

# Visitors from Thailand

News story

Politicians and government officials from Thailand have visited GAD as part of research to accompany a pension reform plan in their country.



Senior politicians and government officials from Thailand have visited the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) to research how an actuarial function can operate within government.

The delegation was made up of more than 20 people. It included the Minister of Labour, the chairs of 2 parliamentary committees and senior officials.

## **Fact finding visit**

The visit was part of research to accompany a pension reform plan. At present Thailand does not have a single department to produce actuarial analysis for the government. Instead, each agency has its own in-house unit to produce reports and analysis.

As part of a 4-year project, the Thai government is considering the creation of an actuarial unit to produce analysis and inputs to policy making and reforms.

## **GAD's expertise**

During the visit, the officials met both the Government Actuary and Deputy Government Actuary. They heard about GAD's historic origins, reporting lines, operating approach and main areas of expertise.

The visiting delegation also learned about GAD's working relationship with other organisations such as HM Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs.

Actuaries from GAD shared information about different projects. These included GAD's work on the National Insurance Fund and the State Pension Age review.

Decorative plaque from the Thai delegation, marking their visit to GAD.

The Deputy Government Actuary Matt Gurden said: “We were really pleased to have been given the opportunity to host this key event for such an influential group of people.

“The breadth and depth of expertise in GAD means we can offer a range of actuarial services to government and the public sector.

“We hope sharing our extensive experience will be of value to the Thai government in its plans for an actuarial unit.”

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## [Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress in Syria](#)

Thank you President, and let me thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms Ghelani for their briefing today. I’d like to make three points.

First, the United Kingdom supports the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to progress the implementation of 2254 through the Step for Step initiative. We welcome the news of his recent discussions in New York, Damascus and elsewhere. But Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress and we call for their participation in good faith. We urge them to de-politicise the Constitutional Committee. We are clear that the Committee should reconvene in Geneva, as agreed, and begin to focus fully on substance rather than process.

Second, the United Kingdom is appalled by the human rights situation in Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured since the beginning of the conflict. Including in the notorious Sednaya prison, where as civil society have told us repeatedly, detainees are tortured and killed on a daily basis.

We strongly condemn these violations. We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254, which includes release of the arbitrarily detained along with a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; conditions for safe voluntary and dignified refugee return and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution.

The UK is closely monitoring the escalation of hostilities in north west Syria. It is essential that all parties to the conflict respect the

ceasefire.

Finally, President, as we've heard, the spreading cholera outbreak highlights the frankly horrifying humanitarian context, and the need for a sustained response by the humanitarian community. The United Nations is stepping up its cross-line delivery where possible.

But cross-border remains a vital lifeline for many in the north west. We look forward to this Council renewing the cross-border mandate in January, ensuring aid for millions of Syrians during winter months.

Thank you.

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## **Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited: information for creditors and interested parties**

On 25 October 2022, winding-up orders were made against Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited and the court appointed the Official Receiver, Gareth Jonathan Allen, as Liquidator.

Following an application made by the Official Receiver, the court has also appointed Alan Hudson and Joanne Robinson of Ernst & Young LLP as Special Managers of the companies. The Special Managers have been appointed to assist the Official Receiver with the liquidations.

The Official Receiver will wind-down the affairs of Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited in an orderly manner in accordance with his statutory duties. The Official Receiver also has a duty to investigate the cause of the companies' insolvency and the conduct of current and former directors.

Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited provide specialist cloud-based services to UK public sector and private sector organisations. The Official Receiver, with the assistance of the Special Managers, is maintaining operations whilst the liquidation strategy is being developed. The strategy will consider the provision of services, transition of contracts and whether a sale is viable.

### **Information for customers and suppliers**

If you are a customer of Virtual Infrastructure Limited and UKCloud Limited, please contact the Special Managers via email: [ukcloudcustomers@uk.ey.com](mailto:ukcloudcustomers@uk.ey.com).

If you are a supplier of Virtual Infrastructure Limited and UKCloud Limited,

please contact the Special Managers via email: [ukcloudsuppliers@uk.ey.com](mailto:ukcloudsuppliers@uk.ey.com).

## Information for employees

If you were an employee of Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited, and were dismissed following the winding up order, the information in this section provides advice about claiming money you're owed and where you can seek support.

