

## **India persuades Myanmar to let UN envoy visit**

17 Feb 2008, 0238 hrs IST, Indrani Bagchi, TNN

The Times of India

NEW DELHI: If China was responsible for facilitating UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari's visit to Myanmar in 2007, India will take charge this year. After foreign secretary Shiv Shankar Menon's quiet visit to Yangon earlier this month, Myanmar's military rulers have reportedly been persuaded to let Gambari return to the country.

If all goes well, Gambari might go back to Myanmar capital Naypyidaw by March. During his recent visit to New Delhi, Gambari told TOI, "Last time, China facilitated my trip to Myanmar. This time, I believe it will be India." Gambari is expected to visit China in February. Asked when he would make his next trip to Myanmar, Gambari said, "The Myanmar government has indicated I could visit in April. But that's too far away, about six months after my last trip. I want to go there much earlier than that." In fact, India has reason to quietly cheer its Myanmar policy.

India made it clear it didn't want sanctions. But it also stood behind Gambari mission. India's resistance to sanctions on Myanmar was matched by China's which also refused to entertain the thought of similar curbs. Besides, the recent sanctions by the European Union have had the predictable effect --- the rulers in Myanmar have been spared but poor textile workers and gems and jewellery workers have been deeply affected. In fact, this call for sanctions has, in a way, rebound on Aung San Suu Kyi herself, because many of those affected by the sanctions are apparently her supporters.

This is a reality that has become clear to the sanctioning countries, which has consequently diluted the western appetite for sanctions. It showed in Gambari's more "nuanced" attitude to the Myanmar issue recently. He was clear that the UN would not get involved in bilateral relations with Myanmar. And in fact, India will show its independence when Myanmar strongman, Gen Maung Aye, arrives here in April to sign the 'Kaladan' multi-modal transport project to be executed by this country.

India in its turn has promised to help steer the Myanmar rulers to work out a more inclusive and comprehensive national reconciliation. Gambari is expected to push for permission to let aid workers in the education and health sectors work among Myanmar's poor.

[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/India\\_persuades\\_Myanmar\\_to\\_let\\_UN\\_envoy\\_visit/rssarticleshow/2788733.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/India_persuades_Myanmar_to_let_UN_envoy_visit/rssarticleshow/2788733.cms)