

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the Pakistan election

I congratulate the millions of voters who participated in Pakistan's elections on 25 July. The people of Pakistan have shown they will not be cowed by the terrorists who seek to disrupt the democratic process. I extend my deepest condolences to those affected by recent attacks.

This is an important moment for democracy in Pakistan, marking an unprecedented second successive transfer of power from one full-term civilian government to another.

I welcome the initial findings from international and domestic observers. Running elections in a country of 208 million people is a challenging and complex task. The Election Commission of Pakistan should be commended for its work to improve accountability, transparency and inclusiveness.

Like the election observation missions, we are also concerned about reports of pressure on the media and the number of parties with links to proscribed groups who preach violence and intolerance. Jinnah's vision of a tolerant, pluralist Pakistan remains central to a stable and cohesive society.

It is now for Pakistan's elected representatives to work together to ensure a successful transition. I hope all sides will resolve any disputed results peacefully and in accordance with Pakistan's electoral laws.

The UK and Pakistan enjoy a longstanding partnership, underpinned by strong links between our people. We look forward to continuing our work with the new federal and provincial governments. The people of Pakistan can be certain of UK support to build the democratic, secure and prosperous future they deserve.

Press release: UK to double support for Palestinian economy to advance peace with Israel

The UK Government is set to more than double its support for economic development in Gaza and the West Bank to create the necessary conditions for lasting peace between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The new UK aid programme will help create hundreds of jobs, install vital water and electricity infrastructure, and boost exports to Israel, the UK and

beyond, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt announced today (Friday 27 July). The announcement will see the UK provide up to £38 million over five years (2018-2023) to support economic activity in Gaza and the West Bank.

UK aid support will promote Israeli-Palestinian cooperation by lowering barriers to economic growth and improving the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority. This will include delivering significant reforms to increase the Palestinian Authority's ability to raise millions of pounds in uncollected revenues and taxes. These measures will help the Palestinian Authority to invest in vital services such as healthcare and education.

The new UK aid programme will:

- help construct the Gaza Central Desalination Plant, which will increase access to clean piped water and help replenish the Gaza aquifer, and in turn help all Gazans access clean water;
- provide finances to install solar panels for households, businesses, hospitals and public buildings so they can have a reliable, affordable and clean source of electricity;
- connect Palestinian IT firms and UK businesses to create jobs for Palestinians;
- fund experts to help the Palestinian Authority work with the Government of Israel to unblock the transfer of taxes and custom revenues estimated to be worth £220m per year from the Government of Israel to the Palestinian Authority; and
- provide technical support to help Palestinian businesses export more, including by reducing logistics costs, removing barriers to exporting and helping them meet international standards.

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, said:

A thriving Palestinian economy is crucial to achieving peace with Israel but wages in Gaza are now lower than two decades ago and Palestinians could slide even deeper into poverty without urgent action.

Our new approach to supporting the economy in Gaza and the West Bank will help create desperately needed jobs, boost exports and collect taxes so that the Palestinian Authority can invest properly in vital services such as education and healthcare. Our work will also help to create reliable electricity and clean water supplies.

As well as alleviating the urgent pressures on the Palestinian economy, this will help to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful two-state solution, which would allow Palestinians to truly prosper.

For a truly sustainable economic recovery in Gaza, we urge all parties to refrain from actions which make peace more difficult and cause unnecessary suffering. That means Hamas and other terrorist groups must cease all violent and provocative actions and Israel

must reverse its punitive measures and work with the international community to ease the difficult conditions in Gaza.

Currently only 4% of the water in Gaza is safe to drink, and insufficient sewage treatment facilities put residents at greater risk of water borne diseases – over 40 swimming pools worth of raw sewage are directed into the Mediterranean Sea every day.

The lack of affordable and reliable water supplies also has a direct impact on the economy, including by limiting the growth of the agricultural sector which has reduced the amount of available jobs and increased the cost of food.

UK aid will help to import construction materials for the Gaza Central Desalination Plant, as well as upgrading water infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank to improve drinking water supplies and reduce pollution. This will result in 55 billion litres of safe drinking being pumped into Palestinian homes and businesses in Gaza every year.

On top of this, Gazans currently receive just five hours of electricity per day on average, putting further strain on hospitals and other vital services that rely on unsustainable fuel supplies.

UK aid will help to finance solar panels for hospitals, businesses and households, increasing the availability of power as well as cleaner and cheaper alternatives to fuel-based generators.

To reduce subsidies in the electricity sector – around 5 per cent of GDP in Gaza – UK aid will help Palestinian electricity authorities to be self-sufficient by increasing the number of paying customers. This will reduce the amount spent on public subsidies and allow the Palestinian Authority to invest more in public services, such as education and healthcare.

To further boost the economy, the UK will work closely with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make it easier for Palestinians to sell their goods – including food, marble, stone and plastic products – to Israel and other countries in the region. The UK will also provide direct assistance to help Palestinian businesses reach new export markets around the world.

As well as helping the Palestinian Authority to work with Israel to unlock £220m worth of annual taxes and revenues, we will work with the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Finance and Planning so that it can take control of the collection of its own customs revenue.

Notes to editors

- The UK will provide up to £38 million over five years (2018-2023) to support economic activity in Gaza and the West Bank. This is more than double the amount of UK aid support previously provided for economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which totalled £16 million in the last five years (2013-2018).