### Who is eligible?

You can apply to the Insolvency Service for redundancy and other payments if:

- you worked for these companies under an [employment contract](#)
- you live in England, Scotland or Wales.

### How to apply

The Official Receiver will give you details about how to apply and will also give you a case reference number (for example CN12345678).

Once you have this information you can [apply online](#).

### What you can apply for

What you can apply for depends on your circumstances. The Insolvency Service can pay:

- money you're owed by Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited, for example unpaid wages, overtime and commission
- redundancy pay: if you've worked for Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited for at least 2 years
- pro rata holiday pay (known as 'holiday pay accrued'): the leave you were entitled to take between the start of your leave year and the date you were made redundant
- holiday pay taken (HPT): if Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited hasn't paid you for annual leave you took before liquidation
- statutory notice pay: if you've worked for Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited for at least 1 month

There are caps on what we can pay you for each type of claim. [Find out how much we can pay you](#).

### Paying your claim

The Insolvency Service's Redundancy Payments Service aims to make payments for redundancy pay and related claims within 6 weeks of receiving your completed application, and information from the insolvency practitioner.

Find more information about [what we can pay](#).

Please avoid contacting The Insolvency Service about how to claim or to check

the status of your application. This will help deal with everyone's application as quickly as possible.

## Information for creditors

You will need to [register as a creditor](#) in the liquidation if:

- you have not been paid for goods or services you've supplied to Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited (in liquidation)
- you have paid Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited (in liquidation) for goods or services that you have not received

To register as a creditor you will need to complete a [Proof of Debt form](#) which you should then email to [VIG.Liquidator@Insolvency.gov.uk](mailto:VIG.Liquidator@Insolvency.gov.uk).

Once you have registered and the Official Receiver receives your [Proof of Debt form](#) he will add you to the list of creditors and include you on future correspondence about the case.

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## [WTO Trade Policy Review of Barbados: UK statement](#)

Chair, let me warmly welcome the Barbados delegation, led by the Minister of State the Honourable Sandra Husbands to their 4th Trade Policy Review. We are grateful to the Government of Barbados and to the WTO Secretariat for their Reports, and to our most distinguished Chair and Discussant, the Ambassador of Maldives, for kindly facilitating this Review with their insights.

Barbados's Trade Policy Review (TPR) Report and its own policy statement describe a relatively small and open economy, vulnerable to exogenous shocks and facing economic challenges with a large current account deficit and public debt, but committed to an open trade policy as a key plank of its economic strategy. We commend that commitment to trade as a driver for sustainable growth. In our Advance Written Questions, the UK was keen to understand developments in areas including customs administration, tariffs, intellectual property, the harmonisation of standards, and the manufacturing sector. We thank Barbados for their helpful responses.

The dramatic effects of climate change, and damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, are recurrent features in TPRs at the moment. We are particularly cognisant of the disproportionate impact felt by Small Island Developing States and other small and vulnerable economies. Let me pay tribute to Barbados for its efforts to champion these perspectives at the WTO, as they have also done so effectively elsewhere, including in the Commonwealth and at COP26 in Glasgow.

Turning to Barbados's trade profile, the UK agrees wholeheartedly with the Government's own assessment that growth and development are predicated on an openness to the global community, in which free trade plays an integral part. We were pleased to note Barbados's commitments in its policy statement to liberalised international trade and its aversion to trade barriers, despite the additional economic stresses caused by a global pandemic, the volcanic eruption, and significant climate events.

Additionally, prudent fiscal solutions implemented since 2018 (such as the BERT Plan) have demonstrated the effectiveness of responses by the Barbadian Government. The fall in Barbados's current account deficit from over 9% of GDP in 2014 to under 3% in 2019 illustrates the impressive effectiveness of Barbados' fiscal consolidation path response.

We also note the concerted strategic efforts made by Barbados to increase linkages with African continental markets and the Middle East. These demonstrate Barbados's commitment to diversifying its economy and to targeting opportunities for export-driven growth.

Chair, the threat of climate change to livelihoods and prosperity throughout the world – (which we were discussing here just yesterday in our agriculture retreat) – obliges us all to put the environment at the heart of our economic policies. So we commend Barbados's National Energy Policy target to reach 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality by 2030. We appreciated the clarifications within the Secretariat Report regarding both demand and supply-side solutions. The outlined two-pronged attack – of increasing the adoption of energy efficient technologies and promoting energy conservation, and diversifying sources of energy, respectively – suggests a reassuringly holistic strategy.

