

Xi stresses precision in battle against poverty

President Xi Jinping underscored the importance of precision in the battle against poverty, saying that poverty relief targets should be accomplished as scheduled.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks Tuesday during the 39th study session held by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

It is the least requirement of building an all-round moderately prosperous society and “our solemn promise” to ensure that the rural poor shake off poverty as planned, and that all poverty-stricken counties be delisted and poor areas lifted out of poverty as a whole, Xi said.

Xi said responsibilities, capital investment, grass-roots vitality and the implementation of tasks must be improved for the poverty relief targets to be met.

China has made remarkable progress in this respect. During the 2013-2016 period, 55.64 million rural people were lifted out of poverty, according to Xi.

“In the coming years, China’s poverty relief work faces a daunting task,” said Xi, since “poverty alleviation is getting more and more difficult as it nears the end.”

Poverty relief is high on China’s 2016-2020 agenda, and the government has vowed to lift everybody out of poverty by 2020.

To this end, some people living in impoverished regions will be relocated. Xi stressed that this must be done on a voluntary basis and the cost must be kept within a reasonable level.

Health and education policies must be implemented to fight poverty, with priority given to helping poor families that suffer major or chronic diseases, or have difficulties in providing schooling for their children, Xi said.

He called for greater policy support to poverty relief, including fiscal, land, financial, education and health policies.

China will apply the highest assessment standards to evaluate the success of poverty relief, Xi added.

News story: Queens Park Rangers sign the Armed Forces Covenant

The club, which has pledged to help service leavers and veterans achieve their goals and find jobs with its Community Trust work skills programme, run in conjunction with the Royal British Legion, signed the covenant during their match with fellow Covenant members Wigan on Tuesday.

The scheme, which helps personnel prepare for life after the military, has already helped half of its previously unemployed participants find work.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, who attended the signing, with the Chief of Defence People Lt General Richard Nugee, said:

It is great to see that QPR are signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The success of their employability programme shows how a football club can help service leavers and veterans improve skills and find jobs.

I encourage other clubs to support the covenant and ensure all those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

QPR have also pledged to work with the Ministry of Defence's Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to provide a career pathway for personnel leaving the Armed Forces, and to support club employees who are training or deployed as Reservists.

QPR's CEO Lee Hoos said:

I'm very proud that we are the first London club to sign the Armed Forces covenant. This will build on the strong relationship the club already has with the local Armed Forces community, including 4 PARA and the White City cadets, as well as the employability programme we recently ran with the Royal British Legion for Armed Forces veterans.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment from the nation, enshrined in law, that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

Over 1,440 businesses and organisations across the UK have already signed, making practical pledges that have made a difference across the Armed Forces community.

[Diane Abbott response to Supreme Court's judgement on legality of minimum income threshold for UK citizens who seek to bring families here](#)

**Diane Abbott MP,
Labour's Shadow Home Secretary,**

following the publication of the Supreme Court's judgement on the legality of the minimum income threshold for UK citizens who seek to bring families here, said,

"The Supreme Court accepted the legitimacy of the Government measures, but it also held that Home Office rules unlawfully fail to take account of requirements to safeguard children's welfare.

"These rules cause hardship for thousands of families, prevent UK citizens being united with their families and clearly discriminate against women, BAME communities, and people on lower incomes.

"These measures were drawn up as part of Theresa May's failed policy to reduce net migration. Labour opposes rules that are clearly discriminatory. We will implement a fair and balanced immigration system which does not split families apart."

[News story: MOD signs £146 million contract to upgrade RAF's long-range missile](#)

The shared deal with MDBA will see the UK's Storm Shadow and France's SCALP missiles updated so they remain fit for purpose and ready for operational use.

