re-register as a political party to contest the election scheduled for later this year. On April 6, it sent out a letter of appeal to the general public.

"The letter of appeal comprises three main components: an explanation of the NLD's decision not to register for election; the party's apology for not being able to realize its election victory; and its affirmation to continue the democracy struggle by peaceful means," said Khin Saw Htay.

Apart from distributing leaflets, NLD members in Karen State are working on rewriting the NLD's appeal to make it more understandable within their communities.

"The original letter is very long, so we are summarizing it to be succinct and to the point, so people can easily understand it," said Nan Khin Htway Myint, an NLD MP-elect in the 1990 election. "Then, we will distribute it among our communities."

THE BURMANET NEWS – INTERNATIONAL - May 12, 2010, Issue #3960 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

May 12, 2010 - Associated Press - <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1988754,00.html>

Burma rejects int'l poll monitors

Rangoon - Burma's military leaders have rejected international poll monitors for the country's first elections in 20 years but asked for unspecified cooperation from the United States in supporting the vote, official media said Wednesday.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

An official urged the U.S. to "show a positive attitude" about the military-organized vote, even though American envoy Kurt Campbell had already expressed deep concerns about the elections ahead of a recent visit.

The polls, to be held sometime this year, have been sharply criticized as a means for the military to maintain its grip on power under a civilian guise.

During his trip, Campbell said that the run-up to the election so far leads the U.S. to believe the polls will "lack international legitimacy."

"We urge the regime to take immediate steps to open the process in the time remaining before the elections," he said.

Campbell asked if election monitors, possibly from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, would be allowed and was rebuffed.

"The nation has a lot of experience with elections. We do not need election watchdogs to come here," the head of the Election Commission, Thein Soe, said.

"Arrangements have been made to ensure a free and fair election," the election chief was quoted as telling Campbell, the assistant secretary of state for East Asia.

Campbell, who departed Burma on Monday after a two-day visit, met with several junta ministers as well as detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Details of his talks with junta officials were published in state-run newspapers Wednesday.

"We would like to receive your kind cooperation so that the election can be held peacefully and successfully," Information Minister Kyaw Hsan told Campbell without elaboration.

Kyaw Hsan said that he welcomed Washington's new policy of direct engagement with Burma and urged the United States to "show a positive attitude" toward the coming election.

Campbell's visit, his second in six months, came just days after the dissolution of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, or NLD, which won the 1990 election but was never allowed to take power.

The NLD considers newly enacted election laws unfair and undemocratic - since Suu Kyi and other political prisoners would be barred from taking part in the vote - and so declined to reregister as required, which meant it was automatically disbanded.

Critics say the elections will be engineered so that military officers, a number of whom have already shed their uniform to enter politics, will be assured of victory.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma

The Irrawaddy – Newsletter, May 11, 2010 – news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

Burma's "Umbrella Dialogue"

By **BA KAUNG** - Tuesday, May 11, 2010 - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18449>

It was a scorching 43 degrees Celsius when detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell braced the heat and walked out of the state guest house to continue their discussion on Burma.

The US embassy in Rangoon released a series of photos of Suu Kyi, Kurt Campbell and Larry Dinger, head of the US mission in Rangoon, walking and holding umbrellas with Inya Lake in the background.

The US delegation and Suu Kyi did not want Burmese officials to listen to their conversation.

One exiled Burmese activist quipped: "These pictures indicate that the meeting wasn't exactly 'closed door'. Unless the fish in Inya Lake wore ear pieces and the coconut palms concealed listening devices, one could at least have a word in



private.”

Meetings between UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari and Suu Kyi in the past were arranged by the military regime at the guest house where officials could listen and monitor the conversation.



In this image made available by the United States Embassy in Rangoon, Burma's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, center, meets with US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, right, at a government guest house on May 10.

Previously, Suu Kyi was allowed to meet visiting diplomats including US Congressman Bill Richardson at her lakeside house.

Political pundits say the meeting at the state guest house indicated that the engagement with the US has taken a step backward.

Kurt Campbell and his team were able to meet Suu Kyi at the Inya Lake Hotel in November last year after US embassy officials had cleared the room and the entire floor.

Suu Kyi and American officials reportedly sat at low tables to be safe from listening devices, and perhaps they whispered.

