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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Barran	Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office
Baroness Buscombe	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Callanan	Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Duncan of Springbank	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office
Baroness Fairhead	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Manzoor	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Whip
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development
Lord Young of Cookham	Cabinet Office Spokesperson and Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 13 February 2019

Competition and Markets Authority: Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS1295]

Lord Henley: My hon Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kelly Tolhurst) has made the following statement:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has sought a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund of £17,049,000 to ensure the CMA's relocation to new offices remains on schedule.

The CMA will only receive its voted funding for this project at the Supplementary Estimate, and consequently may only draw the related cash from the Consolidated Fund after the Supply and Appropriation Act has received Royal Assent in March 2019. This requirement has arisen because the 2018-19 expenditure for the construction works at the CMA's new offices is predominantly falling in the last quarter of this financial year.

The cash advance will ensure the project stays on track and on budget and ensure that the CMA also meets its operational needs.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £2,793,000 and capital of £14,256,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the CMA. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £17,049,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993

[HLWS1296]

Lord Bates: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

In a Written Statement on 22 March 2018 (HCWS579) I informed Parliament that the Government intended to amend the Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993 to enable the Government's agreement with Pool Re, the terrorism reinsurer, to be expanded to include business interruption losses that are not contingent on damage to commercial property. This was achieved with Royal Assent of the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act on 12 February 2019. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that businesses can continue to secure insurance against the financial costs of terror attacks, and that Pool Re can maintain its position as an example world-leading partnership between government and the insurance sector.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 13 February 2019

Accident and Emergency Departments

Asked by *Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to alleviate pressure on Accident and Emergency departments, including through the provision of alternative services, in the light of the closure of a number of walk-in clinics. [HL13455]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The NHS Long Term Plan builds on work from the *Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View*, which set out an ambition to roll out new Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) which would be open 12 hours a day, seven days a week and be integrated with local urgent care services. UTCs will provide a consistent level of care for patients to be seen in clinically appropriate settings, without the need to attend an accident and emergency (A&E) department. The Long Term Plan states that there are currently 110 UTCs in operation.

Services that will not become UTCs may become a general practitioner (GP) Access Hub or another non-urgent primary and community care service. Where services are closing or changing function the guidelines in planning, assuring and delivering service change, including public consultation, will be followed as necessary.

UTCs will work alongside other parts of the urgent care network and commissioners are bringing services together to be part of locally integrated urgent and emergency care services, working together with the ambulance service, NHS111, local GPs, community pharmacists and other community-based services to provide a locally accessible and convenient alternative to A&E for patients who do not need to attend hospital.

The NHS Long Term Plan ensures that work, supported by £33.9 billion in cash terms (the equivalent of £20.5 billion in real terms) by 2023/24, will continue to reduce pressure on emergency hospital services, by expanding and reforming urgent and emergency care with the goal of ensuring patients get the care they need quickly, whilst relieving the pressure on A&E departments.

Patients are increasingly able to access urgent care outside of hospitals through services such as improved NHS111 access, UTCs and evening and weekend GP appointments.

This year the Government provided £1.6 billion to further support the NHS, allowing it to continue treating even more patients in A&E. In addition, an extra £420 million to redevelop A&Es, improve emergency care and help get patients home quicker was provided in advance of the winter period.

Asia Bibi

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the comments of Hafiz Entisha Ahmed published in the Guardian on 30 January that Asia Bibi “deserves to be murdered”; and, following the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to uphold her acquittal following nine years’ incarceration on death row, why she has not immediately been offered asylum in the UK. [HL13272]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: As the Prime Minister set out on 14 November, the release of Asia Bibi will be very welcome news to her family and to all those who have campaigned in Pakistan and around the world for her release. We welcome the assurances the Government of Pakistan has given on keeping her and her family safe, and it is important that all countries seek to uphold the rule of law and afford security and protection for the rights of all citizens irrespective of faith or belief.

It is a longstanding Government policy not to comment on individual cases. In accordance with our duty of confidentiality, we cannot confirm whether an asylum claim has been received or the outcome of such a request. Departing from this policy may put individuals and their family members in danger.

We remain deeply concerned by the misuse of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan, and the fact that religious minorities are disproportionately affected. The harsh penalties for blasphemy, including the death penalty, add to these concerns.

We regularly raise our human rights concerns with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level; and we have urged them to take steps to prevent the misuse of the blasphemy laws. My Foreign and Commonwealth colleague, the Minister of State for Commonwealth and the UN, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities with Pakistan’s Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, in September 2018. We will continue to press the new Government of Pakistan to adhere to its international obligations and uphold the rule of law.

Aviation: Norway

Asked by *Lord Beith*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what arrangements are in place to ensure the continuation of flights between the UK and Norway after the UK leaves the EU; and whether any UK–Norway air services agreement has been concluded. [HL13279]

Baroness Sugg: As part of prudent contingency planning for a no-deal scenario, officials in my Department are working closely with their counterparts in the Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications. We have agreed the detail of arrangements to ensure that, in a no deal scenario, air

services will continue to operate and we expect a deal to be signed in the next few days.

