

Press release: UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Bangladesh visits Dhaka

A trade delegation of nine UK rail companies lead by Rushanara Ali MP, UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Bangladesh, has today begun a week-long tour to Bangladesh to showcase UK expertise in the rail sector and to underscore the importance the UK attaches to its trade and investment partnership with Bangladesh.

The companies accompanying the Trade Envoy on her second visit to Bangladesh in less than a year are specialists in the full spectrum of the rail supply chain from consultancy, systems design, rolling stock, and operations. Rail is an important sector for Bangladesh and the group is eager to look into areas where British expertise can help assist with existing transport initiatives that are key to the onward growth and productivity of the country.

Ms Ali also announced that UK export finance support available for UK trade with Bangladesh has increased from £ 150 million to £625 million, an increase of over 400%. This means an additional nearly £500 million capacity to help UK exporters, and their buyers in Bangladesh get access to the best quality British goods and services.

On arrival in Dhaka, Rushanara Ali said: 'Britain is keen to expand trade with Bangladesh, offering world class expertise and technology that will help the country move closer to its middle income aspiration. I'm delighted to be back in Bangladesh and I'm very much looking forward to working to strengthen and deepen our trading relationships.'

Among her engagements in Dhaka, Ms Ali will visit the Dhaka Metro rail site and attend a special British-Bangladesh rail collaboration seminar. She will also meet the Bangladesh Ministers of Commerce, Communication, Railways and Finance and State Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss future trade possibilities.

Rushanara Ali will also travel to Sylhet, the district her family comes from, to visit actual and potential areas of British investment. She will also see first-hand some of the UKAID supported programmes to help Bangladesh's development.

Expressing optimism about the second visit of the UK Trade Envoy, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Alison Blake, said:

"I am delighted that Rushanara Ali is leading a delegation of UK rail specialists. The mission is a demonstration of UK companies' willingness to learn more about the opportunities in Bangladesh and seek partnerships for the benefit of both our countries. Given the strong friendship and close ties between the UK and Bangladesh, I am confident that Rushanara Ali's visit will open up new avenues for trade."

Ms Ali will conclude her official visit to Bangladesh on September 21.

Note to Editors

The cross-party Trade Envoy programme was established in 2012 to build bilateral trade relationships and help drive economic growth in countries identified as key markets for the UK. They are unpaid positions. There are currently 24 Members of Parliament and Peers from across the political spectrum working as Trade Envoys covering over 50 different markets. All Trade Envoys are personally selected by the Prime Minister for their experience, skills and knowledge of particular sectors and countries. This is part of a new whole-of-government approach to boosting trade with priority markets and sectors.

- Rushanara Ali is the Labour Party MP for the constituency of Bethnal Green and Bow. She was first elected in 2010. She is currently a member of the Parliamentary Treasury Select Committee.
- In her Parliamentary career, she has served as Shadow Minister for Education, Shadow Minister for International Development, a member of the Parliamentary Treasury Select Committee, Parliamentary Select Committee for Energy and Climate Change, Parliamentary Select Committee on Communities and Local Government.
- The UK has strong business interests in Bangladesh and remains the largest foreign investor. Over 240 British companies are operating in sectors including retail, banking, energy, infrastructure, consultancy and education with main centres of operation in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. The UK is also the third single largest destination for exports from Bangladesh.

Press release: International Trade Secretary announces increasing financial support for UK businesses to trade with South Africa and Mozambique

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox , announced increases in financial trade support for UK businesses to trade with South Africa as he flew out to South Africa and Mozambique to discuss strengthening trade relations (Sunday 17 September).

The visit will help to further develop the good bilateral trade relationships with the South African and Mozambique governments, promoting mutually beneficial support for British investment in Africa. In 2015 trade with Africa totalled £30.8 billion and the International Trade Secretary's visit will build on the strong opportunities for trade between the UK and Africa.

Investment ties between the UK and Africa are growing with African investment into the UK increasing by 500% between 2005 and 2014, and British investment more than doubling over the same period, clearly indicating the rich range of opportunities available.

As part of the visit Dr Fox announced that UK Export Finance (UKEF), the UK's export credit agency, will double support for trade with South Africa to up to £3.5 billion, meaning an additional £1.75 billion will be available for UK companies exporting to South Africa and for South African buyers of UK goods and services.

