

UK International Development Secretary gives strong commitment to help Bangladesh and Rohingya through the coronavirus crisis

On a 'virtual visit' to Bangladesh, a first for a UK Minister, Trevelyan met with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister and also saw how UK-backed isolation and treatment centres will help protect Bangladeshi and Rohingya communities in Cox's Bazar from the pandemic.

The UK has dedicated at least £21 million to tackle coronavirus in Bangladesh, where 120,000 cases have been reported.

Its support will save lives by slowing the rapid spread of the disease and boosting struggling health services. During the virtual visit, Ms Trevelyan talked to the staff of BRAC, an NGO which has mobilised 50,000 community health workers with UK aid support to reach more than five million Bangladeshi people in remote, deprived communities, giving them public health information about how to prevent the spread of coronavirus and stay safe.

Ms Trevelyan visited, via a video call, the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, where social distancing is near impossible due to the cramped conditions. UK aid is supporting the construction of vital isolation and treatment centres (ITCs) in Cox's Bazar, making available over 600 beds for treating both Rohingya refugees and people from Bangladeshi communities, who develop severe acute respiratory infections due to contracting coronavirus.

UK International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said

"Coronavirus is the biggest public health emergency in a generation. UK aid is committed to helping Bangladesh and the Rohingya people through this devastating crisis.

"I saw the incredible international work across the country and in Cox's Bazar to stop the spread of coronavirus and improve healthcare. The UK is proud to play our role, so we can help save lives and protect those in need.

"I am grateful to the Government and people of Bangladesh for their extraordinary generosity and support for the Rohingya refugees. The UK will continue to work with the Government of Bangladesh, international partners and the UN Security Council to enable the Rohingyas to return home to Rakhine in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner, and to support them until that is possible."

The International Development Secretary spoke with Sarah Collis, the team leader of the UK Emergency Medical Team, which is working alongside Bangladeshi medics and the International Organisation for Migration to setup

the ITCs and respond to cases in the camps.

She also saw the World Food Programme's emergency food response to the pandemic, backed by UK aid, which is helping to meet the basic food needs of 100,000 Rohingya refugees and helping 53,000 of the most vulnerable Bangladeshis living around the camps to cope with the crippling economic impact of the pandemic.

Ms Trevelyan met with Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, MP and committed to continue UK support to Bangladesh for the fight against coronavirus.

The British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson said

"The coronavirus outbreak has had an unprecedented impact on people's health, livelihoods, and mobility in Bangladesh.

"The virtual visit allowed the Secretary of State to see the breadth and depth of UK support for the country, and underlined the UK's strong commitment to Bangladesh in the face of the coronavirus challenge."

More Information

The UK has dedicated at least £21 million to tackle coronavirus in Bangladesh, including to:

- increase testing capacity in the country by supporting the hiring of 60 additional technicians in Government of Bangladesh labs;
- reach more than 7 million Bangladeshi people in remote, deprived communities with public health information about how to prevent the spread of coronavirus and stay safe, working with BRAC and the UN Development Programme.
- set up isolation and treatment centres, train staff to help treat severe and critical coronavirus cases, and support mobile medical units to deliver home-based healthcare and monitoring. This healthcare is helping both refugees and host communities.
- build an additional 2,400 handwashing centres across the country
- meet the basic food needs of 100,000 Rohingya refugees for a whole year and helping 55,000 of the most vulnerable Bangladeshis living around the camps to cope with the crippling economic impact of the pandemic

Ms Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP was appointed UK International Development Secretary on 13 February 2020. She was previously UK Minister of State for the Armed Forces from 17 December 2019 to 13 February 2020, and UK Minister for Defence Procurement from 27 July 2019 to 16 December 2019.

The UK, the second largest donor to the international response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, is providing life-sustaining humanitarian aid to almost one million Rohingya refugees and vulnerable host communities in Cox's Bazar. Since the last refugee influx in 2017, the UK has contributed more than £261 million. The UK is the third largest bilateral donor overall in Bangladesh, providing more than £350 million in aid since 2018.

Further information

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