



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

A summary of Burma-related issues in the British Parliament and Europe

JUNE
2007

The only monthly round-up of issues relating to Burma in the British Parliament

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

GENERAL

4 Jun 2007: Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to encourage improvement in Myanmar's record on human rights. [139061]

Mr. McCartney: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) identifies Burma as a country of concern in our 2006 Annual Report on Human Rights. The Government's policy is to promote full respect for human rights in Burma encouraging the rule of law, democracy and good governance, and the freedom of association and speech in accordance with international human rights law. We have been at the forefront of international efforts over many years to bring pressure to bear on the military regime to re-establish democracy and to respect human rights. We take every opportunity to raise human rights issues with the regime and remind them of their obligations to adhere to international human rights law. Our embassy in Rangoon also delivers capacity building assistance through the FCO Global Opportunities Fund in support of these objectives. I have raised the human rights situation regularly with the Burmese regime and other Governments in the region. On 16 June 2006, I called in the Burmese ambassador and on 5 July 2006 I wrote to the Burmese Foreign Minister, highlighting our many concerns. On 18 September 2006, I raised the serious human rights situation with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) ambassadors, including the Burmese ambassador, and on 4 December 2006 with the ASEAN Secretary-General. I have also raised Burma with the Governments of China, India, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. I have discussed the human rights abuses taking place in Burma with Juan Méndez, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. I discussed Burma in detail with Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on 15 November 2006, following his visit to the country. I raised the human rights situation in Burma in my address to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 13 March and at the EU/ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg on 15 March, in the presence of the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister. In addition, our ambassador in Rangoon regularly raises human rights with the regime, most recently when he met the Burmese Ministers for Planning and Immigration and the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister on 5 January. The UK also works closely with the EU and other international partners, including the UN and ASEAN, to promote human rights in Burma and fully supports the efforts of the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, Professor Sergio Pinheiro. We supported the efforts to have Burma added to the UN Security Council agenda in September 2006 and co-sponsored with the US a UN Security Council Resolution on Burma. This was put to the vote on 12 January. Nine members of the Security Council supported the Resolution. However, three states, including two permanent members of the Council, voted against and as such the Resolution was not adopted. While the result was disappointing, it is important to note that all Security Council members agreed that there were serious issues of concern in Burma. This, and the positive votes from the majority of Security Council partners, reflected the international community's deep concern over the plight of Burma's people. Burma remains on the UN Security Council agenda. Most recently, on 23 April, the EU Council of Ministers issued a statement expressing its deep concern about the Burmese regime's continuing violations of human rights and the lack of progress towards establishing a legitimate civilian government. In its statement, the Council also called for the Burmese Government to make progress towards national reconciliation and engage constructively with all political parties and ethnic groups.

4 Jun 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports she has received on the building of a military bunker near the new capital of Burma. [140098]

Mr. McCartney: We have received no verifiable reports on the building of a military bunker near Burma's new administrative capital, Naypyitaw. Naypyitaw is located adjacent to a major military zone. It is one of many areas of the country to which access is tightly controlled.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

21 June 2007: Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new diplomatic steps she plans to take on the imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi. [143981]

Mr. McCartney: We have repeatedly condemned the continuing detention of Aung San Suu Kyi. Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister issued a statement on 19 June marking her 62nd birthday and calling again on the Burmese Government to end her detention under house arrest,

With the UN and other key partners, we will continue to press for an open and inclusive political process in Burma and an improvement in the human rights situation. The release of Aung San Suu Kyi is central to both objectives.

We shall continue to raise our concerns about all human rights abuses, including the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, with the Burmese Government. On 28 May, I met the Burmese Foreign Minister at the Asia/Europe Foreign Ministers meeting in Hamburg, and called again for the Burmese Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi. The Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) Chair Statement, endorsed by all ASEM members, also called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the Burmese Government to remain constructively engaged with the Association of South East Asian Nations, the UN and the international community.

11 June 2007: Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps she is taking in response to the ongoing imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi. [140979]

Mr. Hoon: We have repeatedly condemned the continuing detention of Aung San Suu Kyi. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary issued a statement on 26 May condemning the Burmese government's decision to extend Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest by a further year and called for her release and that of all other political prisoners in Burma. The EU also released a similar statement on 25 May.

On 28 May, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Ian McCartney, met the Burmese Foreign Minister at the Asia/Europe Foreign Ministers meeting in Hamburg and called again for the Burmese government to release Aung San Suu Kyi.

With the UN and other key partners, we will continue to press for an open and inclusive political process in Burma, and an improvement in the human rights situation. The release of Aung San Suu Kyi is central to both objectives.

GAS

4th June 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Government have had with the Governments of (a) India, (b) China and (c) South Korea on the Shwe gas project in Burma. [140108]

Mr. McCartney: We have not discussed the Shwe gas project with the Governments of India, China or South Korea. However, we regularly raise Burma's appalling human rights record with its neighbours, including India, China and South Korea. I discussed the human rights situation in Burma with the Chinese Government on 20 June 2006 and again during my visit to Beijing in July 2006. I raised my concerns with the South Korean Government on 20 July 2006 and on 4 September 2006. I spoke to the Indian Government about Burma on 20 June 2006 and 27 November 2006. Most recently, I raised the human rights situation directly with the Burmese Foreign Minister at the Asia-Europe Meeting Foreign Ministers meeting in Hamburg on 28 May.