Borders: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the length of time required to trial any technological solution to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland in order to ensure its veracity prior to full introduction; and how they might evaluate the effectiveness of any such solution. [HL13277]

Lord Callanan: The Political Declaration is clear that the UK and EU should work together and exchange information on facilitative arrangements and technologies. This sits alongside the UK and the EU's existing commitment to developing alternative arrangements to replace the backstop. The Government plans to continue discussions with members from around the House in the coming days to finalise proposals with which to go back to the EU.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the current budgeting arrangements to cover Brexit arrangements provide sufficient resource to cover the introduction of a technological solution to the Irish border question; and how much they envisage that any such solution might cost on introduction. [HL13278]

Lord Callanan: The EU and the UK have agreed in the Political Declaration to work together to exchange information on facilitative arrangements and technologies. The Prime Minister will take the mandate of Parliament forward and seek legally binding changes to the Withdrawal Agreement that deal with concerns on the backstop, while guaranteeing no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

There are a number of ways to secure a backstop that Parliament can support. We are engaging constructively with the details of proposals.

Asked by Lord Dobbs

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their definition of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and whether this definition includes physical infrastructure on the border itself. [HL13385]

Lord Callanan: The Government will stand by its commitment in the Joint Report that there will be no hard border, this includes any physical infrastructure. This will allow people on either side of that border to be able to live their lives as they do now.

Asked by Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the speech by the Prime Minister on 20 July 2018 in Belfast, what assessment they have made of whether

there may be technological solutions to issues relating to the Irish border after Brexit. [HL13411]

Lord Callanan: The Prime Minister in her 5 February speech in Belfast reaffirmed the UK Government commitment to delivering a Brexit that ensures no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, including any physical infrastructure. While technology could play a part in this, and alternative arrangements are being looked at, these must be ones that can be made to work for the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Connect Airways: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Connect Airways about Connect Airways' plans to continue operating in Northern Ireland following its takeover of Flybe. [HL13563]

Baroness Sugg: The Department for Transport has not had any discussions with Connect Airways about the consortium's plans to continue operating in Northern Ireland following its takeover of Flybe.

The Department will continue to monitor the situation as it progresses, particularly given Flybe's importance to the local economy and the key role that it and regional airports play in providing connectivity and a hub for local transport.

Culture: Urban Areas

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations in the report by the Cultural Cities Enquiry Enriching UK cities through smart investment in culture, in particular the importance of (1) investment, and (2) corporate social venture funds and other city-wide philanthropy platforms, in increasing the ability of cities to use culture to drive inclusive growth. [HL13435]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: We welcome the valuable contribution of the Cultural Cities Enquiry report to the cultural sector and fully recognise the benefits that investment, alongside philanthropy, can bring to a cities cultural offer.

The Government appreciates the impact of different investment models in driving inclusive growth, and my officials will consider the recommendations set out in the report closely.

In support of the report's vision, my department has announced funding of up to £110,000 to support early adopters across England in establishing 'Culture Compacts'. These will bring together local partners to deliver a shared vision for investing in culture at a local level to drive inclusive growth. Arts Council England will begin work with the Core Cities Group and the Key Cities Group to identify a number of cities to become early adopters.

Deportation: Appeals

Asked by *Lord Green of Deddington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 13 July 2018 (HL9105), what steps they have taken to encourage the Tribunal Procedure Committee to reach a decision regarding the implementation of the Government's proposals to cap the time between an initial Home Office decision to remove a detained foreign criminal or failed asylum seeker and the conclusion of their appeal to the First-tier Tribunal. [[HL13286](#)]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Tribunal Procedure Committee is independent of government and it would be inappropriate for ministers or their officials to interfere in the Committee's decision making.

Diabetes: Medical Equipment

Asked by *Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement in November 2018 that they intend to centrally fund Freestyle Libre glucose flash monitors, what plans they have to widen access to other diabetes technologies. [[HL13294](#)]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: A range of diabetes technologies and methods of glucose monitoring, such as continuous glucose monitoring or blood glucose test strips, will continue to be available to those meeting the relevant clinical criteria.

One of the long standing and fundamental principles of the National Health Service is that the best way to address local challenges is through clinically-led decision-making, as close to patients as possible.

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning diabetes services. In doing so, CCGs need to ensure that the services they provide are fit for purpose, reflect the needs of the local population, are based on the available evidence, and take into account national guidelines. This should include consideration of access to diabetes technologies such as FreeStyle Libre.

Driverless Vehicles: Buses

Asked by *Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to require a member of staff to be present on driverless buses. [[HL13326](#)]

Baroness Sugg: The Government expects matters such as this to be considered in the Regulatory Review announced as part of the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge. The Law Commission's current automated vehicle project will look at the safe deployment of automated vehicle mobility services in the UK.

Any decision will be informed by these reviews as well as real-world experiences such as the CAV Forth automated bus pilot service in Scotland. As set out in the

Code of Practice, the trialling of any level of automated vehicle technology on the UK's public roads is possible, if the trial is conducted in line with UK law. This includes having:

- a driver, in or out of the vehicle, who is ready, able and willing to resume control of the vehicle;
- a roadworthy vehicle; and
- appropriate insurance in place.