During this visit, Campbell did not meet any high ranking officials except some ministers.

Prime Minister Thein Sein who received him in November was in the Irrawaddy delta together with junta no. 2, Gen Maung Aye on Monday.

However, Campbell managed to meet the Minister for Information, Kyaw Hsan, and U Thaung, minister for science and technology, in Naypyidaw.

A senior journalist in Rangoon explained why only some ministers agreed to meet with Campbell: “The regime leaders did not want to commit themselves to anything, which is why only low-level ministers were available.”

Besides concern for Suu Kyi and the election, Campbell also focused on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation in Burma.

During his meeting with Science and Technology Minister U Thaung, Campbell reminded the regime of its commitment to fully comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1874 in its dealing with North Korea, according to a source in Rangoon.

Passed in 2009, the UN resolution banned North Korea from all imports and exports of heavy weapons and authorizes member states to inspect and destroy any goods suspected of being connected to North Korea's nuclear program.

It has been reported that the regime has bought conventional military hardware such as ammunition and missiles from North Korea, and Washington suspects there has been a transfer of nuclear technology after Russia's Federal Atomic Energy Agency distanced itself from a 2007 agreement to supply a 10 megawatt light-water reactor.

The Irrawaddy reported in March that nuclear facilities in Northern Mandalay Division are thought to be near completion, meanwhile.

Military relations between Naypyidaw and Pyongyang have been attracting international attention in recent years.

In August 2009, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Burmese defectors had revealed the existence of a secret nuclear program combining Burma's proven uranium reserves and North Korean nuclear technology.

In addition to nuclear know-how and equipment Pyongyang may have provided, the rogue state has sent truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers, surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles and technology for underground warfare since the early 2000s, according Andrew Selth, an Australian-based expert on Burmese military issues.

The Burmese junta has sent at least three high-ranking clandestine military missions to North Korea recently, and elaborate birthday party celebrations for Kim Jong Il sponsored by the junta in Rangoon were attended by senior army leaders.

“I think Campbell's greater priority concerns the Burma-North Korea relationship,” said Thakhin Chan Tun, a veteran politician and Burma's former ambassador to China and North Korea during the 1960's and 70's, speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Tuesday.

According to a statement released from the US Embassy in Rangoon on May 10 [[click here for the full statement](#)], Campbell has asked the regime leadership to put into place a transparent process to assure the international community that Burma is abiding by its international commitments.

Without such a process, Campbell said the United States maintains the right “to take independent action within the relevant frameworks established by the international community.” But he did not elaborate what kind of independent action might be taken.

The Burmese opposition, meanwhile, has asked Washington to increase banking sanctions and targeted sanctions against regime leaders and cronies.

Chan Tun said: “The regime wouldn't care [about US concerns]. The generals accepted Mr. Campbell's visit to our country just as a political maneuver in this election year. But I suspect it won't concede anything at all.”

Analysts in Rangoon speculate that Campbell's visit to Burma might have been facilitated by China.

Soon after his visit, Campbell flew to Beijing for meetings with “senior Chinese officials,” according to an *Agence France Presse* report, quoting a US State Department official in Washington.

The report said Campbell will brief Chinese officials on his trip to Burma and could be in Beijing for a briefing on the visit to China by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il in early May.

In his Rangoon statement, Campbell said the US government outlined a proposal to the Burmese officials “for a credible dialogue” for all concerned parties to agree on how to conduct the upcoming poll, but he said the regime had instead moved forward unilaterally without consulting opposition and independent voices.

Suu Kyi shared Campbell's disappointment that the Burmese military government was not more forthcoming and was not willing to expand political space, but she would continue to support the US and the international community's efforts to engage with the regime, according to press briefing by Assistant Secretary, Philip J. Crowley, in Washington on May 10.

The US mission to Burma might not have reaped any tangible results, but while some Burmese people are now in doubt over the wisdom of Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, (NLD), boycotting the polls, Campbell's praise of Suu Kyi “for her compassion and tolerance for her captors,” his calls for the release of political prisoners ahead of the polls and the United States' continued support for the NLD might have given a moral boost to those who have rejected the regime's election plans.

