PM Lee ‘HAPPY TO LEARN’ FROM GAMBARI OF PROGRESS IN MYANMAR

Stopping by Singapore en route to the United Nations in New York, UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor Ibrahim Gambari called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Friday.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they had a “good exchange” of views on the UN envoy’s latest visit to Myanmar.

Mr Lee was also “encouraged” by a statement from detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, delivered by Mr Gambari on Thursday night. Ms Suu Kyi said she was ready to cooperate with the ruling junta to start a dialogue towards national reconciliation.

“Mr Lee was also happy to learn from Mr Gambari that progress had been made in getting both sides to move forward in the dialogue process,” the ministry said. “He encouraged Mr Gambari to keep up his efforts and reiterated that his mission had the full support of Singapore itself, Asean as a grouping, and the regional countries.”

Mr Gambari has also been invited to attend the East Asia Summit in Singapore on Nov 21.

Meanwhile, Myanmar was a hot topic at a dialogue session between Foreign Minister George Yeo and about 50 students from the Singapore Management University.

Referring to calls for Singapore to freeze the bank accounts of people connected to Myanmar’s ruling junta, Mr Yeo said Singapore, as a global finance centre, has to honour contracts and ensure high standards of trust. “If we freeze the bank accounts of those whom we don’t like, after a while we will cease to be a financial centre.”

On junta leaders seeking medical treatment here, he said turning them away was not helpful to a “policy of engagement”, which is what works best to get a country to change.

Mr Yeo asked: “What else can we do? Invade Myanmar? Remove Than Shwe, the way the Americans removed Saddam Hussein? Then what after that?”

— ANSLEY NG

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