Falkland Islands: Exports

Asked by *Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportion of Falkland Islands (1) agricultural, (2) fishery, and (3) meat products that are exported to EU27 markets. [[HL13402](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The EU is the destination for 94 per cent of the Falkland Islands' exports of fisheries products, all of which land in Spain. In 2017, 288,373 tonnes of fish (with a customs value of €139 million) were imported into Spain from the Falkland Islands. Two thirds of the Falklands' meat exports go to the UK, and the rest to the EU27. In 2016, the EU27 also accounted for approximately 75 per cent of the Falkland Islands' wool exports.

Asked by *Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the Falkland Islands fishery exports to EU27 markets if World Trade Organisation tariffs were imposed; whether they estimate that there would be an annual loss to that industry; and if so, what they estimate such a loss would be. [[HL13403](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The majority of the Falklands' fisheries exports consists of Loligo squid. The EU's non-preferential import duty on such squid stands at six per cent. A small proportion of the Falkland Islands' other fisheries exports may face duties of up to 18 per cent. Such tariffs could, according to the Falkland Islands' own calculations, result in reduced profits to the industry of between £6 million and £9 million, depending on whether or not the industry passed the cost of the tariff onto the consumer or absorbed the cost of the tariff.

Asked by *Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the Falkland Islands retains tariff and quota free access to EU27 markets. [[HL13406](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is working very closely with the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) to surface their concerns and interests in relation to EU Exit. We are committed to negotiating a good deal for the Overseas Territories as part of our negotiations with the EU on the Future Economic Partnership.

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they will provide to the Falkland Islands in the event that World Trade Organisation tariffs are imposed on fishery, agriculture and meat product exports to EU27 markets. [HL13407]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Officials from Government departments are working closely with Falkland Island officials and industry so that businesses which export goods are prepared to trade with the EU, if necessary, as a non-EU associated territory. We will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders and provide support throughout the process.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Disclosure of Information

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Freedom of Information Act request to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 14 January (0045–19), whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of the report resulting from the internal investigation into the leaked Foreign Office memo ahead of the State Visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010 with the names of the officials concerned redacted together with any other information that could lead to their identification. [HL13317]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It would not be appropriate to place a copy of the report resulting from the internal investigation into the leaked Foreign Office memo ahead of the State Visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010 in the Library of the House. Doing so would breach data protection legislation as the report contains personal information about those involved. The substantial media coverage of the leak at the time means that, even if the report were redacted to remove names of those involved, their identity would be readily available through an internet search.

Gaza: Chevening Scholarships Programme

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 28 January (HL12814), how many students have left Gaza on Chevening Scholarships in the last five years. [HL13479]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The following information reflects the number of scholars who attended their Chevening interview in Gaza and whose pre-award address lists Gaza. The total number of scholars from Gaza who, in the past five years, completed a Chevening award is 23.

Breakdown by year:

2014- 3
2015- 3

2016- 4

2017- 6

2018- 7

Health Inequalities in England Post-2010 Strategic Review

Asked by Lord Smith of Leigh

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the social and economic determinants of health inequalities identified by the Marmot Review, Fairer Society, Healthy Lives, published in 2010. [HL13307]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: Fairer Society, Healthy Lives - the Marmot Review - provided a comprehensive analysis of the state of health inequalities in England, their causes, and evidence-based recommendations for action on social determinants of health. These are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These conditions are, in turn, shaped by political, social and economic forces.

The Marmot Review concluded there is a social gradient in health whereby the lower a person's social position, the worse his or her health with people in more deprived areas having shorter lives and fewer years lived 'in good health' than those in less deprived areas. The Government has fully assessed the report, and it continues to inform our approach to reducing health inequalities which is now underpinned by legal duties.

Public Health England monitors the indicators on the social and economic determinants of health, identified by the Marmot Review, in its wider determinants of health web tool. In addition, through its Long Term Plan, the National Health Service has committed to all major programmes and every local area setting out specific measurable goals and mechanisms to reduce inequalities over the next five and 10 years. The NHS will also take action to cut smoking in pregnancy, provide outreach to homeless people and help people with severe mental illness find and keep a job.

The Mission in the Ageing Society Grand Challenge, announced by the Prime Minister last year, is to ensure that people can enjoy at least five extra healthy, independent years of life by 2035, while narrowing the gap between the experience of the richest and poorest.

This underpins the Department's prevention vision published in November 2018 - Prevention is better than cure: our vision to help you live well for longer. In it, the Secretary of State for Health sets out our mission to improve healthy life expectancy so that, by 2035, we are enjoying at least five extra years of healthy, independent life, whilst closing the gap between the richest and poorest. A copy of the report is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL13307 attached report [Prevention_is_better_than_cure_5-11.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-30/HL13307>

Hebron

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government who will observe and report on breaches of the agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel on Hebron, following Israel's decision to suspend the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron; and what assessment they have made of this decision. [HL13398]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by Israel's decision not to extend the mandate for Hebron's international monitoring mission. The mission has been in Hebron for over 20 years and fulfilled an important role in reducing tensions in the city between Israeli settlers and Palestinian communities. Our Ambassador to Israel raised our concerns over this decision with the Israeli authorities on 29 January. The Minister for the Middle East discussed our concerns with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 31 January and also expressed these concerns in a Tweet on the 2 February.