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter for Saturday, May 15, 2010 — news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

Obama Extends National Emergency Against Burma for One More Year - By LALIT K JHA -Saturday, May 15, 2010 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/print_article.php?art_id=18479>

WASHINGTON — US President Barack Obama on Friday extended the national emergency against Burma for one more year, arguing that the policies of the military junta continue to pose a threat to America's national security interests and its foreign policy.

In an executive order signed on Friday and sent to the US Congress, Obama said the “actions and policies of the Burmese military junta are hostile to US interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy” of the country.

“For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat,” Obama said in his message to the Congress, a copy of which was provided by the White House.

On May 20, 1997, then President Bill Clinton imposed a national emergency against Burma in response to the ruling regime's large-scale



US President Barack Obama walks into the Rose Garden of the White House to make a statement following a meeting with members of his Cabinet and other senior administration officials to determine next steps in the ongoing effort to stop the BP oil spill in Washington on May 14, 2010. (Photo: Reuters)

repression of the democratic opposition after September 30, 1996, thereby invoking the prohibition on new investment in Burma by the US.

Clinton also declared a national emergency to deal with the threat posed to the national security and foreign policy of the US by the actions and policies of the Burmese junta.

“Because the actions and policies of the Government of Burma continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 20, 1997 ... must continue in effect beyond May 20, 2010,” Obama said.

On Friday the White House sent the notice to the Federal Register for publication, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2010.

The decision to extend the national emergency against Burma comes within a week of a visit to Burma by Assistant Secretary of State for South East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell.

Campbell met the top military leadership, as well as pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, but failed to convince Burma's rulers to listen favorably to the sentiments of the international community, which wants to see the establishment of a true democracy in the country and the release of pro-democracy leaders, including Suu Kyi.

Campbell expressed his disappointment following his meetings with the military leaders and said the US would not accept the sham election being held later this year.

Meanwhile, in Washington, lawmakers have introduced two identical pieces of legislation in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to extend the economic sanctions against Burma for another year.

Several Senators have also written a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging her to review her new policy of engagement with Burma.

An internal congressional report this month told lawmakers that the forthcoming election would indicate what way this Southeast Asian nation is going.

THE BURMANET NEWS - Wed. 19. May 2010 - May 19. 2010. Issue #3965 "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org
<<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/asia/100511/myanmar-generation-wave?page=0,0>>

Myanmar: Hip-hop's revolution

With elections at the end of the year, Generation Wave is producing politically subversive music.



By Alex Ellgee — Special to GlobalPost
Published: May 19, 2010 08:15 ET

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/asia/100511/myanmar-generation-wave?page=0,0>

MAE SOT, Thailand — Behind the rusty prison bars, two men lie on the floor in light blue fatigues. A stream of light pours in through a small window near the top of their cell. All is still.

Suddenly, loud music begins to blare. The men leap up and clang their iron shackles as smoke drifts into their cell. They start singing against a heavy beat: “Never turn back, never give up.”

Despite appearances, these men are not criminals and they are not in prison — at least not in a literal sense.

9KT and MK are famous Myanmar hip-hop artists on the set of their latest music video, "Never Give Up." Donning black masks and using pseudonyms, these musicians aim to keep their political tunes under the radar of a dictatorship as oppressive as Myanmar, formerly called Burma.

“We wanted to film in a prison cell in order to represent for all our members and friends who are now behind bars,” said 9KT, arranging his mask on the set of the music video. “We are trying to tell the government, even if they imprison us they cannot stop us fighting for freedom; we will always carry on.”

“We are telling the people that they shouldn’t give up,” he said. “Burmese youth can’t be afraid of the Burmese junta, they need to fight for freedom in our country.”

Watch a draft of the "Never Give Up" music video: <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/asia/100511/myanmar-generation-wave?page=0,0>>

Already a prominent hip-hop artist in Myanmar, 9KT grew inspired to make more subversive songs when he heard the political hip-hop of refugees from his country in Australia. He wanted to similarly address the extreme suffering he saw around him.

He traveled to Mae Sot, Thailand, near the Myanmar border, more than a year ago. The area has for more than two decades played host to an array of organizations opposing the Myanmar junta.