Press release: PM meeting with Emir of Qatar: 24 July 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held bilateral talks earlier today with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at Downing Street, covering mutual prosperity, defence and security cooperation, regional stability, and wider foreign policy issues.

They agreed that the trade and investment relationship between the UK and Qatar was already strong, welcoming the fact that half of Qatar's 2017 £5 billion investment commitment had already been allocated to projects in the UK. They agreed a shared desire to see investment flows both ways continuing to grow, noting the significant commercial opportunities on offer for both countries across a wide range of sectors. The Prime Minister welcomed Qatar's commitment to continue to invest not just in London but across the country.

They agreed the bilateral defence and security relationship was also strong and growing, noting the recent £6 billion Typhoon deal. They discussed how the UK could continue to support Qatar to deliver a safe and successful World Cup 2022, with the Prime Minister highlighting our particular expertise in this area. They agreed to intensify joint counter-terrorism work, recognising the importance of tackling the root causes of terrorism including the ideology that underpins it.

They discussed a range of regional security issues and the Prime Minister reiterated our strong desire to see Gulf Cooperation Council unity restored at the earliest possible opportunity, observing that Gulf security is our security.

They also discussed Russia, agreeing on the importance of continuing to approach Russia from a position of strength and unity. They noted the particular importance of the international community continuing to work together to stand firm against malign activity, and to protect the global rules and norms.

Press release: Leader of the Commons to Chair Ministerial Group on Family Support from Conception to the Age of Two

The Prime Minister has asked Andrea Leadsom MP to chair a cross-Government ministerial group which will seek to identify gaps in available provision and make recommendations on how coordination across Departments can be improved.

Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP said: "I am delighted the Prime Minister has asked me to explore what more the Government can do to ensure we act early to help every child get the best possible start in life.

"The vital importance of supporting the first 1,001 days from conception to the age of two has been a long-standing passion of mine. A baby's earliest experiences determine their lifelong emotional health, so a secure early start can protect young people from later mental health problems and contribute significantly to reducing major social harms."

"I am greatly looking forward to exploring with ministerial colleagues what more the Government can do to improve the cradle-to-grave effects that result from better outcomes in this critical period of our lives."

The review will build on recent Government policy in this area including NHS England's Maternity Transformation Programme, expanding provision for perinatal mental health care, building parents' confidence to begin the learning process from the home, and supporting thousands of families with access to free childcare.

This includes:

- Record investment in early years education and childcare support of around £6 billion by 2020
- £365 million investment to enable 30,000 more women to access appropriate, high-quality specialist perinatal mental health care by 2020/21
- 15 hours per week of free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds – nearly 750,000 children have benefited from this support
- Ensuring parents in this critical period can benefit from up to £39 million being invested to reduce parental conflict through evidence-based intervention.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The membership of the cross-party working group will be: Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP (Lord President of the Council, Leader of the House of Commons); Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP (Chief Secretary to the Treasury); Justin Tomlinson MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance); Nadhim Zahawi MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families); Jackie Doyle-Price MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health and Inequalities); Rishi Sunak MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Local Government).
 2. For media enquiries, please contact commonsleader@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
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Press release: What the Dickens?

Author's study table at risk of export

A study table used by Charles Dickens, one of Britain's most famous novelists, is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £67,600.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on the William IV mahogany table to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

Estimated to have been made in around 1835, the round table has a revolving drum top above eight drawers and is covered in green leather. It was used by Dickens during most of his career – first in his London home at Devonshire Terrace; then his offices on Wellington Street where he published Household Words and All the Year Round; and finally in his library at Gad's Hill Place in Higham, Kent where he died in 1870.

It is also known to have contained the keys to his wine cellar, and appears to be one of the very first objects to have been formally labelled with Dickens' name; one drawer contains an oval silver plaque stating that the table stood in his library.

Experts believe that the table was bequeathed to Dickens' eldest son Charley, before it was acquired by his younger brother Sir Henry Fielding Dickens at the sale of Gad's Hill Place in 1878. It remained in the possession of Dickens' descendants until it was sold at auction in December 2017.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

As one of Britain's most famous novelists, it is only right for there to be great expectations on us to protect Dickens' study

table for the benefit of the nation.

This substantial piece of furniture was a central feature in whatever household he lived in through most of his adult life. It is another significant item related to one of Britain's cultural icons.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, administered by The Arts Council. They made their recommendation on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune due to its close connection with our history and national life.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest member Christopher Rowell said:

On one occasion, when he was abroad, Dickens precisely described this table and its position in his Library so that a friend could locate a set of keys in one of its drawers. His art criticism as well as his descriptive writing reveal his aesthetic sensibility and this elegant, if workmanlike, leather-covered mahogany library table was clearly valued by him. Its associations are of considerable interest to lovers of Dickens' novels and writings.

The decision on the export licence application for the William IV mahogany table will be deferred until 26 October 2018. This may be extended until 26 January 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £67,600.

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the table should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

Notes to editors

Details of the table are as follows:

William IV mahogany table, previously owned by Charles Dickens

Retailed or made by M. Wilson (the name impressed on one drawer)

Estimated to have been built in around 1835, London

Measured at 74cm high and 107.5cm diameter

A drawer contains an oval silver plaque which bears the hallmark of Robert Hennell, London, and the date cypher for 1873, and is engraved: 'Charles Dickens' Library Table / which stood in / his Library at Gad's Hill.'

Images of the table can be downloaded here ([insert hyperlink to the picture on flickr](#)).

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.
www.artscouncil.org.uk.