High Rise Flats: Social Rented Housing

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by the Minister for Housing on 22 January (HC Deb, col 141), what assessment they have made of the use of tower blocks for social housing. [HL13287]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We are addressing building safety concerns in light of the Grenfell Tower fire to ensure that residents of higher risk buildings are safe and feel safe now and in the future. As part of our comprehensive response to the fire we have established the Building Safety Portfolio to identify unsafe buildings, make buildings safe, identify system problems and fix the system.

The Government will fully fund the removal and replacement of unsafe Aluminium Composite Material cladding systems on social residential buildings 18m and over owned by councils and housing associations, with costs estimated at £400 million. My Department has so far allocated £248 million to replace cladding on 135 buildings. We will still accept applications from building owners who require funding.

Hospices

Asked by Lord Smith of Leigh

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to compensate hospices in order to ensure that the recent NHS pay rise and proposed pension changes do not adversely impact those hospices' ability to fund activities. [HL13304]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: In July 2018 the Department set out eligibility criteria for non-National Health Service organisations to apply for additional funding to implement the Agenda for Change (AfC) deal in 2018/19. The criteria requires non-NHS organisations, including hospices, to provide NHS services and employ existing and new staff on the AfC contract. In addition, that the NHS services they provided are funded by the Hospital and Community Health Services or Public Health Grant funding. Funding is linked to the direct costs of implementing the entire AfC pay deal which includes pay and non-pay reforms, not just headline pay.

For the final two years of the deal, 2019/20 and 2020/21, funding has been provided to NHS England as part of the Long Term Plan. While we cannot intervene in local contracting arrangements, we expect that commissioners and hospices will want to engage in conversations about how extra funding for the final two years of the deal might be passed on, on a similar 'something for something' basis which applies to directly employed NHS staff.

In addition to the long-term funding settlement for the NHS, HM Treasury committed to providing extra funding to meet the costs to the NHS arising from the ongoing actuarial valuation of the NHS Pension Scheme. Work is ongoing to ensure the additional cost to participating employers, including hospices, is appropriately funded. Discussions are underway with NHS England and NHS Improvement to determine the optimum method for distributing this funding to NHS commissioners and service providers. Arrangements will be confirmed in due course.

Asked by Lord Smith of Leigh

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they intend to provide to hospices as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. [HL13305]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: NHS England recognises that children's palliative and end of life care has not kept pace with growth in clinical care cost or inflation. NHS England's hospice grant programme currently provides £11 million a year for children's hospices, helping to provide care and support to children and their families close to home in their final days.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, subject to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) providing match funding, additional funding will be available each year for children's palliative and end of life care services, with NHS England's contribution increasing by up to £7 million a year by 2023/24. Therefore, if this is matched by CCGs, total funding will increase over the next five years to £25 million a year by 2023/24.

NHS England has also commissioned Hospice UK to undertake an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of hospice-led interventions in the community. Although there many such care models across England, there is insufficient data on what the most effective approaches are, making it difficult for CCGs to confidently commission these services. This project will examine

hospice-led initiatives that appear to be having a positive impact on where people are cared for as well as where they die. The final results are expected for publication shortly.

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to make representations to the government of Israel about (1) the violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the Ramallah-area village of Mughayyir in January, and (2) the death of Hamdi Naasan. [HL13396]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa issued a tweet on 27 January condemning the violence in the West Bank on 26 January in which Hamdi Nassan was killed. We have urged the Israeli Government to thoroughly investigate this incident and bring those responsible to justice. We have also stressed the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they are making to the government of Israel about the extension of the closure of Orient House in East Jerusalem. [HL13399]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this specific issue with the Government of Israel, we regularly make clear our serious concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities.

Kashmir

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last held discussions with the governments of both India and Pakistan in regard to the situation in Kashmir; and what action they are taking to help to build trust and peace along the Line of Control. [HL13525]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly discuss the issue of Kashmir with the governments of India and Pakistan, including in the last month. The long standing position of the UK is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution to the situation in Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. We continue to encourage India and Pakistan to keep channels of dialogue open as a means to resolving differences and to build trust and peace along the Line of Control, but the pace and scope must be for them to determine and it is not for the UK to prescribe a solution or to act as a mediator.

Military Aircraft

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, and with whom, about any cooperation between the European Future Combat Air System and the UK Tempest programme. [HL13489]

Earl Howe: We have held discussions with a number of European and other nations on future combat air systems. Effective international partnering offers the UK the best opportunity to deliver affordable military capability and our wider national objectives, while maintaining operational advantage and freedom of action.

Motorways: Cameras

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect type approval to be issued for the cameras needed to properly enforce regulations on smart motorways; and whether they intend to postpone the opening of further sections of smart motorway until such approval has been received. [HL13281]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office is working towards providing type approval for this technology.

