

# **SIN SG Facilitates new UK-SG MOU in Digital Government Services**

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After 3 years of facilitation and support, SIN Singapore has brokered the partnership between the UK's Government Digital Service (GDS) and Singapore's GovTech Agency (GovTech) – with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their collaboration in the design and delivery of digital government services. Under the MoU, GDS and GovTech will share knowledge and best practices in building the digital skills of government officials, and adopting open standards for government information, data and software.

## **The digital age**

Digitalisation is omnipresent in our lives today. Use of the internet and electronic devices have gone from what was once a privilege to a daily necessity. Manufacturers, service providers, and governments have to adapt to the rapidly evolving technological landscape of this new digital age. UK's GDS is a world pioneer in introducing digital government services, and has influenced many other countries to develop their own capabilities in digital governance over the last decade. Spearheaded by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore's Smart Nation programme incorporates digital government services as is one of six national initiatives to support better living using technology.

## **Developing the digital government partnership**

GDS's leadership in this space is internationally recognised just as Singapore's speed in developing and implementing new initiatives is unparalleled. With both countries recognising the importance of providing digital government services and keen to explore collaborations in this space, SIN Singapore facilitated and supported a number of initiatives to drive this interest. These included high-level introductions (co-ordinating visits to Singapore and the UK), securing UK participation in the annual Digital Government Exchange hosted by GovTech, and working with GovTech to organise a lecture by the Director General of GDS for the Singapore Smart Nation Speaker Series. All these endeavours culminated in the signing of an MoU in London in June 2019.

## MoU and beyond

Signing this MoU is a significant milestone in cementing the UK-Singapore partnership in digital government. Not only is this the first international agreement that GovTech has signed, but more importantly, the MoU is well placed to herald new opportunities for the two countries to deepen collaboration on their digital academies, digital identity projects, and the development of new and better digital government services for citizens. A great start and an exciting new milestone under the SG-UK Partnership for the Future.

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## Financial Policy Committee – membership update

The Treasury has confirmed today (6 August 2019) that Dame Jayne-Anne Gadhia will be withdrawing from her appointment to the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee (FPC).

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## The Import of and Trade in Animals and Animal Products (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2019

The purpose of this instrument is to make technical operability changes to parts of retained EU legislation relevant to the import of animals and animal products, in order to assist with the interpretation of cross-referenced Directive provisions. This will provide additional legal clarity.

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## UK joins international maritime security mission in the Gulf

The United Kingdom has reaffirmed its commitment to freedom of navigation and

safe passage through the Gulf by playing a leading role in a new international maritime security mission, announced today. The mission will see the Royal Navy working alongside the US navy to assure the security of merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

Events in the Gulf over the last four months, including attacks on four tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and the illegal seizure of the British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero, have seen the threat to commercial shipping rise. The Strait of Hormuz is the busiest narrow shipping passage in the world and a vital transit zone with 20% of the world's oil passing through it every year.

Following constructive discussions at an international conference in Bahrain last week (31st July), the UK has agreed to join an international mission which will largely draw on assets already in the region to increase inter-state maritime cooperation. The UK has also offered to lead one of the mission's Maritime Task Groups.

While exact operational details are being determined, the mission is intended to improve coordination between different countries' militaries and commercial shipping. Both the UK and US are committed to working with allies and partners to encourage others to join and broaden the response to this truly international problem.

The UK has dedicated to doing all it can do defend freedom of navigation, which is crucial for the global trading system and world economy. This new coordinated effort will bolster the work the UK has already being undertaking to this end, including through HMS Duncan and HMS Montrose accompanying UK-flagged ships. At the same time, the Government remains committed to working with Iran to reduce the current tensions and to the Iranian nuclear deal as the best means of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK is determined to ensure her shipping is protected from unlawful threats and for that reason we have today joined the new maritime security mission in the Gulf.

Upholding international maritime law and freedom of passage is in all our interests. We are seeing, across our seas and oceans, too many incidents that seek to challenge such freedoms. The UK is proud to be partnering with other members of the international community to uphold the rules based approach. The deployment of Royal Navy assets is a sign of our commitment to our UK flagged vessels and we look forward to working alongside the US and others to find an international solution to the problems in the Strait of Hormuz.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

It is vital to secure the freedom for all international shipping to navigate the Strait of Hormuz without delay, given the increased threat. This deployment will reinforce security and provide reassurance for shipping. Our aim is to build the broadest international support to uphold freedom of navigation in the region, as protected under international law.

Our approach to Iran hasn't changed. We remain committed to working with Iran and our international partners to de-escalate the situation and maintain the nuclear deal.