REFUGEES AND IDPs

13th June 2007: Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what

representations she has made to the government of (a) Burma and (b) Thailand on employment and education for refugees that live in camps on the border; [140993] (2) what representations she has made to the government of (a) Thailand and (b) Malaysia on extending refugee status to parents and children of Burmese residents in camps within their borders. [140994]

Mr. McCartney: Our Embassy in Bangkok has regular discussions, both bilaterally and together with EU counterparts, with the Government of Thailand and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) about the welfare of refugees in Thailand. These discussions include the question of the refugees' status and access to education and employment. Officials from our Embassy in Bangkok regularly visit the refugee camps to monitor conditions, most recently in May this year. We have made no representations to the Burmese government about employment and education opportunities for refugees in Thailand. We have made no representations to the Malaysian government on the status of Burmese refugees. However, our High Commission in Kuala Lumpur remains in close contact with UNHCR about issues concerning refugees in Malaysia.

25 Jun 2007: Lynne Featherstone: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much UK-funded support has been made available to aid groups in Thailand assisting those displaced from their homes in Burma in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [145217]

Mr. Thomas: Of those aid groups based in Thailand, DFID provides £1.8 million (over three years—2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08) to the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium for the provision of food, shelter, cooking fuel and non-food items for the 166,000 refugees in the nine camps on the Thai-Burma border, and for their support to internally displaced people, particularly those in hiding in areas of ongoing conflict. We provide an approximately equivalent amount of funding to the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium's refugee work through our contributions to aid provided by the European Union.

DFID acknowledges the importance and value of cross-border aid, especially in supporting many of the 100,000 internally displaced people living in conflict areas in eastern Burma. We also acknowledge the value and importance of work by community based groups inside the country, who are able to reach many of the 400,000 internally displaced people living in Government controlled areas, mixed administration areas (where both ethnic armed groups and the Burmese army are present) and cease-fire areas. We believe strongly that the two mechanisms should be seen as complementary to each other—not as competitors.

We have removed the restriction on the use of UK funds provided to Thailand-based non-Governmental organisations for cross-border assistance. But while several Governments already fund cross-border work, the UK is the only bilateral donor currently supporting community-based groups reaching internally displaced people from inside Burma. Our judgment is that the best use for our additional money is to support community based organisations working inside Burma, which is why we also provide assistance to internally displaced people through community-based groups inside Burma (£400,000 in 2007-08) to provide emergency relief, health and education programmes in eastern Burma.

DEBT

15 Jun 2007: Paul Holmes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Burma last repaid debt owed to the UK Government; what recent steps the Government have taken to recover debt owed by Burma; and what legal options are available to the Government to recover debt owed by Burma. [141625]

Ed Balls: ECGD has unrecovered claims totalling £22.9 million in respect of seven contracts in the power, textile and water sectors on which claims were paid to UK banks/exporters between 1988 and 1998. There have been no recoveries since 1990. The UK also has two outstanding aid loans amounting to £1.06 million that are managed by the World Bank. These represent the UK's share of co-funded loans from the EU. The loans reverted to bilateral status in 2005. These loans are not currently being serviced by Burma. Given the economic and political situation in the country, HMG does not consider that legal action would be appropriate.

25 Jun 2007: Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much debt is owed to UK companies by Burma; in relation to which (a) companies and (b) projects the Export Credits Guarantee Department has taken over this debt; and in each case when the guarantees were given. [145338]

Mr. McCartney: The amount owed by Burma to UK companies in respect of defaulted export contracts insured or guaranteed by ECGD is £22.9 million. ECGD has subrogated rights to recoveries. Contracts for which ECGD provided 100 per cent. guarantees for the related financing loans given by the National Westminster Bank are as follows: John Brown Engineering/Government of Burma Electric Power Enterprise: One loan signed in 1979 and two in 1982; Bonar Cruickshank Power Engineering/Government of Burma Electric Power Enterprise: Loan signed 1986; and James Mackie and Sons/Myanmar Textile Industries: Loan signed 1980. ECGD also insured two export contracts with Myanmar Textile Industries and the Inland Water Transport Corporation where the outstanding debt is £1.8 million. The policies were issued in 1980 and 1983. Due to commercial confidentiality undertakings in insurance policies ECGD would need to notify those companies before disclosing their names.

INDIA

5 Jun 2007: Sir Robert Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Indian counterpart on relations between India and Burma. [140324]

Dr. Howells: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs raised Burma with the Indian Government in June and November last year. He urged the Indian Government to use its influence to help bring peace, stability and democracy to Burma.

ENVIRONMENT

15 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what grants his Department provided for environmental projects in Burma in each of the last five years; and what the value of each grant was. [142036]

Mr. Thomas: DFID is providing £4 million over four years to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Initiative in Burma. The project aims (i) to strengthen the capacity of poor communities to address their basic needs; and (ii) to provide continued and constructive engagement with selected remote rural communities in the areas of social development and sustainable livelihoods. One of the intended project outcomes is an increased local capacity for sustainable environmental management, achieved through improved community skills for good environmental management; better planning by communities of the use of their local natural resources; and the introduction of energy-efficient technologies and community forestry initiatives to reduce the demand for wood for fuel.