Decisions about postponing the opening of further sections of smart motorway until such type approval is provided would be a matter for Highways England.

NHS

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the dependency of NHS England's ability to deliver its Long Term Plan on (1) Government financial support for NHS England's capital expenditure over the ten-year period of the plan, (2) the budget of Public Health England, (3) the budget available for the education and training of NHS staff, and (4) the funding available for adult social care; and when the budgets for those areas will be made known to (a) NHS England, (b) relevant agencies, and (c) both House of Parliament. [HL13428]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: We have asked the National Health Service to develop a clear implementation framework by spring, to set out how the commitments should be delivered by local systems and ensure transparency for patients and the public.

The Government recognises the importance of capital investment and public health, health education and adult social care services to the NHS. Last June the Government confirmed that to support the plan, in addition to a five-year revenue settlement the Government will:

- come forward with proposals to reform social care;
- ensure adult social care places no additional pressure on the NHS;
- ensure the public health budget supports efforts to help people live longer, healthier, happier lives;
- consider proposals from the NHS for a multi-year capital plan to support transformation and a multi-year funding plan for clinical training places, based on the workforce requirements of the NHS plan; and
- consider any proposals from the NHS for legislative changes that will help it to improve patient care and productivity, as requested by the NHS.

The future of budgets outside of the NHS England resource settlement will be confirmed later this year at the Spending Review 2019.

NHS: Drugs

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to prioritise imports of medicine in their post-Brexit trading arrangements, in the event of a no-deal scenario. [[HL13310](#)]

Lord Callanan: DHSC are working closely with life sciences industry and the NHS to make detailed plans to ensure continued access to medicines and devices in all scenarios.

We are working with industry to reroute supplies that make use of freight capacity acquired by Government. Medicines and medical products will be prioritised within this additional capacity to ensure that the flow of all these products will continue unimpeded after 29 March 2019. In addition, we are working with pharmaceutical companies to ensure that there is a minimum of six weeks additional supply of medicines in the UK, over and above existing business-as-usual buffer stocks.

NHS: Migrant Workers

Asked by *Lord Smith of Leigh*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of NHS staff, per region in England, are citizens of other EU member states; and what assessment they have made of the impact of Brexit on those employees. [[HL13306](#)]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in general practitioner surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the percentage of HCHS staff that are known to have an EU27 nationality in England and by Health Education England region, as at 31 October 2019, headcount.

Percentage of HCHS staff with an EU27 nationality

England	5%
Of which:	
Health Education East Midlands	3%
Health Education East of England	7%
Health Education Yorkshire and the Humber	2%
Health Education Wessex	7%
Health Education Thames Valley	9%
Health Education North West London	10%
Health Education South London	10%
Health Education North Central and East London	11%
Health Education Kent, Surrey and Sussex	7%
Health Education North East	2%
Health Education North West	3%
Health Education West Midlands	3%
Health Education South West	5%

Source: NHS Digital

These figures are based on nationality data held on the Electronic Staff Record. It is self-recorded, so can differ from an individual's citizenship or immigration status.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the over 63,000 European Union nationals that work in the National Health Service not only stay in the United Kingdom after we leave the EU, but feel welcomed and encouraged to do so. Part of this commitment is mitigating against any potential impact that EU exit might have on EU citizens in the UK. To help achieve this, the Home Office has opened the public testing phase of the EU Settlement Scheme. All EU nationals are eligible to apply to the scheme's public testing phase. Furthermore, to help facilitate as many applications as possible, the Prime Minister announced on 21 January 2019 that, as of 30 March 2019, all applications to the settlement scheme will be free. Additionally, where individuals have applied, or do apply, before that date, and are charged an application fee, then this fee will be refunded.

Nigeria: Violence

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Nigeria following the recent violence and deaths associated with Fulani herder militia. [[HL13498](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise our concerns about intercommunal violence with the Nigerian Government at the highest levels. Our High Commission in Abuja is engaging closely with international partners, the Nigerian Government, state governments and the

National Economic Council as measures are developed to address the underlying causes of the conflict, including the recently-announced bi-partisan National Livestock Transformation Plan.

Nurseries: Finance

Asked by Lord Ouseley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many state-maintained children's nurseries are in deficit; and what assessment they have made of the implications for the viability of such nurseries and for children's early years educational needs. [[HL13413](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Information regarding the finances of local authority-run maintained day nurseries is not held centrally. However, data on maintained nursery schools (MNS) are published as part of statistics on local authority and school expenditure. They show that in 2017-18, there were 80 MNS in deficit. Funding decisions, including the services provided, spend and how to manage deficits, are a matter for the relevant local authority and MNS to agree.

MNS make a valuable contribution to improving the lives of some of our most disadvantaged children. They experience costs that other providers do not, and we are providing local authorities with around £60 million a year in supplementary funding to enable them to protect MNS' funding.

This arrangement is due to end in March 2020, and what happens after that will be determined by the next Spending Review. Owing to uncertainty over the exact date of the Spending Review, we are considering how best to handle transitional arrangements for a number of areas, including MNS.

