

Press release: Minister focuses on media freedom and economic progress in Bangladesh

During his two-day visit, which included a roundtable with senior editors to discuss media freedom in Bangladesh, the Minister warmly praised Bangladesh on its continued economic growth, including its transition toward a Middle Income Country, with Britain playing a leading role in Bangladesh's economic development as the second-largest foreign investor, and also supporting the country through the UK aid programme.

He thanked Prime Minister Hasina for her government's efforts in dealing with the Rohingya crisis and discussed the potential options for dialogue with Burma that would allow the Rohingya to begin returning home.

The Minister cautioned that economic progress could be undermined unless steps are taken to improve democratic governance and accountability in Bangladesh, including the need for rigorous challenge from an effective political opposition and a free press.

As well as hearing from editors during the media roundtable about journalists' concerns in relation to the Government of Bangladesh's Digital Security Act, the Minister also visited the office of the Prothom Alo newspaper, whose website is accessed by 1.6 million visitors from over 200 different countries.

Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, said:

Bangladesh has been making great strides and I was pleased to discuss with Prime Minister Hasina how our two countries can strengthen our already deep links.

As well as our enduring people-to-people links, we are working together to combat human trafficking and through the Commonwealth on a variety of mutual issues from climate change to trade.

But as a true friend of Bangladesh, we stand ready to address issues around democratic governance and accountability, where we believe the government of Bangladesh must do more for its people to flourish and reach their full potential.

During the visit, the Minister also attended a British Council roundtable event and discussed how UK universities and local providers can increase the pace of co-operation to ensure UK degree programmes can be run in Bangladesh through branch campuses and provide greater choice to students in Bangladesh.

Press release: MOD launches £2m fund to counter drones threat

The [competition](#), run by the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), the MOD's innovation hub, will seek robust and cost-effective next-generation solutions to the risks posed by hostile UAS.

The MOD is looking to develop new defensive capabilities which draw upon autonomous decision-making mechanisms and networked sensing systems capable of detecting, tracking, identifying and defeating hostile UAS over complex and varied environments.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

As the security threats from hostile drones are evolving at pace, it's critical that our armed forces benefit from the very latest technology to stay ahead.

This competition will draw on the brightest and best of our defence industry to find innovative solutions that will ensure we are protected in the years to come.

The competition is the latest stage in Defence Science and Technology Lab's (Dstl) ongoing research programme into Countering UAS which has been running for ten years.

This programme has included the extensive research, testing and evaluation of the counter-UAS technology currently employed by the MOD, including the landmark series of ['Bristow'](#) trials with industry in 2013, 2015 and 2018.

Dstl's Principal Engineer, David Lugton said:

Hostile UAS is a challenging threat in many different ways and requires cutting edge technology and well-thought-out system approaches to counter it effectively. Through this competition we are looking to inspire and develop a range of solutions to mitigate the threat posed by UAS now and in the future.

Among the technologies we're looking for, we'd be interested in those which can detect and track multiple threats simultaneously, with minimal human oversight, and against a broad spectrum of UAS types.

We're also interested in Counter-Unmanned Air Systems which can overcome the challenges posed by line of sight blockages, collateral, and ones which can link systems together to improve understanding of the local "drone air picture".

Today's call is focused on tackling the challenges of current and future UAS capabilities, in particular:

- Next-generation Counter-UAS technology – new technological solutions to provide robust and cost effective sensing and defeat options.
- Flexible Counter-UAS technology – programmes capable of bringing counter-UAS technologies together and linking with other surveillance systems and cooperative drone awareness systems.
- Countering Future UAS Systems – developing capability to detect and mitigate threats from UAS acting autonomously, in swarms and in highly congested airspace.

Phase 1, which will deliver proof of concept of the proposals, will be worth approximately £800k and is scheduled to take place from July 2019 to March 2020. The total funding for the competition is expected to be at least £2m, split over multiple phases.

The full competition document can be found [here](#).

[Press release: Fishing rod licence funds invested in healthy fish stocks & fisheries](#)

The Environment Agency has released its Annual Fisheries Report 2017-18 providing anglers with details of how their fishing rod licence money is spent.

Press release: Fishing rod licence funds invested in healthy fish stocks & fisheries

More than a million fishing licences were sold in 2017/2018 raising £23 million and this funds most of the fisheries work carried out by the Environment Agency.

The [Annual Fisheries Report 2017-18](#) highlights all of the Environment Agency's work for fisheries and anglers including the effort we have been putting into our enforcement activity.

In 2017-18 we checked the licences of nearly 65,000 anglers, responded to 569 reports of illegal fishing and conducted 2257 successful prosecutions.

In 2017-18 sales of fishing licences also funded:

- Installing 61 fish passes opening up 1,128km of habitat for fish
- Invested in 339 Fisheries and Angling Improvement projects involving 347 partners
- 37,000 fishing lessons for juniors and families to increase participation
- £3.2 million invested in fisheries projects
- More than 350,000 fish for restocking into rivers raised at the National Fish Farm
- The National Fisheries Laboratory assessed fish from 56 stillwaters collected by EA officers at incidents
- Supporting the Riverfly Partnership monitoring macroinvertebrates at 1850 sites
- Work with the Angling Trust Volunteer Bailiff Service to reduce the likelihood of people risking fishing without a licence, providing training and support for more than 400 Voluntary Bailiffs.

Environment Agency Deputy Director for Fisheries Kevin Austin said:

Income from fishing licence sales is used to fund our work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

Fishing rod licence income is vital for so much of the work we do including fisheries enforcement, fish rescues, restocking, improving habitats for fish and facilities for anglers as well as working with partners to encourage people to give fishing a go.

Annual fishing licences are available from only £30. To enjoy fishing and make sure you fish legally just go to [gov.uk get a fishing licence](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence)

News story: Mal Singh takes over as BPDTS Ltd's Finance Director

Mal joins BPDTS having been the Deputy Finance Director for Digital Group at the Department of Work and Pensions. He has held a number of senior finance roles across DWP Finance Group and Operations. Prior to this he spent 6 years at HM Treasury leading on the professionalisation of Whitehall's finance functions and managing the community of qualified accountants and trainees across government. He has also worked in a number of finance roles in HMRC and the Department of Health.

Mal Singh

Talking about the new role, Mal said:

I'm absolutely delighted to be joining BPDTS at such an exciting point in the company's evolution. I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to use my skills to help improve digital experiences of millions of UK citizens, and make a difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Loveday Ryder, BPDTS's Chief Executive Officer, when talking of Mal's appointment, said;

I'm delighted that Mal has agreed to become BPDTS's Finance Director. He brings a huge knowledge of both his finance profession and the workings of government. I'm very much looking forward to working alongside him to deliver our organisation's goals and ambitions. I'd also like to publically thank Paul Greening, our former Finance Director who has recently retired, for all of his hard work in establishing and making our company the success it is today.