DFID has also provided a grant of £580,000 over three years to the non-governmental organisation Forest Trends, to assess the impacts of the Chinese timber market throughout SE Asia, including in Burma. Copies of their reports are available at: www.forest-trends.org. The British Embassy in Rangoon has recently provided a grant of £32,000 from the Grassroots Development Programme (GDP) fund to support seven environmental projects in Burma. The main objectives of the projects are to enhance village livelihoods through an improved management of agriculture, natural resource and agro forestry.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

25 Jun 2007: Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if she will make a statement on proposals to abolish the UN Human Rights Council envoy posts charged with reporting on (a) Belarus, (b) Cuba, (c) North Korea, (d) Burma, (e) Somalia, (f) Sudan and (g) Uzbekistan. [145817]

Mr. McCartney: When the UN Human Rights Council was established in March 2006, it was tasked with reviewing its tools and mechanisms, including its so-called Special Procedures (for example Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts dedicated to specific country situations). On 18 June, the Council agreed a package of measures at the conclusion of this review. Throughout the review the UK consistently took a strong position, nationally and with the rest of the EU, in favour of maintaining all the existing country-specific and thematic Special Procedures. There was a great deal of opposition at the Council to the continuation of country-specific Special Procedures. I was profoundly disappointed that, because of this

opposition, the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the human rights situations in Cuba and Belarus were not renewed. The situations in both those countries continue to be of deep concern and we will continue to monitor the situation in each closely. I was, however, pleased that the mandates of all the other country-specific Special Procedures (including the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Burma and Sudan, and the Independent Expert appointed by the UN Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Somalia) were renewed.

The Council inherited an Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, created through the confidential complaints procedure under the old UN Commission on Human Rights. At its fourth session (12-30 March) the UN Human Rights Council discontinued consideration of the specific file relating to Uzbekistan under its confidential complaints procedure. The confidential nature of that procedure prevents us from commenting on any details of the cases and on the position taken by the UK. We do, however, emphasise strongly our deep concern over persistent violations of human rights in Uzbekistan. The Council also agreed on 18 June a new system of universal periodic review, which will look at every state's individual work on human rights implementation, including Cuba's and Uzbekistan's.

18 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government have taken to promote the passage of a resolution on Burma at the UN Human Rights Council in September. [142609]

Mr. McCartney: We have repeatedly raised our concerns about the serious human rights situation in Burma. We co-sponsored a UN Security Council Resolution on Burma in January. However the resolution was not adopted, as two permanent members of the Security Council—China and Russia—voted against, as did South Africa.

We agree that the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) should address the situation in Burma. On 13 March I raised the serious human rights situation in Burma in my address to the HRC in Geneva. The EU raised Burma at the HRC on 23 March, expressing concern about the situation and calling for the release of all political prisoners and an end to the systematic human rights abuses in Burma. The EU also took part in discussions with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma at the March session of the HRC.

We will continue to discuss with our EU partners about how to take the most effective action on Burma at the HRC.

UNDP

18 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what monitoring and auditing of UN Development Programme projects in Burma funded by his Department takes place to counter corruption and to ensure that funds do not end up in the hands of the regime. [142605]

Mr. Thomas: All UN Development Programme (UNDP) work in Burma is carried out in compliance with guidelines established by its Executive Board. These stipulate that all UNDP assistance to Burma should be clearly targeted towards programmes having grass-roots-level impact in a sustainable manner, particularly in the areas of primary health care, the environment, HIV/AIDS, training and education and food security.

In order to deliver this mandate, UNDP has established the Human Development Initiative (HDI), funded by DFID and other donors, with the objective of meeting basic needs and alleviating poverty in some of the poorest areas of Burma. In accordance with the Executive Board restrictions, UNDP does not transfer funds to the Burmese authorities. However, like other international organisations operating in Burma, UNDP has been required to purchase items such as fuel and telecommunications services and pay rent for its premises, and the authorities remain the sole provider of such services.

UNDP has a network of approximately 1,500 national staff based in the 57 townships in which the HDI operates in Burma. These staff—at the state/division level, township level and community level—undertake extensive routine process monitoring for all project activities. They are involved in all aspects of implementation, verification of accounts and expenditures, review of problems, and provision of technical support to ensure effective implementation. Their monitoring is supplemented by national programme managers, which in turn is overseen by UNDP international staff who also regularly visit programme sites.

No difficulty has been encountered in such monitoring on account of any government control or restrictions. National staff can travel freely; they do not have to ask for travel permission and are not accompanied by counterpart or local officials in the performance of their project work. Internationals do have to ask for permission but there has been no case when permission has been denied. Furthermore, the formulation of the Operating Guidelines by the Government (February 2006) has not had any significant impact on UNDP's ability to engage effectively in the field, or to abide by its Executive Board mandate, adhering to humanitarian principles.

On the basis of their programme monitoring, UNDP provides DFID with periodic written progress reports on HDI activities. This includes substantive information on activities, achievements, challenges/issues and recommendations as required, as well as budgetary information. A detailed financial report accounting for the previous tranche of support from DFID is necessary before the next tranche is provided to UNDP. Donors themselves carry out an annual joint assessment mission to review the HDI programme. Further ad hoc fieldtrips are made by donors to project sites—in DFID's case, about four times a year.