Philippines: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions, if any, they have had with the government of the Philippines about the proposal of the Consultative Committee to create 18 federated regions in that country. [[HL13516](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is aware of the Philippine Consultative Committee proposals to create 18 federated regions in the Philippines and notes that the proposals have not yet been passed into law by the Congress of the Philippines. We believe that constitutional matters are the remit of the Government of the Philippines.

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will call for an independent investigation of recent actions by the government of the Philippines, in particular (1) the arrest of senators Leila de Lima and Antonio Trillanes, (2) the removal of Maria Lourdes Sereno as

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and (3) in respect of journalists and news organisations. [[HL13518](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government's view on the importance of the rule of law is clear, consistent and well known in the Philippines. In August 2018, Mr Field raised our concerns with several Philippine Ministers during his trip to Manila.

In November 2018 a senior official from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office called on the Government of the Philippines to ensure thorough and independent investigations into deaths relating to the war on drugs and deaths of human rights defenders, and to commit to bringing those responsible to justice. The British Embassy in Manila consistently champions democratic values, including the independence of the judiciary and a free parliamentary opposition. Cases of harassment of high profile political opponents are regularly raised with the Government of the Philippines. We have also raised our concerns about media freedom and action taken against the media organisation Rappler. We maintain close contact with human rights groups in the Philippines and the UN on a range of human rights issues.

Police: Forensic Science

Asked by Lord Fox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, since the closure of the Forensic Science Service, how many in-house police forensic scientists have previously been police officers. [[HL13284](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not hold this information.

Railways: Leeds

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 6 February (HL13059), on how many days since 10 August 2018 have London North Eastern Railway cancelled trains in either direction between Leeds and London in addition to the pre-planned cancellations. [[HL13497](#)]

Baroness Sugg: During the period between 13 August 2018 (from whence a small number of Leeds services were removed from the timetable) until 1 February 2019 (Monday to Friday only), LNER operated the full timetable on the Leeds to London (both directions) route on 65 of the 123 days. This means that on the other 58, there was at least 1 cancellation of either a Leeds to London or London to Leeds service.

This represents an improvement in operating the full timetable on that route from 31% (in the previous 21 May to 10 August 2018 period) to 53%.

Additionally, the overall number of cancellations halved after implementing the timetable with planned cancellations meaning a more robust service offer for passengers. Between May and July 2018 so called TOC-

on-Self cancellations (ie those cancellations within LNER's control versus external factors) across all LNER services were averaging 89 per period, whilst cancellations between August 2018 and February 2019 were reduced to an average of 44 per period. The provision of extra resilience by implementing the pre-planned cancellations is ensuring a more robust and predictable service for passengers.

Russia: Cross Border Cooperation

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the State Institute of Drugs and Good Practices of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, whether they plan to cooperate with the government of Russia on other issues in the future; and if so, what are those plans. [HL13315]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Although planned high-level contact with Russia has been suspended, it remains important that we continue to engage with Russia; avoid misunderstandings; push for change where we disagree; and cooperate where it is in the UK national interest.

Rwanda: Burundi

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of tensions between Rwanda and Burundi; and what steps they plan to take in response. [HL13447]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about the tensions between Rwanda and Burundi and urge restraint by all parties involved. Regional stability is crucial to improving development and prosperity within the region.

The UK High Commissioner to Rwanda and Ambassador to Burundi, as well as the UK Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, have both recently discussed regional tensions with Rwandan and Burundian counterparts. We continue to raise our concerns regarding political stability in Burundi at the UN Security Council, and work closely with bilateral and multilateral counterparts to promote stability in the region.

Schools: Hate Crime

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle hate crime in schools; and what assessment they have made of the recent incident of vandalism at Bahr Academy. [HL13531]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Hate crime has no place in our society and no child should live in fear of racism or bullying. Schools must promote our shared values, which include mutual respect and tolerance for those with

different faiths and beliefs, and they must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act. Schools must also have a behaviour policy which includes measures to prevent bullying.

Recent research commissioned by the Department for Education details common strategies that schools have found to be effective for combating bullying. The department is funding a number of projects to help schools tackle bullying, including hate-related bullying, and recently published the attached 'Respectful Schools Communities' toolkit, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline.

The department is also taking forward a number of commitments in the government's attached 'Hate Crime Action Plan' to support the sector to tackle and prevent prejudice and hate-related issues, as well as in the attached 'Integrated Communities Strategy' to support integration and community cohesion.

Vandalism of any kind is unacceptable, and where a school is vandalised, the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount. We are aware of the incident at Bahr Academy. We have liaised with the local authority and stand ready to work with partners and assist the school in any way we can.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL13531_Hate_crime_action_plan_2018
[HL13531_Hate_crime_action_plan_2018.pdf]

HL13531_Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Government
[HL13531_Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Government_Response.pdf]

HL13531_Respectful_schools_signposting_tool
[HL13531_Respectful_schools_signposting_tool.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-06/HL13531>

Schools: Vocational Education

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many schools and multi-academy trusts the Secretary of State for Education intends to write to in order to remind those schools and trusts of the legal obligation under the "Baker Clause" of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 to allow technical education providers access to speak to students. [HL13485]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: It is important that young people are able to find out about all of the options available to them, including doing an apprenticeship or going to a further education college. This is why we have introduced a new law, commonly known as the Baker Clause, which requires all maintained schools and academies to make sure that there is an opportunity for a range of education and training providers to contact pupils from year 8 to year 13 for the purpose of informing them

about approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships.

