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Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa is expected to meet with Burmese generals this week, in what will be the junta's first meeting with a top diplomat from Southeast Asia since its Political Party Registration Law was announced in early March.



Ahead of Natalegawa's visit, which began on Tuesday, the New York-based *Human Rights Watch* urged on Sunday that as leading Asean member, Indonesia should continue its principled stand on the human rights situation in Burma.

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

Burmese authorities did not report on Natalegawa's visit in state-run-newspapers. But, the media reported on Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's visit over the weekend.

At Burmese Prime Minister Gen Thein Sein's invitation, Nguyen Tan Dung will pay a "working visit" to the country in the near future, according *The New Light of Myanmar*.

Both the Indonesian minister and the Vietnamese prime minister visits come a few days ahead of the 16th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Hanoi on April 8-9.

Vietnam is the 2010 chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Vietnam's motto for its chairmanship is "Towards the Asean Community: from Vision to Action."

Human rights activists in Southeast Asia have called for Asean to take a stronger stand on Burma's electoral laws and the upcoming election, which has been widely criticized as undemocratic. Indonesia has been one of the strongest critics of the Burmese regime.

"If Indonesia is not successful in this mission, then Asean should prepare to reject the election," said Debbie Stothard, the coordinator of the Alternative Asean Network.

Until now, Asean has not commented on Burma's electoral laws. Indonesia and the Philippines have called for more fairness and inclusiveness in the political process.

Stothard said that the current political situation in Burma challenges the credibility of Asean, Vietnam's chairmanship, and the upcoming Asean summit.

"They [Asean] have to have some guarantees. The situation is going to change. If there is no guarantee and no immediate action, this is a crisis for Vietnam, because it's the Asean chair and Asean has to reject the situation," she said.

In spite of being roundly criticized as authorizing an undemocratic and non-inclusive election, the Burmese junta has rejected all calls for a free and fair election.

"It seems that the international community will watch with undisguised anguish as the junta steers the nation down this dead-end democracy, but it will not actually do anything significant," said Jeff Kingston, a Burma expert at Temple University's Japan campus.

"The world is in a wait-and-see mode, creating a perfect situation for the junta to steal the elections and let the facts on the ground accumulate that will become an excuse for not pursuing real reforms," he said.

[Letter to Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa Regarding his Upcoming Trip to Burma](#)