Finally, in order to ensure compliance with the Executive Board mandate, independent assessments of the HDI are carried out regularly and reported to the Executive Board. The assessment teams include a team of external consultants who undertake 3-4 week field trips to prepare their report. The report for the period May 2006 to April 2007 is now being finalised and will be presented to the Executive Board in September 2007. The initial findings conclude that the HDI programme is in full compliance with the Executive Board mandate and addresses the needs of the poor and vulnerable in rural areas of Burma with humanitarian assistance. The 2006 Assessment—covering the period 2005-06—also echoes the conclusion of previous reports, namely, that the HDI programme effectively provides humanitarian support on a large scale and that “all projects operate independently of the Government and target the village-level groups and needs described in the [EB] mandate.” The full report can be found on the Executive Board website at: www.undp.org/execbrd/adv2006-second.htm

18 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many grants have been given to the UN Development Programme for projects in Burma in the last four years; for what purposes; and to what value. [142606]

Mr. Thomas: In the last four years, DFID has funded the following projects implemented by the UN Development Programme in Burma: £10 million over four years (2003 to 2007) support to the Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar—which was managed by UN Development Programme—to enhance capacity for the prevention and care of people living with HIV/AIDS. £4 million over four years (2005 to 2009) to the UN Development Programme's Human Development Initiative to strengthen the capacity of poor communities to address their basic needs, particularly those of the poor and disadvantaged. £110,000 (2004) and £67,000 (2006) to part-fund a liaison officer within the UN Development Programme to improve coordination and effectiveness of development agencies providing assistance to Burma.

AID

18 June 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when he expects to announce the annual budget from his Department for Burma for 2008-09. [142607]

Mr. Thomas: DFID's 2008-09 budget is subject to the conclusions of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which is expected to be announced in October 2007. Subsequent individual country programme budgets are expected to be announced in January 2008.

18th June 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what expenses are paid to consultants working for his Department in Burma in addition to their basic pay. [142604]

Mr. Thomas: Expenses paid to consultants are to reimburse reasonable expenditure necessary for undertaking the assignment—for example, travel and subsistence costs. These are specified in the contract agreed in advance with each consultant.

CHINA

18 Jun 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions she has held with representatives of the Chinese Government on the situation in (a) Darfur and (b) Burma. [143231]

Mr. McCartney: We regularly discuss Darfur with the Chinese Government, including at the UN. We want China to use its influence with the Sudanese Government to ensure Khartoum supports the deployment of joint UN peacekeeping forces in Darfur, as well as committing to a ceasefire and renewed political process. We gave this message to the Chinese Government before President Hu's visit to Africa earlier this year. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised Sudan with the Chinese Government during her trip there last month, as did my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister during his visit to China in April.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has had no discussions with the Chinese Government about Burma. However, she urged China, in a speech to the Central Party School, to use its influence to improve the situation in Burma when she visited Beijing on 17 May. I discussed the human rights situation in Burma with the Chinese Government on 20 June 2006 and again during my visit to Beijing in July 2006.

18 Jun 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions she has held with representatives of the Indian Government on the situation in Burma. [143232]

Mr. McCartney: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has had no recent discussions with the Indian Government about Burma. We raise Burma at official level with the Government of India as part of our regular dialogue with the Indians on regional security. We encourage India to use their contacts with the regime to make strong messages on the need to restore democracy and respect human rights. Most recently, I raised Burma with the Indian Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi on 27 November 2006.

TOURISM

13 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps have been taken to reduce the number of British tourists visiting Burma. [142037]

Mr. McCartney: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in January 2005 that anyone who may be thinking of visiting Burma on holiday should consider carefully whether by their actions they are helping to support the regime. The country profile for Burma on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) website draws attention to our position and the views of Aung San Suu Kyi on tourism. The FCO Travel Advice on Burma includes a link to the country profile so that those thinking of travelling to Burma will be aware of this. The FCO's country profile on Burma can be found at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1018965307901>. The FCO's Travel Advice on Burma can be found at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket%2FXcelerate%2FShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029390590&a=KCountryAdvice&aid=1013618387126>.

13 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment she has made of the security risks to (a) British tourists and (b) Burmese citizens if such tourists engage local people in political discussions in Burma; and what advice her Department gives to British citizens on this issue. [142038]

Mr. McCartney: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Travel Advice for Burma advises that "there are stringent restrictions on freedom of speech, movement, religion, and political activity. Foreign nationals criticising the regime in public are liable to arrest or imprisonment". The FCO's Travel Advice on Burma can be found at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket%2FXcelerate%2FShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029390590&a=KCountryAdvice&aid=1013618387126>.

EU & TRADE

5 Jun 2007: Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what

recent discussions she has had with other European Foreign Ministers on the situation in Burma; and if she will make a statement. [140328]

Dr. Howells: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and her EU colleagues issued a statement at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting in Luxembourg on 23 April expressing their deep concern over the situation in Burma. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs (Mr. McCartney) joined EU Ministers and Asian counterparts in issuing a further statement about Burma at the Asia/Europe Foreign Ministers' meeting in Hamburg on 29 May.

