

Sein Win Seeks Talks with China, India

By LALIT K JHA / WASHINGTON

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The Burmese prime minister in exile, Dr Sein Win, wants to visit leaders in India and China to seek their help in resolving the current political impasse in Burma.

The two countries---key allies of the military government---can play an important role in finding a peaceful solution to the current political crisis, Dr Sein Win told The Irrawaddy.

Dr Sein Win

He has approached both India and China in this regard, but without any success so far.

"We want solutions. We need help from China and India," he said.

"I want to travel to India and China and talk with their government officials and meet their people and present our views," he said in an interview.

"It's very simple. Why can't we go there?" he asked, saying he has tried to reach out to the Indian and Chinese governments so but so far without any positive results.

Despite his efforts, he said, "They [India and China] are very elusive because they are afraid any contact with us could jeopardize their relationship with the military."

"We agree with China and India on many points," he said. "They want stability; we want stability. They want prosperity; we also want prosperity. They want dialogue; we also want dialogue. We can talk on those topics."

"Since 1990, I could not go to China and India," said Sein Win, who in an interview last year said he would like to have his government-in-exile located in India, rather than in Washington DC.

A cousin of the Burmese leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, Dr Sein Win spends most of his time in Washington.

Regarding the humanitarian situation in Burma in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, he said he was dismayed that the junta discouraged people from helping the refugees and arresting many volunteers who tried.

He said the military government is keeping the high quality rice donations from the international community and selling poor quality rice, which was stored for emergency purposes by the army.

He said the National League of Democracy would not participate in the 2010 election and refused to accept the results of the constitutional referendum.

"We have not accepted the referendum," he said. "We do not accept the constitution. We do not accept the way the referendum has been conducted.

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Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said China and other neighboring countries of Burma are not putting enough pressure on the military government to move quicker and more inclusively to a democratic system.

In an interview on CNN, Secretary Rice said China has consistently blocked resolutions on Burma at the UN Security Council.

"They [China] blocked the ability to get it [Burma] to the Security Council," she said. "We were never able to get a strong resolution to deal with it."

However, the Chinese are not alone in helping the junta, she said. "Some of Burma's other neighbors have not been willing to put the kind of pressure on the Burmese regime that is needed.

However, she acknowledged a positive role played by China and other neighbor countries during the cyclone disaster.

"I will say that I think the rather limited progress that we made was because China and a couple of others did intercede with the junta to allow some aid in," she said.

Expressing her frustration with the response of the international community on issues related to Burma, she said: "The truth of the matter is that the international community has not responded as it should have. This is, sometimes, one of the frustrations with the Security Council."

When the UN General Assembly took up the issue of the responsibility to protect principle a few years ago, she said the US was skeptical at that time. That was, Rice said, "because we said if you take on something like the responsibility to protect, and then you don't do it, what does it say about the credibility of the Security Council in the international community."

That's precisely what's come true now in Burma, she said.

In another interview with the CNN editorial board, Rice said the international community has not done a good job in the case of Burma, in particular in the aftermath of the Cyclone Nargis which killed more than 130,000 people.

"I will tell you I think the international community has not done a good job in this case because if the responsibility to protect is going to mean anything, it will have meant something in this case.

But we couldn't even get Burma on the Security Council agenda because of China," Rice said.

"Now, you can say the United States should have done it unilaterally, but that has its costs. In this case, when you have a strong friend of Burma---and not just China, by the way, but Asean and others...then it is very hard to do," she said.

So, the US took of position of pressing China to use its influence to get some aid in, she said.

"Much of what you see and the ability to get some aid in, is because a lot of representations and tough efforts were made with the Burmese by their neighbors," Rice said.

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