A year on from the Baker Clause being introduced, we know that too many providers are still being blocked from going into schools to speak to pupils and we are determined to address this. In January 2019 my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Skills and Apprenticeships, wrote to five of the largest multi-academy trusts that have not yet published arrangements for provider access on all of their academy websites to ask them to take action to comply with the law. We will shortly write to all local authorities to remind them of their role in making sure that all maintained schools in their area are compliant with the Baker Clause.

We are prepared to act on evidence of serious non-compliance by maintained schools and academies. We continue to encourage providers to report any difficulties that they are experiencing in accessing local schools to talk to pupils about their technical education or apprenticeships offer.

Service Industries

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve growth in the UK services sector. [HL13474]

Lord Henley: The Professional and Business Services (PBS) sector contributed £199.3bn, almost 11%, of UK GVA in 2017, and the financial and insurance sectors contributed £131bn. From 2010 to 2017, annualised GVA growth in PBS was 5.5% which exceeded total UK growth (2.0%) by 3.5 percentage points. The Government is committed to ensuring the sector continues this success.

The industry-led Professional and Business Services Council (PBSC) is made up of representatives from the PBS sector, and has a number of working groups focusing on important issues and opportunities for growth in the sector. The council also contributes to Government reviews and consultations such as the Blackett Review - Services Transformed: Growth Opportunities for the UK Service Economy, a report by the UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser. The council is a well-established and respected forum that informs and challenges government on key issues facing the sector.

Further, the Government is helping the sector to innovate and grow through a number of initiatives. Firstly, in April last year, my rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced £20 million from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to help the service industry take advantage of new technologies. £3 million of this fund was allocated to projects in November last year and the rest of the fund will be allocated to further support the sector in due course.

Secondly, the Secretary of State has invested £10 million in regulator-led initiatives to support new products and services to come to market through the

Regulators' Pioneer Fund, as part of the Government's commitment to creating the regulatory environment for innovation to thrive. Projects include a Solicitors Regulation Authority-led initiative to support the development of ethical AI-powered legal services and a Financial Conduct Authority-led project to scope a single access point for innovators looking to test new services that involve multiple regulators.

Social Media: Children

Asked by Lord Ouseley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to introducing penalties to prevent social media operators from publishing, or failing to remove, content which is harmful to children's health and well-being. [HL13412]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The Government's forthcoming Online Harms White Paper will set out plans for legislative measures to ensure platforms take adequate steps to protect their users, particularly children, from online harms.

Social Media: Standards

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to work with social media companies to help improve online fact-checking mechanisms. [HL13477]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The Government is committed to maintaining a news environment, both online and offline, where accurate content can prevail. We regularly meet with the major social media companies to discuss their progress in tackling disinformation on their platforms including their use of fact-checking mechanisms.

We are exploring options for addressing disinformation in the Online Harms White Paper, to be published shortly. The White Paper will set out legislative and non-legislative measures to tackle a wide range of harms and set clear responsibilities for social media companies to protect their users.

Social Services

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord O'Shaughnessy on 5 December 2018 (HL11677), whether they plan to publish their considerations on the findings of the Local Government Association green paper for adult social care and wellbeing, published in November 2018; and if so, when. [HL13302]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The Government will consider closely the findings of the

Local Government Association's report as we bring forward proposals to reform the social care system.

In the development of the Green Paper on Adult Social Care we have noted the important contributions made by a number of recent reports, including the Local Government Association's report. The Green Paper will be published at the earliest opportunity.

Sudan: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister of State for Africa on 28 January (211702), what was the Sudanese Foreign Minister's response to the concerns the Foreign Secretary raised in the 22 January meeting about the need for an end to violence and for political reform; and what steps they are taking to promote human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, in Sudan since the fifth meeting of the biannual UK–Sudan strategic dialogue on 24 April 2018. [[HL13380](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: When she met the Sudanese Foreign Minister on 22 January, the Minister for Africa communicated the UK's concerns about the Sudanese government's response to recent protests, emphasising the importance of the rule of law and human rights. The Sudanese Foreign Minister registered the depth of these concerns and set out his assessment of the economic challenges that had initiated them. We have continued to raise human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, regularly with the Government of Sudan at all levels. I visited Sudan in September 2018 and raised religious freedoms with senior members of the government, as well hearing directly from a number of religious leaders. I also raised the need for action to address these issues with the Sudanese delegation in the margins of the biannual UK–Sudan strategic dialogue in November 2018. Most recently we supported an event in Khartoum on 29 January with the Bishop of Leeds to press for greater religious freedoms, after which the Government of Sudan announced the dropping of restrictions on school opening hours at weekends, a priority freedom of religion issue.