5 Jun 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Burma will be included in the trade agreement being negotiated between the EU and ASEAN; and if she will make a statement. [140109]

Mr. Hoon: Burma will not benefit from the proposed EU-Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) under its current regime. The mandate to negotiate the FTA was agreed by the EU at the 23 April General Affairs and External Relations Council. The UK and like-minded member states were instrumental in securing language within the Council conclusions and the mandate which will have the effect of excluding Burma from the EU/ASEAN FTA.

13 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Burma will be taking part in negotiations regarding a free trade area between the EU and ASEAN. [142035]

Mr. McCartney: The European Commission, on behalf of the EU, and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries as a bloc agreed to enter into negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on 4 May. It is for the ASEAN states to decide how they are to be represented at the negotiations. The mandate to negotiate the FTA was agreed by the EU at the 23 April General Affairs and External Relations Council. The UK and like-minded member states were instrumental in securing language within the council conclusions and the mandate, which will have the effect of excluding Burma from the EU/ASEAN FTA. Burma will not benefit from the proposed EU-ASEAN FTA under its current regime.

5 Jun 2007: Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what products were imported from Burma in each of the last five years; and what the value was of those imports; [140164] (2) what the level of British imports was from Burma in each of the last five years. [140165]

John Healey: Information available on the imports from Burma into the UK are published in the Overseas Trade Statistics by HM Revenue and Customs, which are available in the Library of the House and via www.uktradeinfo.com.

OLD SOLDIERS

12 Jun 2007: John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the British Government provides pensions to any Burmese soldiers who fought alongside the British in the Second World War. [141984]

Derek Twigg: The British Government no longer provide pensions to Burmese soldiers who fought alongside the British forces in the second world war. Responsibility for the payment of these pensions was transferred to the Government of Burma in 1947, ahead of Burma gaining independence in January 1948.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

The numbers of MPs who have signed these EDM's has gone down slightly because several of the MPs who had signed have now been appointed government ministers.

To view the full list of MPs who have signed these EDMs please visit:
<http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/>

EDM 662: VETO OF DRAFT UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON BURMA: Signed by 83 MPs.

EDM 658: RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS, DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION IN BURMA: Signed by 147 MPs.

EDM 498: TARGETED INVESTMENT SANCTIONS AGAINST BURMA'S DICTATORSHIP: Signed by 81 MPs.

EDM 367: UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON BURMA: Signed by 173 MPs.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

On **5th June** Burma was raised during Foreign Office questions:

John Bercow (Buckingham) (Con): Given that the brutal military dictatorship in Burma commits some of the most egregious human rights abuses to be found anywhere in the world, and that only last month the tyrannical Government of that country, in defiance of international opinion, renewed the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, does the Minister share my horror, and more particularly that of Human Rights Watch, at the fact that the Government of Burma were invited to the Asia-Europe meeting in Hamburg on 28 and 29 May? Ought not the international community to be prepared to exert pressure on India, China and Russia to force the Government of Burma to stop killing their people, and to start respecting and liberating them? Dr. Howells: Yes, I agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman said. It is a great shame that commercial considerations are often put far above humanitarian ones when it comes to dealing with the Burmese Government.

Also during discussion on Sudan on **5th June**:

Mr. Moore: ...Many international crises and atrocities demand our attention: Zimbabwe, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan and Burma. All those and many more have often distracted attention from the horrors of Darfur, so our debate rightly serves to put the unconscionable and unforgivable suffering of the people of that region at the heart of our political agenda....

...Beyond our concerns about the arms embargo, we must surely look at measures aimed at international investment in Sudan's petroleum industry. Of course, restrictions on investment, let alone divestment, raise difficulties. It is an approach only to be considered in extremis, as we have seen in Burma, but surely that is the situation that we have reached in Sudan.....

...Javier Solana, has already indicated that the EU is "open to consider" further sanctions. That is not enough. By the time of the European Council later this month, the EU needs to agree a further, substantive and targeted sanctions package that complements President Bush's announcement last week. The Prime Minister has said that we should pursue sanctions at the UN level, and I certainly endorse that view. Given the role of Russia and China in Sudan, however, it is not at all certain that further UN sanctions will or can be imposed. There is precedent for such EU action. Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma are all examples of the EU having imposed sanctions ahead of, or in the absence of, United Nations measures. Therefore, if agreement cannot be reached there quickly, the implementation of EU sanctions must go ahead....

On **11th June** Burma was discussed during a debate on the outcome of the G8 summit.

John Bercow (Buckingham) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's candid exchange with President Putin. Does he agree that the abuse of human rights in Chechnya, the sale last year of more than \$34 million worth of arms to the murderous tyranny in Sudan and the use of the veto to stop concrete action against the brutal military dictatorship in Burma are an additional three good reasons why President Putin is not yet greeted with the uncritical acclaim of the international community that he apparently expects?

