

# Press release: Lord Ahmad appointed as PM's Special Envoy to promote religious freedom

Lord Ahmad has today been appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The role, which supports the Prime Minister's commitment to religious tolerance in the UK, will allow Lord Ahmad to demonstrate the country's commitment to religious freedom by promoting inter-faith respect and dialogue internationally.

Lord Ahmad, who is also Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, will promote the UK's firm stance on religious tolerance abroad, helping to tackle religious discrimination in countries where minority faith groups face persecution.

The appointment underscores the Prime Minister's commitment to tackling religious prejudice in all its forms and follows the government's recent announcement of a further £1 million funding for places of worship that have been subjected to hate crime attacks.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Religious discrimination blights the lives of millions of people across the globe and leads to conflict and instability. Both here and abroad, individuals are being denied the basic right of being able to practise their faith free of fear.

Tolerance for those of different faiths is fundamental to our values, and is an issue I know is already of great importance to Lord Ahmad, who is constantly looking for fresh ways to promote religious liberty in his role as Minister for Human Rights at the Foreign Office.

I look forward to supporting him in this new role as he works with faith groups and governments across the world to raise understanding of religious persecution and what we can do to eliminate it.

The PM's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

In too many parts of the world, religious minorities are persecuted, discriminated against and treated as second class citizens. As a man of faith, I feel this very keenly.

Freedom of Religion or Belief is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It must be respected. People from all faiths or none should be free to practise as they wish. This respect is key to global stability, and is in all our interests.

I am delighted to have been appointed as the PM's Special Envoy. I shall use the UK Government's global network to reach across religious divides, seek the elimination of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and bring different communities together.

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## **News story: Government completes 26 major projects that deliver policy priorities and improve public services**

The IPA, which supports the delivery of a range of large government projects, has published its [latest annual report](#) on the government's most important major projects, reporting that 26 have been successfully completed this year.

Projects delivered range from transformation and ICT programmes which modernise the civil service and make public services more efficient, to infrastructure and construction projects and military capability programmes, which grow our economy, improve productivity and defend the nation.

These include:

- Childhood Flu Immunisation programme – reducing the risk of flu in vaccinated children by 66%.
- Airseeker project – three new military surveillance and intelligence aircrafts that support air and ground forces.
- Francis Crick Institute – the biggest biomedical research facility under a single roof in Europe.
- Government's role in setting up the Thames Tideway Tunnel – a major new sewer to protect the River Thames and create 4,000 new jobs.
- Hinkley Point C enabling project – securing private investment into a new nuclear plant so construction can begin.
- Hosting Services Refresh programme – a major refresh of the Department for Work and Pensions' IT system, enabling improved digital services for 22 million people.

The IPA's Annual Report provides a snapshot of how all GMPP projects were progressing as of September 2017.

The GMPP is a continually evolving portfolio of the government's most complex and high risk projects and it regularly changes to reflect government policy priorities. The current portfolio includes 133 major projects with a whole life cost of £423 billion, spread across 16 government departments.

Over half of this year's 26 completed projects received a Green or Amber Green Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) – the IPA's rating of a project's chance of success at a specific point in time. By taking the right steps following reviews and managing challenges effectively, DCAs are often improved and a project's likelihood of delivery is increased.

The IPA supports the delivery of government projects by helping to set them up for success, building delivery capability in departments and managing more than 200 independent assurance reviews of projects each year.

Cabinet Office Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden MP said:

"We are focused on building a Britain that is fit for the future and this report shows just how much we have achieved. All of these projects will improve the way we deliver public services in this country.

"Project delivery is at the heart of all government activity as it is the main way we implement our most important policy priorities. Getting these projects right is essential to build a country that works for everyone."

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick MP said:

"We are investing record amounts in crucial national infrastructure projects that are the foundation of our economy and will boost productivity.

"It's exciting to see this investment translate into real projects on the ground that will have a long-lasting impact for the public."

IPA Chief Executive, Tony Meggs said:

"The collective size and scope of these projects is impressive. It takes years of hard work from the cadre of world class project delivery professionals in government to deliver projects of this scale and complexity."

"The current portfolio of government major projects remains a broad and ambitious one. It is vital that we continue to help create the right environment for their successful delivery."

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**[Press release: Agreement signs](#)**

# development of new livestock traceability service

The initiative was instigated by key industry stakeholders and is set to be rolled out from 2019.

Activity will take place over the next few months to undertake due diligence and develop a target operating model for the new service. That detailed work will enable a final decision on whether to proceed with the collaboration to be taken in the autumn.

This development follows the [announcement](#) from Defra in April about the go-ahead of the service, providing the foundation for some of the best farm-to-fork traceability in the world. The heads of agreement was signed during a visit to AHDB's Stoneleigh Park headquarters by Farming Minister George Eustice.

Key stakeholders, represented by the Traceability Design User Group (TDUG), have been involved in developing the vision and design principles and determining how all parties can work together.

The new service will add value for the livestock sectors, as well as providing a statutory service that will better protect against disease and bolster trade negotiations.