Syria: Al Qaeda

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Syria about the action it will take, other than military intervention, to deal with the presence of al-Qaida-affiliated fighters in Idlib province. [[HL13358](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have no diplomatic engagement with the Syrian regime, responsible for the tragedy in Syria, and therefore we have had no recent discussions with them about Idlib or any other subject.

Syria: White Helmets

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the capture of Idlib province by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), whether they will cease supporting the White Helmets operating in areas of Idlib under the control of HTS. [[HL13355](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We will continue our support to the White Helmets in Idlib. In a statement on 22 January, the White Helmets made clear that recent changes in control in Idlib had not affected their ability to continue their humanitarian work with independence and neutrality. As with all our work, we have extensive controls in place to ensure that our aid reaches those who need it and that it does not benefit extremists or terrorist groups.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the White Helmets may be cooperating to stage fake chemical attacks in Syria. [[HL13356](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We assess these claims, made by the Russian state, to be baseless and absurd. The concerted Russian disinformation campaign, including insinuations about the White Helmets, is a desperate attempt to deflect attention from the appalling crimes of the Asad regime, including its repeated use of chemical weapons.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they offer the White Helmets in Syria. [[HL13357](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has provided £38 million from the Conflict Pool and its successor, the Conflict Stability and Security Fund, to support the White Helmets over the past five years. This assistance, delivered through trusted third party implementers as part of a coordinated international programme of assistance, has provided training and equipment to support the White Helmets' vital civil defence work.

Trade Agreements

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the length of time that will be required to conclude new global trade deals after Brexit. [[HL13308](#)]

Baroness Fairhead: Our priority is to be in a position to begin formal negotiations with key partners after we leave the EU, and to then make progress towards substantive deals, so long as such deals work for the whole of the UK. We have consulted on our first four potential free trade agreements (FTAs), with Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Comprehensive

and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). We will publish the government's response to these consultations before any negotiations begin.

Trade agreements vary in shape, scope and form. There is no "average" timeframe for a deal. For example, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada took seven years to negotiate, the China-Switzerland FTA took two, but the USA-Jordan FTA negotiations only four months. The government is clear that its objective is to negotiate the best possible free trade agreements for the whole of the UK. Necessarily, this will take different amounts of time to conclude with different partners.

Trade Agreements: USA

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to implement more flexible trading standards to secure a bilateral trade deal with the United States in the (1) food, (2) agriculture, (3) health, and (4) technology sectors. [HL13311]

Baroness Fairhead: The Government is preparing for an ambitious programme of trade negotiations and enhanced market access, including potentially opening formal negotiations for a new free trade agreement with the US. We have conducted a 14-week long public consultation on a potential future trade agreement with the US and will respond in due course.

There is substantial complementarity between the UK and US economies, notably on trade in services. We have been clear that any future trade agreements must work for UK producers, businesses, and consumers, and uphold the UK's high levels of food safety, animal welfare standards, and environmental protection.

USA: Rights of Accused

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have made to the government of the United States about (1) the sentencing, age and state of health of Krishna Maharaj, and (2) the detention of Saifullah Paracha, who is reportedly in poor health, in Guantanamo Bay without charge or trial. [HL13395]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Her Majesty's Government has made numerous representations to the United States government over a number of years about Mr Maharaj's case, most recently when our Ambassador, Sir Kim Darroch wrote to the Attorney General of the United States, Jeff Sessions, on 13 February 2018.

The UK's long-standing position remains that the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay should close. We continue to engage with the US government on this issue, as we do on a range of national security issues.

Venezuela: Politics and Government

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have had any discussions with the government of Russia about its approach to the political crisis in Venezuela. [HL13288]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are working closely with EU partners, regional organisations such as the Lima Group and like-minded international partners to ensure a peaceful resolution to the current crisis and a return to democracy. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials met a representative of the Russian Embassy on 29 November 2018.

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the aim and purpose of their current policy in regard to the political situation in Venezuela; and when a UK Government representative last met the Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó. [HL13290]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are working closely with EU partners, regional organisations such as the Lima Group and like-minded international partners to ensure a peaceful resolution to the current crisis and a return to democracy. We urge all Venezuelans to recognise Juan Guaido as the constitutional interim President of Venezuela until new presidential elections that are free and in accordance with international democratic standards are held.

On 30 January, the Foreign Secretary spoke with Mr Guaido. Our Ambassador in Caracas, together with other EU Ambassadors, met Mr Guaido on 26 January.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are providing to enable Juan Guaidó to become the interim President of Venezuela. [HL13312]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are working closely with EU partners, regional organisations such as the Lima Group and like-minded international partners to ensure a peaceful resolution to the current crisis and a return to democracy. We urge all Venezuelans to recognise Juan Guaido as the constitutional interim President of Venezuela until new presidential elections that are free and in accordance with international democratic standards are held.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister has received a letter dated 26 January from Juan Guaidó, President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, relating to a request to halt financial transactions from the Bank of England to Venezuela; and if so, what will be their response. [HL13313]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I can confirm that Mr Guaido wrote to the Prime Minister and the Governor of

the Bank of England on 26 January. The Bank of England is an independent institution. Decisions about such issues are a matter for the Bank of England.

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