

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.

Further information