

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa will visit Burma to talk about the election law and try and promote democracy.

Indonesia Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa will visit Burma on March 30 and meet with Burmese authorities as scheduled to talk about the electoral law and its implications with the aim of the promotion of democracy, according to the Indonesia news agency, *ANTARA NEWS*.

“We would like to know about the practical implications of the recently issued electoral law to determine whether its substance meets the Myanmar [Burma] government's commitment to hold a democratic, free and multi-party election,” Marty said on Friday.



“We hope Aung San Suu Kyi can participate in the election. She will contribute to the democratization process in Myanmar,” he said.

He also said Indonesia would not accept any undemocratic action by the military junta.

The Burmese regime announced its electoral law on March 8, but no date for the election.

The electoral law bans Suu Kyi from participating in the election because she is a political

detainee, and it forces her party, the National League for Democracy, to expel her if it wants to contest in the election.

Senior officials from countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) such as Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia have told the Burmese government that the release of Suu Kyi and other political prisoners is key to winning international credibility and achieving a much-needed national reconciliation.

Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Prime Minister of Thailand told the *BBC World Service* on Friday that he and other Asean members would like to see an inclusive election held in Burma. He also said it was obvious that Burma's neighboring countries are upset about the electoral law released by the Burmese government.

Recently, Alberto Romulo, the foreign secretary of the Philippines, said, "Unless they [Burmese authorities] release Suu Kyi and allow her and her party to participate in the elections, it's a complete farce and therefore contrary to their road map to democracy."

Before the electoral law was released, Romulo called on the junta to ensure that the election is "free, fair, credible and all-inclusive."

While some members of Asean are calling for the release of Suu Kyi, other members such as Laos, Cambodia, Brunei and Vietnam share the Burmese junta's penchant for authoritarian rule and have mostly been silent on the need for a free and fair election, analysts said.

During a *BBC* "Hardtalk" program in February, Surin Pitsuwan, the secretary-general of Asean and a former foreign minister of Thailand, said Asean expected a credible and transparent election in Burma, but added that the organization cannot interfere in the details of the poll.

"No election is perfect," he said. "It has to begin. That's why they [the Burmese regime] are beginning. They promise [to hold an election] at the end of this year," Pitsuwan said.