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The state media of Burma and China did not mention any political issues in reporting on both Wen Jiabao's agenda and his discussions with Burmese officials, but diplomatic sources in Burma said that the Chinese premier spoke to Than Shwe about inclusiveness in Burma's 2010 elections and stability in the border areas.

When contacted by The Irrawaddy, the Chinese embassy in Rangoon neither confirmed nor denied reports of discussions on these two issues, both sensitive topics for Burma's military regime.

In the past, Beijing was seen as unwilling to even privately discuss sensitive political issues with the junta that did not directly involve Chinese interests.

But observers say that following the junta's September 2007 crackdown against the mass demonstrations and the August 2009 Kokang offensive, which resulted in an exodus of refugees into China, the relationship between Beijing and Naypyidaw has changed, with China becoming a relatively "more responsible" partner which is willing, at least privately, to criticize the regime.

Analysts believe that Wen Jiabao's comments to Than Shwe regarding Burma's election repeated the position of the international community reflected in a statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon following a March 25 meeting in New York of the "Group of Friends on Burma," which consists of 15 countries including China, India and the United States,

as well as the leadership of the European Union.

“The Group stressed the need for elections to be inclusive, participatory and transparent in order to advance the prospects of stability, democracy and development for all the people of Myanmar [Burma],” said Ban Ki-moon.

This call was similar to the message that Wen Jiabao previously communicated to Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein in a bilateral meeting held during the 15th summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in October 2009.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs web site, Wen Jiabao told Thein Sein at the time that China hoped Burma “will achieve stability, national reconciliation and development.”

With respect to discussions between Wen Jiabao and Than Shwe regarding ethnic issues related to the Sino-Burmese border, there has been no word of what message Wen Jiabao communicated. But there was a public report on the issue following Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping's visit to Burma in December.

“China believes the Myanmar side would settle the relevant problems through peaceful ways such as dialogues and consultation so as to guarantee the stability in its border area with China,” China's Xinhua news agency then quoted Xi Jinping as saying.

At the time, official Burmese sources in Naypyidaw said the regime's top generals were angry at this public statement by Xi Jinping.

Although Beijing publicly proclaims that it avoids interfering in other country's internal affairs, analysts said China has often, directly or indirectly, involved itself in Burma's internal affairs during their 60-year relationship.

Following the 1967 riot against minority Chinese living in Burma, the ruling Chinese Communist Party provided military and logistic support to Communist Party of Burma (CPB) troops. When Deng Xiaoping took over the Chinese leadership in 1981, Beijing organized a failed dialogue between the Burmese communists and the Burmese regime of late dictator Ne Win.

In 1989, observers said China played a significant role in the uprising of ethnic troops within the CPB against its leadership, which led to ceasefire agreements between former CPB ethnic troops and the Burmese junta, as well as the boosting of border trade between the two countries.

In addition, since 1988, China has become Burma's closest ally and has sold the regime massive amounts of arms, which has significantly impacted Burma's internal affairs. Human rights groups have alleged that the junta has used Chinese weapons to oppress the people of Burma.

“During 60 years of the Sino-Burma relationship, the Chinese government always interferes in Burma's affairs, though it has said ‘No’,” said Aung Kyaw Zaw, a Burmese observer in Yunnan,

China who is a former communist guerrilla. "But all Chinese's involvement in Burma is for their own interests."

Although both Chinese and Burmese state media were silent Thursday regarding sensitive political topics, they did report on less controversial and more innocuous issues surrounding Wen Jiabao's visit.

Xinhua news agency reported that Wen Jiabao remarked in Naypyidaw on Thursday about "the consensus and agreements" reached with the Burmese leadership during his meeting with Than Shwe. Xinhua also reported that Wen Jiabao and Thein Sein witnessed a signing ceremony for 15 cooperation documents covering areas such as a natural gas pipeline, hydropower station and grant aid.

The Burmese state newspapers published on Thursday a picture of Wen Jiabao sitting with young Burmese students at a famous school in Rangoon, the No.1 Middle School of Dagon Township, where the Chinese premier was welcomed by Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win and the commander of Rangoon Regional Military Command, Maj-Gen Win Myint.