

Burmese Ethnic Delegation Meets US's First Lady

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A Burmese ethnic delegation met with the US's first lady, Laura Bush, in the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday, calling on the US to help protect ethnic minorities and to promote democracy in Burma.

Lian H Sakhong, the general secretary of the Ethnic Nationalities Council, said he asked the US government to promote the issues of democratic reform and restoration of federalism in Burma within the international community, including China, Russia and Asean.

The ENC delegation also met with seven congressmen, including Rep Joseph Pitts, and five senators, including senators Richard Lugar and Edward M Kennedy, during the week.

Lian H Sakhong said the first lady expressed her concern for pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for more than 11 of the past 17 years.

Last month, she called for the immediate release of Suu Kyi and asked members of the US democratic and republican parties to cooperate in creating an effective Burma policy. The first lady also noted a group of US female senators who are working to promote human rights in Burma.

Saw David Taw, the joint secretary of ENC, asked the US government to support tripartite-dialogue as a solution to overcome the country's political crisis.

Harn Yawngwe, the director of Euro-Burma Office, said his organization will continue its work to develop a "friendship with China and Russia" to try to win their support, according to the Chinland Guardian.

The two permanent members of United Nations, China and Russia, last year vetoed placing Burma on the UN Security Council agenda.

A Burmese delegation is also scheduled to meet with Ibrahim A Gambari, the United Nations under secretary-general and a special adviser on Burma, at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The Ethnic Nationalities Council was established in 2001 by exile ethnic groups, including Chin, Kachin, Karen, Mon, Arakan and Karenni.