

## **Gambari: india must be seen helping UN**

By RAMESH RAMACHANDRAN

New Delhi, Jan. 31: India must take more concrete steps to demonstrate her support to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's good offices in Burma, according to a UN official.

Ibrahim Gambari, who is UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon's special envoy for Burma, said that India's influence is growing regionally and globally but with influence comes responsibility too.

"We want them to do more and we'd like all of us then to be able to recall tangible progress in terms of engagement between UN and Burma," Mr Gambari said in an interview to this newspaper.

Mr Gambari arrived in New Delhi on Monday night for a three-day visit to India. He called on vice-president Hamid Ansari and minister of external affairs Pranab Mukherjee. He held talks with foreign secretary Shivshankar Menon too.

"It is important that this process delivers results because then if it does deliver results then it would weaken the arguments of those who have suggested that maybe the best way is sticks and more sticks [and fewer carrots]," Mr Gambari said.

India has opposed the imposition of sanctions on Burma.

Mr Gambari did not see India's growing proximity to the Burmese military junta as a handicap. On the contrary, he felt that India can exercise her influence to nudge the junta to take more conciliatory steps.

"I feel very much encouraged because channel of communication, that's not only open but seems to be increasing," he said, referring to a recent visit to India by Burmese foreign minister U Nyan Win.

India and Burma also held foreign office consultations in December 2007 when deputy minister in the Burmese ministry of foreign affairs Kyaw Thu visited New Delhi at the invitation of foreign secretary Shivshankar Menon.

He clarified that the UN cannot interfere in India's bilateral relations with Burma and therefore, it is up to New Delhi to decide how it should conduct military cooperation with the Burmese junta.

"That's up to India to decide. It's not the UN's prescription but our position is very simple. Use the influence that you've acquired as a result of your bilateral relations to work with us to the objectives that we all share, which is a peaceful, prosperous, democratic Burma with full respect for human rights of its own citizens," he said.

Mr Gambari felt that India can help the UN in several areas, logistically and substantively. India can begin, for instance, by ensuring that Mr Gambari is able to visit Burma more often and hold talks with the junta.

India can also contribute her mite to get the Burmese military regime to allow the UN to "enhance" its good offices role in Burma and to have "more (UN) presence" in that country progressively as the reconciliation process gains momentum.

"India can strongly urge Burma to increase their cooperation with good offices to make sure the process of dialogue between them and Aung San Suu Kyi produces tangible results in good time frame," he added.

Mr Gambari appreciated India's role in facilitating the UN's engagement of Burmese military junta and acknowledged India's positive contribution as a member of the Group of Friends on Burma, which was formed in December 2007.

<http://www.asianage.com/presentation/leftnavigation/news/india/gambari-india-must-be-seen-helping-un.aspx>