

HANOI— The Philippines says the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will be undermined if next month's elections in military-ruled Burma are a sham.

Asean leaders have repeatedly pressed member state Burma to ensure the Nov. 7 vote is free and fair and have urged the regime to release of pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

It will be the first election in 20 years in Burma. The regime says it is a key step toward democracy, but critics say the polls are designed to cement military control. Suu Kyi's party, which won the 1990 vote but was blocked from power, is boycotting.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said Saturday that flawed elections "will cost Asean not only goodwill but its own position. They are also putting at risk Asean itself."