



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Protocol Directorate
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King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

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Mr Mark Farmaner
By email: mark.farmaner@burmacampaign.org.uk

11 October 2013

Dear Mr Farmaner,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0740-13

Thank you for your email, which we received on 13 August, requesting the following information:

*".....a breakdown of all costs incurred by the Foreign Office regarding the visit of Burmese President Thein Sein and his delegation to the UK in July 2013.
I would like copies of all invoices or any other form of bill relating to the visit, including from airlines and itemised hotel bills."*

We have undertaken a search and I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Copies of the information which can be released are attached.

However, some information in these documents has been withheld. Some of the withheld information is personal data relating to third parties. It is our view that disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) therefore apply. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which we think would be breached by disclosure in this case. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. We do not therefore have to apply the public interest test.

We also considered whether some of the information is exempt from disclosure under the international relations exemption in Section 27(1)(a) of the FOIA, as disclosure would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and Burma. Burma falls within the definition of "State" in Section 27 of the Act. The application of Section 27(1)(a) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. In this instance the public interest in withholding the information was not outweighed by the public interest in disclosing it and therefore no information has been withheld under this exemption.

In addition, we consider some of the information is exempt from disclosure under the Section 43(2) – commercial interests - of the FOIA, as disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. This exemption requires the application of a public interest test. The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the general need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. In this case, after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding a limited amount of information, outweighs the public interest in its release.

The costs incurred by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to this particular visit can be broken down as follows:

| Expenditure Type | Cost |
|--|-------------------|
| Accommodation (doc 1) | |
| Delegation (1 suite and 10 rooms). Also includes Visit Officer's room charges and per diems for room service | £18,796.33 |
| Transport (doc 2) | |
| Saloon, 3 people carriers and 1 luggage van | £4,893.20 |
| Interpretation (docs 3 and 4) | |
| Chatham House event and bilateral | £133.90 |
| Events (docs 5,6, and 7) | |
| Small reception, heritage event, hire of boat | £2581.22 |
| Printing (doc 8) | |
| Official programmes | £320.00 |
| TOTAL | £26,724.65 |

President Thein Sein was invited to the UK as a Guest of Government. For visits of this nature Protocol Directorate covers the cost of accommodation, transport and entertainment costs in the UK for the Official Delegation (President plus a maximum of ten Ministers or Senior Officials), during the official programme only. Accommodation costs for one FCO Visit Officer are also paid. International air fares for the visiting delegation are the responsibility of the government concerned.

I hope this reply is helpful and establishes what you have asked for in your FOI request. However, if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to FOI and DPA Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, K4.10-14, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH or email them at foi-dpa.imd@fco.co.uk. Please note any request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,

Wilmslow,
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Emma Vernalls

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