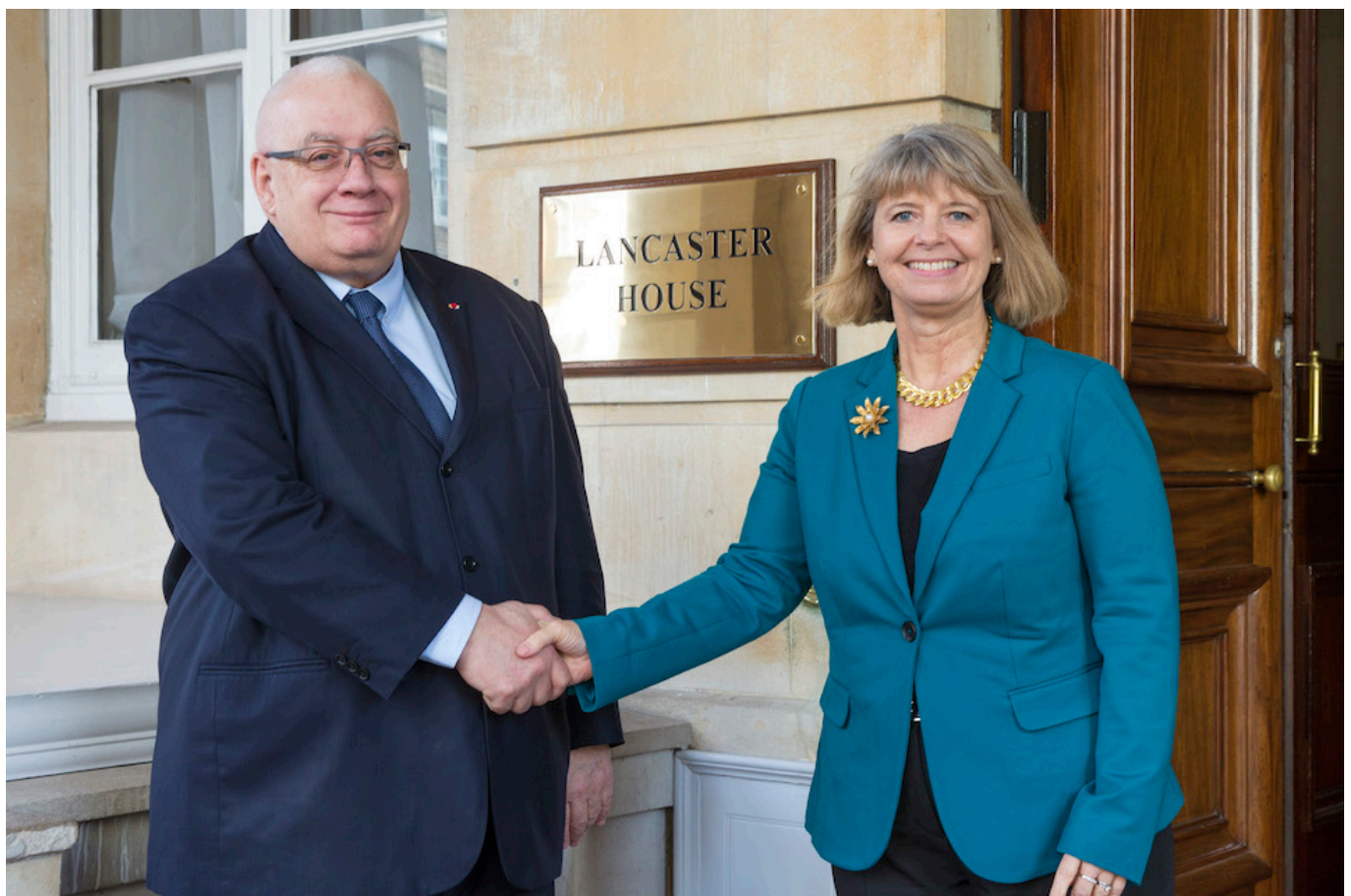
During an inward visit by Laurent Collet-Billon, the Minister confirmed the strong partnership with France in a series of meetings at Lancaster House. The collaboration is providing a £50 million saving for both sides.

The contract will keep the missile in service for the next decade and beyond and help to sustain around 60 UK jobs. Storm Shadow is a combat-proven, long-range, precision cruise missile, already in service with RAF Tornados, deployed recently against Daesh in Iraq.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin said:

Storm Shadow is a proven and vital missile for the RAF, and this £146 million upgrade will ensure it is always ready for whenever our Armed Forces might need it to defend our way of life.

This contract is an important part of the Government's £178 billion plan to ensure our armed forces have the right equipment at the right time.



Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin with her French counterpart Laurent Collet-Billon. Crown Copyright.

The midlife refurbishment programme has been developed in co-operation with the French Government who will be updating their own similar missile known as SCALP.

By taking advantage of the similarities, this collaboration not only

reaffirms the strong defence relationship as outlined under the Lancaster House Agreement, but has also resulted in a £50 million saving for both the UK and France.

The regeneration will consist of a midlife refurbishment of current missile parts such as the turbo-jet engine, an upgrade of the navigational system, and a like for like replacement of items such as the cabling, seals and gaskets.

The work will sustain around 60 jobs at MBDA in Stevenage and Bolton, in a variety of roles including software and systems engineering. Over 40 jobs will also be sustained through the supply chain.

Chief Executive at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support Organisation, Tony Douglas said:

The contract to regenerate Storm Shadow, a combat-proven, all-weather precision missile, provides a clear example of the MOD and UK industry working effectively together with our counter parts in France; providing our UK Armed Forces with the best equipment possible while sustaining dozens of UK jobs.



Two Storm Shadow missiles on a Tornado GR4. Crown Copyright.

Storm Shadow is designed to target substantial buildings and structures, such as military facilities, control centres, bunkers, missile sites, airfields and bridges, which might otherwise require the use of several aircraft over

the course of numerous missions.

France is the UK's most important European Ally, with both countries' defence budgets together account for almost half of all European defence spending. This deal is the most recent example of collaboration in a long history of cooperation on defence and security. The £146 million investment in Storm Shadow will sustain the missile until its planned out of service date in 2032.

Laurent Collet-Billon, Délégué Général pour l'Armement said:

This deep-strike missile mid-life update was jointly prepared. It represents a new step in the Franco-British cooperation roadmap and strengthens the Franco-British strategic partnership in the armament field.

UK growth accelerated in the fourth quarter of last year

The fourth quarter saw UK growth speed up to 0.7% for the three months. The quarterly pattern last year according to the ONS was 0.2% in Q1, 0.6% in each of Quarters 2 and 3, and 0.7% in Q4. The ONS says this amounts to 1.8% growth for the year as a whole, though the four quarters as reported gives you a figure of 2.1%. What is clear from these figures is the economy grew faster after the Brexit vote than before by a decent margin, the opposite of the official and expert forecasts at the time.

As the ONS rightly said "In the fourth quarter the UK experienced the strongest arte of growth among European groupings and G7 countries". Let's hope the Treasury adjust their forecasts for our economy in the Budget statement, as their recent forecasts have been far too low.