There, he joined up with an underground political group called Generation Wave (GW). He later met MK through GW, and they immediately found common ground in their love for music and the desire to "wake up the youth." In Mae Sot, they can produce their music with relative safety, away from the police presence in Yangon, Myanmar's capital.

GW itself was formed after the "Saffron Revolution" in September 2007 when rising fuel prices provoked thousands of monks to take to the streets in protest. Civilians joined the movement, but the military junta cracked down, leaving hundreds dead and thousands imprisoned.

Following the crackdown, a group of protesters, who had been friends since high school, started GW as a way to inspire new activists inside Myanmar. Having analyzed revolutions worldwide and the opposition movement in their country they decided to focus on non-violent resistance.

In two and half years, the group has carried out what they call "action campaigns" almost every week. Their main activities include anti-government graffiti in busy places, handing out pamphlets and writing and distributing political music.

"The youth of Burma have seen so many activists thrown behind bars, they have seen monks killed in the streets, so many are turning their back to the struggle for human rights," said Min Yan Naing, founder of GW.

"Our job and aim is to bring them back and make them feel the responsibility to change our country and better the lives for all Burmese people."

Just association with GW risks a hefty prison sentence. Thirty GW members have been arrested. Nyie Chan was handed the longest sentence, 32 years, and is said to be suffering from severe stomach problems in Myanmar's notorious Insein prison near Yangon.

Zayar Thaw, another famous hip-hop artist, was arrested and sentenced to six years. Minutes before Zayar Thaw was sentenced, he wrote a statement, which was leaked to GW members. "Tell the people to have the courage to reject the things they don't like, and even if they don't dare to openly support the right thing, tell them not to support the wrong thing," he said in his statement.

The young musician pioneered the hip-hop industry in Myanmar, releasing the first-ever rap album in the country in 2003. The rock 'n' roll music fans of Myanmar's crumbling cities found a new passion overnight.

Zayar Thaw's thirst for hip-hop was married to his desire to further democracy in Myanmar. The most prolific of GW campaigns, which saw the phrase "Change New Government" being applied to Change Nitric Gas stickers, was his brainchild. This motto is also spray-painted across the gate of GW's safe house in Mae Sot.

All the walls of the GW safe house are covered in graffiti. One wall has "Freedom" splattered across it. Another has "Generation Wave" stenciled in red, with a large clenched fist giving a thumbs up — GW's logo.

9KT's latest album, "Never Give Up," is a direct message to youth. Eleven tracks, to be released in October in time with Myanmar's elections, mix rock and hip-hop. One song called "If We All Unite," talks about coming together to topple the government; while another, "Negative Thinking," is a comic song that mocks the generals for their bad intentions.

"Music can change everything. Popular music can change a lot," he said. "When I was young and heard celebrities singing happy songs, it made me happy, if they sang angrily, it made me angry — so I hope if the people hear political songs from familiar voices they will become interested in politics."

The cameraman at the music video shoot takes an aerial position. 9KT shakes a can of spray paint and skillfully tags "2010," to represent the upcoming elections, on the concrete floor. Without delay he whips out his second can and aggressively paints a white cross over the digits.

Angrily, he stamps on it and walks off. With a bit of luck a dog walks over the graffiti. Since dogs are considered lowly creatures, cheers arise from the group which believes the upcoming election will be a sham — a belief furthered by new election laws that for the first time allow the junta to legally arrest opposition politicians who did not register.

As the camera and lights get packed up GW members sit around a table with guitars discussing their upcoming furtive campaigns.

"We have to do as many as possible during the elections," Min Yan Naing told the group. "A revolution is evolving, it might not happen over night but at least the people will soon realize they have the right to be free."

THE BURMANET NEWS - May 14, 2010, Issue #3962 – burmanet@burmanet.org, www.burmanet.org

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter for Fridav. May 14, 2010 – news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

Suu Kyi Criticizes NDF Faction -

By KO HTWE, Friday, May 14, 2010 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18472>

Detained National League for Democracy (NLD) icon Aung San Suu Kyi said that the act of forming a new party by some of the NLD leaders is incompatible with the democratic process, according to her lawyer, Nyan Win, after meeting her on Friday (14.05.2010).

Speaking with The Irrawaddy after his meeting, Nyan Win said, "The NLD's decision [not to register for the election] was agreed by all members, but there are still some who have taken matters into their own hands—something that is not compatible with the democratic process, according to Suu Kyi."

