

**TRANSCRIPT OF DOOR-STOP INTERVIEW BY
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS GEORGE YEO
ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MYANMAR AFTER
THE ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING INFORMAL
WORKING DINNER, 20 JULY 2008**



Minister: Dear Friends, I'm back again but this time by myself. I would like to brief you on our discussion on Myanmar this evening.

Statement by ASEAN Chair.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers had a full and frank discussion on the political situation in Myanmar. They were briefed by Myanmar Foreign Minister Nyan Win on recent political developments, including the constitutional referendum in May 2008 and preparations for general elections to be held in 2010.

The Foreign Ministers expressed their deep disappointment that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's detention under house arrest had been extended by the Myanmar Government. They repeated the call by ASEAN Leaders for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political detainees, as part of Myanmar's national reconciliation process. The Foreign Ministers reiterated their view that the Myanmar Government should engage in a meaningful dialogue with all political groups, and work towards a peaceful transition to democracy in the near future.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers also encouraged Myanmar to continue working closely with the Good Offices of the UN Secretary-General and his Special Advisor Ibrahim Gambari in ensuring an inclusive process towards national reconciliation. They stressed the importance of Professor Gambari's work in helping Myanmar move forward. They welcomed the Myanmar Government's invitation last week to Professor Gambari to visit Myanmar in August 2008 and reiterated their call for Myanmar to extend its fullest cooperation to Professor Gambari. They urged the Myanmar government to give him access to senior leaders and to facilitate meetings with the widest possible range of contacts, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

On Myanmar, we discussed both the political situation which I have just issued a statement on, and also on the post-Nargis situation in the Delta. For the post-Nargis situation, the PONJA report, which is the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment Report, will be formally released tomorrow at 6pm. And since there will be a separate press conference on this, with my Myanmar counterpart, the UN Secretary-General, the incoming Thai Chair and Sir John Holmes from UN OCHA, I'm holding back that part of the discussion till tomorrow and I ask for

your patience. Thank you very much. Now if I could have questions on the political situation, then I will be happy to answer them here.

Q: What was the Myanmar Foreign Minister's reply to the call by his ASEAN colleagues for Aung San Suu Kyi's release?

Minister: Well he explained that under their law, the maximum period of detention for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is one year as approved by the Home Minister and five more years as approved by the Prime Minister as a cabinet decision, meaning a maximum of 6 years, and he told us that the 6-year limit will come up in about half a year's time.

Q: You said that the Myanmar Minister was telling you that the detention would end in about half a year's time, does that mean that Aung San Suu Kyi will be released after the end of the six years?

Minister: I'm just repeating what he told me, but I think that is not an inaccurate inference.

Q: But were the ASEAN ministers satisfied with that explanation?

Minister: On Myanmar, we have long taken a position which we knew did not have the full agreement of the Myanmar Foreign Minister. We understand the position he is in, and we agreed that in my statement to you, I should mention by name, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Thank you very much and good night.

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