The Prime Minister: Well, all these issues need to be examined. I think the most important thing is that Russia does understand that in the end there will be limits to the relationship that it is able to have with the rest of the world unless it is on the basis of shared values and shared principles. The problem is that of course people will want to deal with Russia and have to deal with Russia; we are engaged in talks with Russia on a number of different things that are of fundamental importance. I think the real question for Russia is this: does it want to maximise its relationship with the western world, in which case shared values and shared principles are the only basis on which to do it, or is it content to have it minimised? In the end,

there is no point, as I have said before at the Dispatch Box, in our making empty threats—we are not in a position to deliver on those. What I tried to say to the President is that there is a real concern, as has been shown in the House today, and a sensible policy would take account of that. Of course, it is true that there are valid and legitimate points that Russia has to make about western policy towards Russia, but in the end those strategic interests can be gained only by recognising that certain values are fundamental to countries like ours and other western nations, and it is just not possible for them to be compromised.

On **14th June** Burma was raised during discussion on the business of the House.

Julie Morgan (Cardiff, North) (Lab): On Saturday, the Cardiff-based Actors Workshop will be putting on extracts of a play called “The Lady of Burma” to mark the 62nd birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is her 12th year of house arrest in Burma. When may we have a debate to discuss what more the Government can do to end that deplorable situation?

Mr. Straw: Like the whole House, I pay tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi for her courage and forbearance in the face of a most terrible regime in Burma. We will certainly look for an opportunity to do what my hon. Friend seeks.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

On **8th June** Burma was referred to during a debate on Europe.

Lord Triesman: I shall reiterate the points that I made in the debate on 9 May. We can easily take Europe’s stability for granted, but Europe has for centuries been disfigured by conflicts. Tens of millions of innocent Europeans have died in two world wars, and, in the second half of the last century, it was evident that we had to forge a different way. President Clinton rightly described this new architecture as the greatest and most successful example of “fixing in place”—I use his words—peace and community. Today the common foreign and security policy is delivering for the UK and the EU around the world. Twenty-seven member states are able to agree on common positions on issues ranging from regions in conflict through to Darfur and human rights around the world. Belarus, Burma and others are coming into the club and others are taking those positions; that is helpful.

On **13 June** Burma was referred to during a debate on the UK Borders Bill.

Lord Hylton: Enforced removal is not working satisfactorily because the Home Office reckons the average cost at £11,000 per person, so that only some 20,000 people are removed in a year. The Home Office must surely become more realistic. It has to realise that many people not qualifying as refugees still need protection. It is not realistic to return such people to countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Darfur, Iran, North Korea, parts of Burma or China, or indeed to return Christian converts to many Islamic states. Therefore the old category of exceptional leave to remain for a limited period of years has to be more widely used. It is necessary for humanitarian reasons because it allows people to work legally, thus meeting some of the demand for migrant workers.

On **14th June** Burma was referred to during a debate on UK membership of the House of Lords.

Lord Triesman: In many situations, together we have far more weight. That is a fundamental truth not just about the EU but about the entire system of multilateralism. When we speak in concert, our demands, or our condemnations, carry that much more weight. I can say at first hand that I have experienced that in trying to move the Sudan/Darfur problems along, and that we may be starting to make some progress now on matters such as the hybrid force precisely because we have stuck to that, as I hope we will in Burma and on other problems. We badly need to be able to do so in ensuring that we have biting sanctions against reprehensible Governments such as Robert Mugabe’s.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Following on from coverage in last months edition regarding the House of Lords Economic Committee enquiry into sanctions, almost two months on BCUK has still not had a response from the Committee

regarding inaccuracies in the report with relation to sanctions and Burma.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO AID TO BURMA

This Committee is currently holding an inquiry into aid to Burma. To view evidence submitted to the International Development Committee as part of its inquiry into British Aid to Burma, please visit the following links:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/ucburma/ucburma01.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/uc645-i/uc64502.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/uc645-ii/uc64502.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/uc645-iii/uc64502.htm>

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

The APPG Burma held a packed reception in the British Parliament on 19th June for Aung San Suu Kyi's 62nd birthday. Media release from Burma campaign UK follows.

60 UK MPs to attend Reception for Aung San Suu Kyi in UK Parliament

19 June 2007

More than 60 British MPs – almost 1 in 10 MPs - are expected to attend a reception for Aung San Suu Kyi in the House of Commons. The reception, organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma, will be attended by Ian McCartney MP, Foreign Office Minister responsible for Burma, Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague MP, and Liberal Democrat Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Moore. At least two other government ministers are expected to attend.

The evening reception follows a day of demonstrations in London. More than 100 demonstrators held a protest outside Downing Street calling on the British government to do more to pressure the regime in Burma. Protesters then marched to the Burmese Embassy in nearby Mayfair.

Tony Blair released the following statement today:

"I am deeply saddened that today Aung San Suu Kyi will spend yet another birthday under house arrest cut off from her family and the outside world, and unable to contribute to the healing of the nation for which she has sacrificed so much.

As the period of her detention lengthens, the calls for her freedom from the international community grow louder. I add my voice to those calls. I strongly believe that, only by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi and the other political prisoners, can Burma move towards inclusive national reconciliation, the restoration of democracy and full respect for human rights. Her release can help usher in a new chapter.

I call again on the Burmese Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately as the first step towards healing the wounds of a country that has suffered for too long."