AHDB Chief Executive Jane King said:

AHDB is in a unique position to be able to lead the collaboration between government and industry in order to deliver a future traceability service which is truly transformational.

By working closely with industry through TDUG we will ensure that the needs of the user are at the heart of the developing service, resulting in a system that delivers for farmers and processors across the livestock sectors.

As we prepare to leave the EU, a robust service delivering farm-to-fork traceability is fundamentally important to the future health of livestock farming in this country. Being able to evidence our world-leading production standards for quality meat and livestock products will continue to set us apart from our competitors.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

We have been clear from the start that we need government and industry to work together in providing this service, which is why I am pleased to see this next stage of delivery underway.

The service will be instrumental in improving traceability and ensuring we continue to provide some of the best meat and livestock products in the world.

John Cross, independent chair of TDUG, said:

It is essential that the service is delivered in partnership with industry. It must underpin on-farm productivity and enable better management of risks to animal health in order to connect our supply chain, help us to evidence our high standards of production and protect and access markets both at home and internationally.

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## **Press release: New hurricane preparedness plans for British Overseas Territories in Caribbean**

The Government has today (Wednesday 4 July) announced new measures to make sure British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean have the support they need in the event of a repeat of the devastating hurricanes which hit the region last year.

Government departments have been putting plans in place to bring together humanitarian, military support and diplomatic work under a joint unit coordinated by the Foreign Office.

These include:

- Royal Fleet Auxilliary (RFA) Mounts Bay, a Navy ship deployed to the region since 2017, will remain in the vicinity of the Caribbean throughout the hurricane season this year and also for 2019.
- Experts have been deployed to the region to lead negotiations on a number of commercial contracts, in advance of peak hurricane season, to deliver essential recovery needs.
- Military reconnaissance and analysis in the Overseas Territories, building links and familiarity with local and regional disaster management personnel, and conducting professional analysis of selected critical infrastructure.
- Plans for a multi-national coordination cell in the Caribbean to coordinate partner countries and organisations to make sure efforts aren't being duplicated across the region and to make immediate responses more efficient. The UK has coordinated meetings between representatives from the USA, Canada and the Netherlands and the

Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to ensure a joined up approach to hurricane preparedness.

- Emergency humanitarian supplies in the form of over 1000 collapsible jerry cans, 1000 hygiene kits and up to 1000 shelter kits have been pre-loaded onto RFA Mounts Bay, which will remain in the region for the hurricane season and be on hand to provide life-saving emergency assistance as required.
- DFID has also fielded a preparedness mission to the region from 5 – 17 June to coordinate UK preparations with both national and regional institutions.
- DFID has well established programmes in the poorer Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean and, in addition to humanitarian assistance, is supporting reconstruction efforts in the hurricane-affected islands of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda.
- The UK has also helped ensure all islands affected by the hurricanes last year are now insured under the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Fund (CCRIF). DFID helped establish the CCRIF which provided over \$50m of quick payouts to hurricane affected Caribbean countries and territories in 2017. This year, the UK has supported BVI and Montserrat to join as new members. This means that all of the islands affected last year are now covered.

Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Last year's hurricanes hit Caribbean British Overseas Territories and the wider region with devastating effect, uprooting lives and damaging local economies. The UK has provided critical support and help with recovery efforts and I have seen for myself the huge impact that this has had already. The UK continues to work closely with the governments of the Overseas Territories in their recovery efforts and in helping to rebuild their economies.

Moreover, we have also been working hard with key partners across the region to ensure an even more effective and strategic response in the event we see a repeat of last year's hurricane season.

International Development Minister, Lord Bates said:

The scale of last year's hurricanes was unprecedented and the UK aid mission was huge, covering small islands stretching more than 1,000 miles apart, where buildings and roads had been destroyed.

Britain continues to stand by those people whose lives were devastated. Not only have we been working with the islands' governments to make sure they are more resilient to natural disasters but we are also well prepared to respond and provide humanitarian relief if a hurricane hits again.

Minister for Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

Our Armed Forces are committed to supporting our Overseas Territories, and we have worked alongside our colleagues across Government to ensure we are fully prepared in the event of a natural disaster or other crisis. RFA Mounts Bay, which played a vital role during the 2017 hurricane crisis, remains ready in the Caribbean and will be supported by specialist forces from the UK if required.

£72m was immediately committed in September to help the Overseas Territories Anguilla, BVI and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In November, the Prime Minister committed a further £70m for reconstruction efforts and £300m of UK loan guarantees.

Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Anguilla, the Cayman Islands and Montserrat as part of a regional tour to discuss hurricane preparedness in May and will visit the region again later this month.

Hurricane preparedness was one of the key topics of discussion at the Joint Ministerial Council with the Overseas Territories in June.

**Notes to editors:**

A written ministerial statement on hurricane preparedness can be found [here](#).

**Further information**

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## **[Open consultation: Fisheries white paper: sustainable fisheries for future generations](#)**

Leaving the European Union provides an opportunity move away from the Common Fisheries Policy, to create a sustainable, responsible and responsive policies. We want to know your thoughts on the future of fisheries.

Some of the proposals outlined in this paper will apply to the whole of the UK, while some apply to England only.