The International Trade Secretary also announced that UKEF are offering UK businesses wider access to government-backed overseas investment insurance (OII) which will protect UK businesses investing abroad. The enhanced support comes as the Department for International Trade looks to encourage more UK companies to invest overseas, realising the opportunities presented by fast-growing developing economies around the world.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

As we leave the EU, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a more open and outward looking Britain and forge independent trading arrangements with growing economies around the world.

That is why as an international economic department, we are making billions of pounds of additional financial support available to UK exporters and buyers of UK goods and services in South Africa and opening up further export opportunities for British businesses across Africa through overseas investment insurance.

As part of the visit to South Africa, Dr Fox will meet Rob Davies, Minister of Trade and Industry as both seek to reaffirm the importance of the UK/SA trade and investment relationship.

He will also tour the newly opened Invest SA One-Stop-Shop, part of the SA government's initiative to attract investment and improve the business environment. Whilst there Dr Fox will meet with leaders of [WESGRO](#), the provincial Investment Promotion Agency for the Western Cape, seeing how investment opportunities for British companies are being promoted.

The Trade Secretary will also see first-hand how UK investment overseas is positively impacting on the local workforce when he meets apprentices at the Jaguar Landrover apprenticeship facility in Johannesburg.

In Mozambique Dr Fox will continue to promote the importance of a UK trade

and investment relationship overseas as he meets with President Filipe Nyusi and Trade Minister Ernesto Max Elias Tonela.

South Africa

Total trade in goods and services (ie exports plus imports) between the UK and South Africa totalled £8.1 billion in 2015, a 5.2% increase since 2014 (Source: ONS Pink Book 2016).

The top 5 UK goods exported to South Africa in 2016 were:

- 84 – Machinery and mechanical appliances (18.7% of all UK goods exported to South Africa)
- 85 – Electrical machinery and equipment (12.7%)
- 87 – Motor vehicles (11.7%)
- 30 – Pharmaceuticals (6.5%)
- 22 – Beverages, spirits and vinegar (6.0%)

Source: HMRC Interactive database (Data by HS Commodity code)

Mozambique

Total trade in goods and services (ie exports plus imports) between the UK and Mozambique totalled £284 million in 2015 (Source: ONS Pink Book 2016).

The top 5 UK goods exported to Mozambique in 2016 were:

- 85 – Electrical machinery and equipment (22.9% of all UK goods exported to Mozambique)
- 84 – Machinery and mechanical appliances (19.8%)
- 87 – Vehicles other than railway or tramway stock (17.5%)
- 30 – Pharmaceutical products (6.8%)
- 90 – Optical, photographic, cinematographic and medical equipment (5.8%)

Source: HMRC Interactive database (Data by HS Commodity code)

Further information

News story: UK Defence Chief appointed as NATO Chairman of Military Committee

UK Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach has been elected as the new NATO Chairman of the Military Committee, the Alliance's senior military officer.

Following a lengthy election campaign, last night Sir Stuart was elected by other NATO Chiefs of Defence. It is anticipated that CDS will take over the role in June 2018.

Becoming the first Briton to hold the position for 25 years, this appointment will see Sir Stuart as NATO's senior military officer and act as the principal military advisor to the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

CDS Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

It is a huge honour to have been chosen to be the next Chairman of the Military Committee, one of the most important positions in NATO, central to European security.

I am excited to take on this next challenge at such an important time for NATO, at a time when the alliance must modernise to face new and ever adapting threats. Having spent the last year in the hugely rewarding position as Head of the UK's Armed Forces, I know I am ready to take on this challenge.

I would like to personally thank all of those who supported me through this campaign and voted for me in the election.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

That Air Chief Marshal Peach has been elected to this position by his fellow Chiefs of Defence across NATO underlines the esteem in which he is held by his peers.

No-one understands better the challenges that NATO faces and I am sure that he will serve the Alliance with the same professionalism and rigour with which he has furthered Britain's interests throughout his distinguished career.

While Sir Stuart's appointment is testament to his ability and

achievements, it is also a demonstration of the leading role that the UK plays in NATO and the importance of the Alliance to the UK.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

I would like to congratulate Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, who has deservedly been appointed as the next Chairman of NATO's Military Committee.

Sir Stuart has been an exceptional Chief of Defence Staff, unwavering in his dedication and commitment to the UK's Armed Forces.