Some leading members of NLD, who disagreed with the party's decision to boycott this year's general election, have founded a new political party, named the National Democratic Force (NDF), which will contest the polls.

Dr. Than Nyein, a former political prisoner and a member of the NLD, who is expected to lead the new party, said the NDF will be registered at the Election Commission sometime in the middle of this month, and will be headed by several members of the NLD.

Dr. Win Naing, Thein Nyunt, Sein Hla Oo and several others will join the new party, he said. Another prominent NLD leader, Khin Maung Swe, will serve as an adviser.

In 1990, when the NLD was divided on whether to contest the election, Suu Kyi's decision to participate broke the gridlock and resulted in the NLD gaining an unexpected landslide victory. However, the junta never acknowledged the results.

According to Nyan Win, Suu Kyi also said that many agreements regarding the election had been made with US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell on Monday at a government guesthouse in Rangoon, but declined to give details.

The NLD automatically ceased to exist at midnight on May 6—the deadline for all existing political parties in Burma to register under the junta's election law. In March, the party decided against registering under what it called "unjust and unfair" election laws.

Tin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] Burma Related News - May 19, 201

Source: Reuters - 19 May 2010 17:24:24 GMT <<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N19242931.htm>>

U.S. says troubled by Myanmar developments

WASHINGTON, May 19 (Reuters) - The top U.S. diplomat for Asia said on Wednesday Washington is troubled that Myanmar has not moved on any of the issues standing in the way of better American ties with the military-ruled state.

Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, said his visit to Myanmar this month for talks with the military left him disappointed on a full range of bilateral disputes.

"The United States remains quite dissatisfied with what we've seen to date in terms of movement on the part of the government with the specific issues that we've laid out," he said.

Campbell had called on Myanmar to hold dialogue with opposition parties and ethnic groups ahead of elections this year and for the immediate release of the country's estimated 2,100 political prisoners.

He had also expressed concern that Myanmar was seeking to acquire nuclear technology from North Korea in violation of U.N. Security Council sanctions.

"On each of these issues we are troubled by developments," Campbell told a news briefing.

Campbell's visit followed up a trip in November last year -- the first to the former Burma in 14 years by a senior U.S. official -- under Washington's new policy of deeper engagement with a regime it has disparaged for years.

He met with government officials, leaders of opposition parties and ethnic groups and long-detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's charismatic pro-democracy icon. (Reporting by Paul Eckert; editing by Chris Wilson) ****

Burma News - 26 May 2010 - "<burma_news@verizon.net> -"EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

AFP – 26 May 2010 - <<http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/world/7300501/eu-seeking-deal-on-election-mission-to-myanmar/>>

EU's Ashton seeking deal on Myanmar election mission



AFP ©

[Enlarge photo](#)

EU diplomatic chief Catherine Ashton hopes to make a deal with Myanmar Wednesday to send an "exploratory" mission to Yangon to discuss the country's upcoming elections, a Spanish official said.

Ashton aims to "finalise" the agreement during talks in Madrid with Myanmar Foreign Minister Nyan Win on the sidelines of a conference between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

She will make clear to Nyan Win that "if the Myanmar authorities want a credible political process they have to respect a minimum standard of democracy," said Jose Eugenio Salarich, the official in charge of Asia-Pacific affairs at the Spanish foreign ministry.

Salarich warned that the EU mission would be "very complicated, very delicate" with "no guarantees that it will see opposition leaders."

Myanmar said earlier this month that it does not want foreign election observers at the polls.

The talks between Ashton and Nyan Win are scheduled on the sidelines of a one-day ministerial conference between foreign ministers and senior officials from the 27 EU members and the 10 ASEAN members

ThaungN@aol.com - US senator to visit Burma, Wed, 26. May 2010 08:11:01

Burma Digest, A Magazine Specializing in Human Right Affairs of Burma, 26. May 2010

US senator to visit Burma- <<http://burmadigest.info/2010/05/26/us-senator-to-visit-burma/>>

YANGON, Myanmar -A U.S. senator who secured the release of an American prisoner convicted of sneaking into the house of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will return to Myanmar for talks with the country's military rulers, his office said Wednesday.