Let me pay tribute to the leadership role that Barbados plays, not only in this organisation, but across multilateral Geneva. In particular, let me reiterate our pleasure that Barbados ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) back in January 2018 and encourage Barbados's ongoing progress in implementing the TFA. We note, as Barbados and others have acknowledged, that Barbados has various outstanding WTO notifications. We welcome the assurance that the Minister gave this morning. We are sympathetic and receptive to Members' individual pressures and we encourage Barbados and other Members in similar circumstances to consult with the WTO Secretariat and to utilise the resources already available. Notifications are a vital WTO transparency component, and their value is highly regarded both across the Membership and outside this organization. We want to make these tools workable and useful for delegations like Barbados, and effective for the Membership as a whole.

Finally, let me underline the healthy state of the long-standing and deep-rooted bilateral relationship between our two countries. At the economic heart of that modern relationship lies the UK-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, which came into force in January 2021, ensuring continuity from the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. The first meeting of that agreement's Trade & Development Committee took place in October last year. The meeting was an opportunity for parties to provide updates on relevant

trade policy developments in the United Kingdom and in the Caribbean region, and to reaffirm their desire for a prompt ratification of the EPA by all parties.

The United Kingdom and CARIFORUM States discussed matters of joint interest including tariff liberalisation, trade in Goods & Services, and Geographical Indications. The parties noted with satisfaction that the EPA had secured continuity of a trading relationship worth almost three billion pounds in 2020 and expressed their desire to develop further sustainable and inclusive trade underpinned by the EPA.

And so, to conclude, Chair, we wish Barbados well in building on its trade-centred growth and development path as it recovers from the pandemic and confronts the challenges of climate change, and we thank our colleagues in Barbados for their engagement in this important transparency exercise. Let this be a successful and fruitful 4th Trade Policy Review.

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## **Beware of bonfire bandits and don't burn waste**

As well as the safety risks caused by bonfires, they have an impact on the climate and, if the wrong materials are burned, can harm wildlife, the environment and human health.

The only materials that should be used in bonfires are dry, untreated and unpainted wood, along with small amounts of paper or cardboard. Using wet wood creates smoke which can spread and cause a nuisance to neighbours, and bonfires can quickly get out of control if not properly managed.

If you are intending to have a bonfire at home, don't use it to dispose of household waste, such as plastic, rubber, glass, oils or metal. These materials could cause a pollution risk to water, air, soil, plants, animals or the countryside and should be disposed of through recycling or household waste collections or at council recycling centres. Always check the bonfire for hedgehogs and other wildlife before setting light to it and don't allow anyone else to add materials to your bonfire, other than clean, dry, untreated wood.

It's not just householders that may use Bonfire Night as a way of getting rid of rubbish. Businesses may use it to burn waste, too. But the Environment Agency also urges them to be aware of what they are burning.

Whether you are a business owner or householder, if paying someone to take waste away, always check they are licensed waste carriers, who will dispose of waste correctly. Unfortunately, criminals working in illegal waste operations may also use the celebration to dispose of hazardous and

inappropriate waste.

There are strict rules on what can – and can't – be burned in bonfires to avoid environmental harm

As well as the harm and nuisance burning the wrong kind of waste can cause, burning of most types of waste is illegal and can carry a fine of up to £50,000.

Kevin Baker of the Environment Agency said:

We want people to have fun on Bonfire Night – but to do so safely and in a way that won't create a risk to the environment, wildlife and to you and your neighbours.

The best way of doing that, is to stop burning waste altogether and go to a properly organised community event, where organisers, hopefully, should have followed our guidelines and won't be causing a hazard.

Ros Clarke, group manager for prevention at Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, said:

Bonfire night and the days surrounding it can be busy for us, and our emergency service colleagues. The safest way to enjoy bonfire night is to go to an organised professional bonfire night event, rather than holding your own bonfire.

If you see a bonfire being built, which you think may contain hazardous materials, you can contact the Environment Agency on our 24-hour helpline at 0800 807060 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. You can check if a waste carrier is licensed [here](#).