NATO is vital to Britain's security at a time of increasing threats across the globe. This appointment underlines our leadership role in NATO and I know Sir Stuart will relish these new challenges.

Outgoing Chairman of the Military Committee General Petr Pavel said:

I welcome the election of CDS Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach. I have no doubt his vast experience as Chief of Defence but also as a Military Committee member, will allow him to chair the Committee with great aptitude, ensuring the North Atlantic Council continues to receive sound and unfettered military advice from the Military Committee to guide their work. I wish him the best of luck in his future position.

Sir Stuart has been in the role of CDS since July 2016 part of his long and successful military career after joining the RAF in 1977. Highlights of his career include commanding the UK's intervention in Libya in 2011 and becoming the first Commander of UK Joint Forces in December that same year.

The appointment of CDS will reassure NATO allies across Europe in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia. The UK has been standing by allies in the region, leading an Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia and contributing troops in Poland, contributing to NATO Maritime Groups, committing Typhoons to Air Policing Missions in Romania, and training thousands of Armed Forces in Ukraine.

CDS will take over from General Petr Pavel, of the Czech Republic, who has been in the role since 2015.

Press release: Foreign Office statement on Kurdistan Regional Government's intention to hold a referendum

A Foreign Office spokesman said:

The UK does not support the Kurdistan Regional Government's aspiration to hold a referendum on 25 September. The referendum risks increasing instability in the region when the focus should be on defeating Daesh. That is why the UK has proposed new talks between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Government of Iraq on the future of the relationship between Erbil and Baghdad. Talks should be without preconditions, time limited, address all the issues of dispute between the two parties, and be backed by the international community. The UK calls on the Kurdistan Regional Government to seize this opportunity and to enter into serious negotiations with Baghdad.

News story: David Mundell announces new Scottish business taskforce ahead of trip to Paraguay and Argentina

Former UK Government minister Andrew Dunlop has been commissioned by the Scottish Secretary to chair a group made up of leading figures with expert knowledge of Scotland's business and economy. The group's membership will be announced shortly.

David Mundell said:

The UK Government's new Scottish business taskforce will provide expert advice and guidance on how best to strengthen Scotland's economy. We know that Scotland's economic performance lags behind the rest of UK, and we need to close that gap. As we develop our ambitious industrial strategy and negotiate new trade deals with Europe and around the world, this expert panel will provide insight from a range of Scottish business sectors.

The Scottish Secretary made the announcement ahead of a trip this week to Paraguay and Argentina. He will use his visit to promote Scottish business interests and build cultural and educational links. Scottish firms already do substantial business in South America – Scotch whisky, for example, exports more than £14 million and £12 million a year to Paraguay and Argentina respectively. Scottish agritech companies are also keen to create opportunities in Paraguay's dynamic agricultural sector.

Speaking ahead of his visit Mr Mundell said:

As we are prepare to leave the EU, we want to build and strengthen our trade relationships with friends and partners old and new, and I am certain Scottish companies will be at the forefront of this. Scotland's skills, products and services are highly regarded globally, and we can build on that as we strike ambitious new trade deals around the world. I am travelling to South America this week to bang the drum for Scottish businesses, taking the message to these markets that Scotland's companies have the skills, products and expertise they need.

There are strong historic links between Scotland and Paraguay, going back nearly 200 years, and I hope to further strengthen the relationship between our two countries. I will be promoting Scottish businesses, including looking at opportunities in Paraguay's agricultural sector and for Scottish exports – building on the success of whisky sales to Paraguay.

UK companies have an extensive presence in Argentina, with enormous scope to expand, particularly in new technology and in oil and gas, areas where Scottish firms are among the best in the world. There are also strong cultural links between Scotland and Argentina, including through the Edinburgh Festivals, and I very much look forward to cementing these links.

In Paraguay, Mr Mundell will meet prominent senior political and business figures, and make a keynote speech about the place of the UK in a post-Brexit world. He will also host a reception to promote Scottish produce and meet local civil society organisations working to combat discrimination .

In Argentina, Mr Mundell will meet cultural organisations, host a whisky tasting for business leaders and community groups, and meet a number of local businesses. He will also visit San Andrés University to hear about their links with St Andrew's University, and attend a commemoration to mark Argentinian pilots' contribution to the Battle of Britain.