Sen. Jim Webb, a Democrat from Virginia who serves on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, is likely to press for opposition leader Suu Kyi's release from detention during a three-day visit starting June 4.

His visit is part of an Asian tour that will also include South Korea and Thailand, his office said.

"Webb's trip comes at a time of great unrest in the region following the North Korean torpedo attack on a South Korean vessel, violent protests in Thailand and provocations from the Burmese regime," a statement from his office said.

Myanmar is also known as Burma.

Webb's trip to Myanmar follows a visit by top U.S. official Kurt Campbell last month and will come on the heels of that of Premier Wen Jiabao of China, Myanmar's closest and most powerful ally. Wen is due to visit June 2.

Webb met democracy icon Suu Kyi last year and secured the release of John Yettaw, an American man sentenced to seven years in prison for secretly swimming to her house.

Suu Kyi, who has been detained for 14 of the last 20 years, was sentenced by a court to three years in prison with hard labor for violating her house arrest as a result of Yettaw's intrusion, but the punishment was reduced to 18 months of house arrest by the junta's chief, Senior Gen. Than Shwe.

"EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>, "BurmaNews " Wed, 26. May 2010 17:59:50 <burma_news@verizon.net>

AFP – 26 May 2010 - <http://entertainment.yahoo.ca/s/afp/100526/world/china_myanmar_diplomacy_wen/>

China's Wen to meet with Myanmar junta leaders

BEIJING – Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao will meet with leaders of Myanmar's junta to discuss energy cooperation and aid to the southeast Asian nation during a visit next week, a top diplomat said Wednesday.

During the June 2-3 visit, Wen will hold talks with reclusive junta chief General Than Shwe, Prime Minister Thein Sein and other top officials, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun told reporters.



AFP Photo: A Myanmar soldier stands guard in the Myanmar-China border town of Laukkai. China's Prime Minister

"The two countries will sign a number of cooperation documents covering economy, trade, finance, energy, science and technology," Zhang said, without offering specifics.

Last year, bilateral trade between the neighbours reached 2.91 billion dollars, up 10.7 percent year-on-year, as progress was made in joint projects involving energy, transportation and power supply, Zhang said.

China is the isolated state's sole major ally on the diplomatic stage and one of its key trading partners.

Energy-hungry China is an eager buyer of Myanmar's sizeable natural gas reserves and has in the past tried to shield its ruling junta from international sanctions imposed over its poor human rights record.

"We will offer help to Myanmar, to help it grow its economy and improve the well-being of its people," Zhang said.

"We will offer assistance as our ability permits to the national development of Myanmar, particularly in those areas that will benefit the general public, such as transport and education."

Wen's visit to Myanmar will be the final stop of a four-nation tour that will take him to South Korea, Japan and Mongolia starting Friday.

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter for May 27, 2010 - news@irrawaddy.org, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/>

PM Brown's Last Letter Was to Suu Kyi

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18569>



Britain's former Prime Minister Gordon Brown

By THE IRRAWADDY
Thursday, May 27, 2010

The last letters that Britain's former prime minister, Gordon Brown, wrote from No.10 were to Nobel Peace Prize laureates Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi, reported a British political magazine on Thursday.

In a personal handwritten letter to Burmese opposition leader Suu Kyi, Gordon Brown wrote: "This is one of the last letters I write as Prime Minister and I want it to be to you, to champion your cause for democracy in Burma and to say I will do everything I can to support you. You are, for me, what courage is and I will fight for you to be free and your people [to be] free."

Both South Africa's national hero, Nelson Mandela, and detained Burma's pro-democracy icon Suu Kyi, are "two prisoners of conscience and two people who have inspired him hugely," New Statesman magazine Web site reported, quoting a friend of the former prime minister.

Gordon Brown became Britain's prime minister on June 27, 2007, and he resigned, after an election loss to the Conservative Party, on May 11, 2010

The Irrawaddy - **COVER STORY** - MAY, 2010 - VOLUME 18 NO.5 - <<http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?>

Chaos in Thailand - By [AUNG ZAW](#)

An unprecedented movement of rural working-class Thais challenges the Bangkok establishment's hold on power.