"Tony Blair's call for Aung San Suu Kyi's release is welcome," said Zoya Phan, Campaigns Officer at Burma Campaign UK, "but we need words to be turned into action. He doesn't talk about Burma when meeting his counterparts in Asia, particularly the Indian and Chinese Prime Ministers and Presidents. There needs to be high level engagement on Burma if we are to see change in my country. We hope that Gordon Brown will take a stronger personal interest once he becomes Prime Minister." Gordon Brown recently published a book – 'Courage: 8 Portraits' – which included a chapter on Aung San Suu Kyi.

There will also be readings and performances of the play about Aung San Suu Kyi – The Lady of Burma – taking place in 16 countries and 31 locations around the world, including 11 in the UK and 6 in the USA.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS ON BURMA

Following on from the May 2007 edition of Last Month in Parliament, and Margaret Beckett raising Burma during a trip to China, we have now learnt that unfortunately she did not raise Burma during discussions

with the Chinese government.

Tony Blair Calls for Release of Aung San Suu Kyi
10 Downing Street, 6/19/2007

Prime Minister Tony Blair marked the 62nd birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi by calling for her immediate release. In a prime ministerial statement, Prime Minister Blair said he was “deeply saddened” that the Burmese opposition leader would spend another birthday under house arrest, “cut off from her family and the outside world.”

He said: *“I strongly believe that, only by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi and the other political prisoners, can Burma move towards inclusive national reconciliation, the restoration of democracy and full respect for human rights.”*

“I call again on the Burmese government to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately as the first step towards healing the wounds of a country that has suffered for too long.”

The peace activist and leader of Burma’s National League for Democracy has spent 11 of the last 18 years under house arrest. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her efforts to bring democracy to Burma, a country with more than 1,160 political prisoners according to Amnesty International.

In the European Parliament

European Parliament resolution of **21 June 2007** on Burma
The European Parliament ,

- having regard to the first formal session of the UN Security Council on Burma held on 29 September 2006,
- having regard to the statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of 25 May 2007 calling for ‘restrictions on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political figures’ to be lifted,
- having regard to the 12th ASEAN Summit held in the Philippines on 9-15 January 2007,
- having regard to the eighth ASEM Foreign Ministers” meeting held in Germany on 28-29 May 2007,
- having regard to the letter of 15 May 2007 to General Than Shwe, signed by 59 former Heads of State, calling for ‘the immediate release of the world’s only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’,
- having regard to its resolutions of 12 May 2005(1) , 17 November 2005(2) and 14 December 2006(3) on Burma,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 481/2007 of 27 April 2007(4) renewing restrictive measures against Burma,
- having regard to the 17th anniversary of the victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in the parliamentary elections of 27 May 1990,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the NDL leader, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Sakharov Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has spent 11 of the last 17 years under house arrest,

B. whereas on 25 May 2007 the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) extended the illegal detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for another year,

C. whereas the SPDC continues to subject the people of Burma to appalling human rights abuses, such as forced labour, persecution of dissidents, conscription of child soldiers and forced relocation,

D. whereas 30% of Burma's population, an estimated 15 million people, are subsisting below the poverty line,

E. whereas the National Convention – first convened in 1993 to draft a constitution but suspended many times since then – will resume on 18 July 2007 for a final session but lacks legitimacy and international credibility due to the absence of democratically elected representatives, most notably from the NLD,

F. whereas ASEAN has started to take a more robust stance against the abuses by the military regime in Burma and insists that Burma improve its human rights record and embrace democracy,

G. whereas on 15 May 2007 Russia and Burma concluded an agreement to build a nuclear research reactor in Burma, despite international concerns about safety standards, security and dual use,

1. Demands the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi;

2. Deplores the fact that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has suffered years of house arrest, including solitary confinement and, since 2003, has only been allowed to leave for urgent medical treatment and briefly to meet the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs;

3. Condemns the SPDC's unremitting oppression of the Burmese people and its persistent persecution and imprisonment of pro-democracy activists; draws particular attention to the case of U Win Tin, a 78-year old journalist detained as a political prisoner for almost two decades now for writing a letter to the UN on the ill-treatment of political prisoners and the poor conditions in which they are held;

4. Insists on the immediate release of U Win Tin and all political prisoners – estimated to number over 1 200 – held by the SPDC;

5. Deplores the fact that, despite the condition of the country, regional and international criticism and forty-five years of rule, the SPDC has failed to make any substantial progress towards democracy;

6. Urges the legitimisation of the National Convention, through inclusion of the NLD and other political parties and groups, and that the National Convention adopt a roadmap to democracy that reflects the genuine wishes of the Burmese people instead of consolidating the military's stranglehold on power;

7. Welcomes the Chairman's statement made at the 12th ASEAN Summit, in which ASEAN leaders encouraged Burma 'to make greater progress towards national reconciliation', called 'for the release of those placed under detention and for effective dialogue with all parties concerned' and agreed 'on the need to preserve ASEAN's credibility as an effective regional organisation by demonstrating a capacity to manage important issues within the region';

8. Regrets, however, that the 2006 fact-finding mission to Burma by the Malaysian Foreign Minister, mandated by the 11th ASEAN Summit, has not yet resulted in more robust measures against the military junta in Burma and trusts that these will be forthcoming;

