

India News

UN envoy discusses Myanmar with Indian foreign secretary

Oct 22, 2007, 12:04 GMT

New Delhi, Oct 22 (IANS) UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari Monday discussed the Myanmar situation with Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon amid calls that New Delhi should put pressure on the military junta to initiate political reforms in the neighbouring country.

The UN diplomat arrived here Sunday night as part of his six-nation tour to talk to regional leaders who could influence the Myanmar regime.

Gambari, special advisor to the UN secretary general, embarked on the six-nation journey after the UN Security Council passed a resolution deploring the violent crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Myanmar and calling for the release of all political prisoners including Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

He has already visited Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and will leave for China and Japan Tuesday.

While the content of Monday morning's meeting had not been made public yet, officials said that Gambari was expected to ask India to put more pressure on the military junta in Myanmar to initiate reforms towards democracy and stop action against dissidents.

India has been reluctant to isolate the regime, despite calls from western countries, mainly due to Myanmar's strategic importance as it is adjacent to the northeastern states.

'In dealing with this, we need to cooperate with the government in Myanmar regardless of its colour,' Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had told reporters last week.

But he had tried to balance his words by adding: 'Let me say that our position on the basic issues of political reforms is never in doubt.'

US President George W. Bush last week called upon India and China to 'do more' to exert their influence when he unveiled new sanctions against the Myanmar regime.

Gambari is scheduled to meet Manmohan Singh and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee Tuesday.

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