The political standoff in Bangkok in April had been slowly building for four years, since the 2006 military coup that ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra. The 28 dead and hundreds of injured on the streets of the capital in late April harken back to the politically dark days of Thailand's decades-long legacy of coups, bloody street protests, rewritten constitutions, and a musical-chairs series of prime ministers—none of whom before Thaksin ever completed their full term in office.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Current Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's Democrat-led government is the latest to reap the wrath of street protests pitting the army against the people. His government is struggling to survive a violent phase that has paralyzed the body politic, shocked the international community and sent the economy and tourism into a tailspin— in harsh contrast to the Thai peace and love of compromise.



Slide Show [View](#)

With the current unrest, the country has entered a new chapter in its democratic development, challenged by the rise of the Redshirts, a fiercely dedicated—mainly rural—working-class political movement that has brought a new factor into the chemistry of Thai politics. The Redshirt leaders, for the first time in Thai history, have found a rhetoric that articulates working-class grievances, pitting the have-nots against the establishment's haves.

Further complicating Abhisit's position is the current government's tenuous relations with the military's top brass, who themselves seem divided. Top general Anupong Paochinda has publically urged the government to seek a political compromise. On top of it all, the Democrat party has been charged with election code violations by the Election Commission, which, if proven in court, could lead to its dissolution.

The question analysts are now asking is how far is Abhisit, an Oxford-educated member of Thailand's elite, willing to go? The potential answers: bloody repression, another coup, a sleight-of-hand political compromise that steps back from the brink or some combination of them all are possible, with the answer expected in the days or weeks ahead.

The political stakes have been raised by a new brand of violence that crept from the city into the countryside through sporadic acts of political terrorism and open defiance in the form of the bombing of a key high-voltage electrical power line, the blockade of a cargo train transporting military equipment to Bangkok, roadblocks preventing police from sending reinforcements to Bangkok and grenade attacks on police offices in Chiang Mai and other establishment locations.

A sign of how far things have changed is that throughout April the rhetoric has shifted—ever so slightly—away from former premier Thaksin and towards the Redshirt grass-root grievances, which raise broader questions about the maturity of Thai culture and its ability to accommodate a populist movement. The 2006 coup and the dissolution of two previous democratically elected pro-Thaksin governments—for election code violations—were the factors that ignited the Redshirt movement, but it is now its populist, power-sharing concerns that have become the focus of debate, although the violence threatens to overshadow them.

Thaksin has recently lowered his own profile, shifting the focus to the Redshirt street protest leaders who have successfully prolonged the standoff. Part of the reason for their success may be that there is some truth in Thaksin's claim that many soldiers, generals and police are "watermelons," suggesting that they are "green" on the outside, but "red" on the inside.

Amid the rising tension, Thailand's Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, a die-hard Thaksin opponent, was refreshingly candid in a speech in April at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, where he called the upheaval "a traumatic experience that was nevertheless part of the process of becoming a more open and democratic society," and admitted the need for more political reform.

Looking at the kingdom's mayhem one cannot be too optimistic, however, for the divisions run deep.

From the perspective of the people in Burma, many are asking what could be called comparative political questions.

What if a Redshirt-type movement flared up in Burma and caused "watermelon" divisions within the military? If a populist-minded Thaksin Shinawatra appeared among the Burmese billionaires and supported the opposition, how would the regime handle him?

Many internally displaced and exiled Burmese were amazed to hear how the Thai prime minister expressed homesickness after he took refuge in army headquarters apart from his family for a few weeks.

Many Burmese understood why the Abhisit government condemned the attacks by "black-shirt gunmen," calling them terrorists. But in Burma, simply distributing anti-government leaflets will see you labeled a terrorist.

After living for decades under the junta's brand of "law and order," the Burmese were surprised to see how easily Redshirt leaders escaped police commando raids and how Thai soldiers played John Lennon's "Imagine" before attempting to remove protesters with only batons, tear gas and rubber bullets. In Burma, as the late dictator Gen Ne Win said: "When the army shoots, it shoots to kill."

Observing the turbulence in Thailand, the military junta in Naypyidaw can be expected to conclude that Burma will progress best under a strong leader, a strong military and a regime-imposed "disciplined democracy." Such a view bodes ill for Burma and for the ethnic minorities who harbor hope of more freedom and autonomy under Burma's 2010 election and the formation of a parliament.

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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