9. Urges the Council and the Commission to continue their constructive relationship with ASEAN countries and to ensure that the EU-ASEAN free trade negotiations are used as a vehicle to increase pressure on the SPDC to establish a civilian and democratic government;

10. Regrets that the Burmese Foreign Minister, Nyan Win, was permitted to attend the eighth ASEM Foreign Ministers' meeting in Germany this year, only days after the military junta in Burma had extended the illegal house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for another year; recalls that Nyan Win is on the list of Burmese individuals subject to the EU travel ban and calls on the EU Member States to implement the EU travel ban more rigorously;

11. Insists that the International Atomic Energy Agency subject any nuclear research reactor in Burma to comprehensive safeguards, in order to ensure that any civilian nuclear programmes are not diverted to military purposes, and calls on the Burmese regime to fulfil its obligations under the nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty;

12. Urges China and India to use their considerable economic and political leverage with the Burmese regime to bring about substantial improvements in that country and, in any case, to cease the supply of weaponry and other strategic resources;

13. Calls on businesses which invest in Burma to ensure that their projects are carried out in a manner which respects genuine human rights and, if human rights abuses do occur, to suspend their activities in Burma; expresses disappointment that some countries have seen fit to increase substantially their investments in Burma, regardless of the dire human rights situation there;

14. Welcomes the renewal of EU targeted sanctions but recognises that they have failed to achieve the desired impact on those directly responsible for the suffering of the Burmese people; calls on the Council to ensure that all Member States rigorously apply existing restrictive measures;

15. Calls on the Council to expand the scope of the sanctions and to enlarge the list of those targeted, so that it includes all SPDC ministers, deputies, members, supporters and workers, in addition to their family members, and businessmen and other prominent individuals associated with the regime;

16. Notes that, in accordance with the Council Common Position 2006/318/CFSP of 27 April 2006(5) renewing restrictive measures against Burma, support is limited to humanitarian aid and assistance for those most in need; insists that all aid destined for Burma must be delivered through genuine NGOs and must reach the people for whom it is intended, with the least possible involvement of the SPDC;

17. Suggests in this context that all possible efforts be made to enhance contacts and to design programmes focusing on Burmese civil society, notably women's groups and ethnic minorities;

18. Regrets that China and Russia, supported by South Africa, vetoed a UN Security Council draft resolution on Burma on 12 January 2007 and calls on the UN Security Council to redouble efforts to obtain unanimous backing for a binding resolution requiring the release of political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi;

19. Welcomes the appointment of Ibrahim Gambari as Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Burma, which comes at a critical juncture in the UN's approach to Burma, and calls on the SPDC to fully cooperate with the UN and not to obstruct its work;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the governments of the ASEAN nations, the National League for Democracy of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Government of the People's Republic of China, the Government of India, the Government of Russia, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency

In the German Parliament

Unofficial translation

Motion of the Bundestag to strengthen the EU Common Position

The Bundestag asks the Federal Government to

1. Demonstrate solidarity with the imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and to call on the Burmese government to release her.
2. Insist on a critical evaluation of the current EUCP until the next adoption of the Common Position of the EU and to consider in this connection
 - to impose a travel restriction to more members of the military regime, representatives of the economic sector as well as their relatives,
 - to add government-owned companies to the list of private companies with affiliations with the government which will not get no credits from the EU to undertakings that are connected to or even owned

by the Burmese government

- and to freeze private and state assets of government representatives and close allies.
- 3. To make clear to the Burmese government that respect for human dignity is an indispensable precondition to ease the common position of the EU, but that the German government would be willing to do so after tangible progress in the area of human rights.
- 4. To reveal the willingness to support the development of an democratic and constitutional state and to emphasise that progress in this area immediately will have an effect on better cooperation.
- 5. To clarify towards the ASEAN-States, that the government hopes that ASEAN could positively influence a democratic process through Burma's embedding into the ASEAN.
- 6. To urge the Asian partners – despite its economic interests - not to give military support to Burma, but to push for a reconciliation process between the government and the armed groups.
- 7. To alert within the framework of the United Nations that the common responsibility of all members for a peaceful development does not exclude Myanmar despite its chosen isolation.
- 8. To inform the German Bundestag about the efforts being undertaken previous to the next review of the EU common position.

Berlin, **12 June 2006**

Guido Westerwelle and FDP-fraction

in Parliament in Canada

Canadian Parliament calls for Suu Kyi's release

June 7, 2007

Ottawa – The House of Commons, in a unanimous vote yesterday evening, called for the immediate release of Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The motion stated: "That this House request that the Government of Burma release the Leader of the National League for Democracy and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, from house arrest, which has been imposed on her since 1989."

"We are very proud to announce that our motion requesting the Burmese Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest was passed with the unanimous consent of the House," said Hon. Larry Bagnell, chairman of Parliamentary Friends of Burma.

Hon. Larry Bagnell submitted the motion and secured all parties support in advance before the motion was tabled in the House.

"This may be a small step towards democracy in Burma", Mr. Bagnell continued, *"But it is a step, nonetheless, and Canada will continue to do what it can to see that it happens."*

Parliamentary Friends of Burma (PFOB) was launched in December, 2006 in support of democracy and human rights in Burma, and currently consists of 28 Members and Senators from all parties of the Canadian Parliament.

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CAMPAIGNING
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA