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The newspaper *The New Light of Myanmar* on Wednesday reported that the chairman of the Union Election Commission, Thein Soe, told visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell of the government's decision during their meeting in Napyidaw.



"The nation has a lot of experience with elections," Thein Soe is quoted as saying. "We do not need election watchdogs to come here."

His remark came after a question by Campbell on whether international election observers, including Asean, would be allowed to monitor the election.

Also, Thein Soe, a former major-general who served as military judge advocate-general and later as deputy chief justice of the Supreme Court, reportedly said that the formation of a

political party by the government's current ministers who are also expected to be candidates in the election this year is "in conformity with the law."

In response to a question raised by Larry Dinger, the charge d' affaires of the United States Mission in Rangoon, Thein Soe said that "ministers are political posts, not state service personnel," referring to a provision in the party registration law which says that state service personnel shall not organize or take part in political parties.

While in Napyidaw, US envoy Campbell also met with Nyan Win, the minister for Foreign Affairs; U Thaung, the minister for Science and Technology; Aung Kyi, the minister for Labour; and Htay Oo, the minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Campbell's visit, his second in six months, came just days after the dissolution of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The NLD—which won the 1990 election but was never allowed to take power—decided not to take part in the election, saying it lacked credibility and was undemocratic.

Many observers say that hopes for a free and fair election in Burma have faded.

Meanwhile, Simon Tay, the chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs and a law faculty member at the National University of Singapore and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, has urged Asean countries to ask what they can and should do in response to the Burmese election.

"The prospect are diminishing that the upcoming election will be accepted as free and fair," he said.

Campbell also discussed the nuclear non-proliferation issue during his meeting with Science

and Technology Minister U Thaung, reportedly reminding the regime of its commitment to comply fully with UN Security Council Resolution 1874 in its dealing with North Korea.

Passed in 2009, the UN resolution banned North Korea from importing and exporting heavy weapons and authorized member states to inspect and destroy any material suspected of being used in connection with North Korea's nuclear program.

U Thaung told Campbell that Burma agreed to follow the UNSC resolution, according to the article.

“But it has the duty to maintain and protect national sovereignty,” U Thaung added.

The new US policy initiative in Burma is based on direct engagement on a range of difficult issues. Envoy Campbell has frequently called for a more fair and credible election and the release of all political prisoners. The US has maintained its economic sanctions on members of the junta and specific businesses tied to the ruling leadership.

The newspaper also reported a comment attributed to Foreign Minister Nyan Win, who remarked to Campbell that “guests who criticize the host again and again are unwanted.”