

[Hong Kong Electoral Reforms: Foreign Secretary Statement](#)

Press release

The Foreign Secretary comments following the decision by the National People's Congress in Beijing to bring in changes to the Hong Kong electoral system.



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

This is the latest step by Beijing to hollow out the space for democratic debate in Hong Kong, contrary to the promises made by China itself.

This can only further undermine confidence and trust in China living up to its international responsibilities and legal obligations, as a leading member of the international community.

Published 11 March 2021

[Thai-UK Augmented Reality Company, Perception Codes, brings students on immersive journey to Mars](#)

- The now UK-based deep tech company specialises in Desktop Augmented Reality (Desktop AR). The company develops Software Development Kit

(SDK) for developers to make computer applications, turning your everyday 2D computers into an immersive and interactive 3D content display.

- Founded in 2019 by “Rabbit” (Dr. Sirisilp Kongsilp), a Desktop AR pioneer. Through support from the UK’s Department for International Trade (DIT) in Thailand, the company recently qualified for the UK’s Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP), which supports overseas deep tech entrepreneurs looking to use the UK as a springboard to scale up internationally. Currently, Holo-SDK is partnering with museums and schools in both the UK and Thailand to bring many 3D digital artefacts and interactive learning to life using its holographic applications.
- Students joined a workshop focused on developing their own immersive experience on Mars using “Holo-SDK”, a Software Development Kit for developers. In a little game comprising of an astronaut exploring Mars with his own rovers and satellite, students learned the basic principles of Desktop AR technology and the basic tools for making applications.

Thursday, 11 Feb 2020 – Perception, a UK-based computer software company hosted a workshop on developing Desktop AR for 26 Bangkok Prep International School students in Key Stage 3.

The workshop focused on educating students with basic coding skills and providing a hands-on exercise for them to develop their own Desktop AR using the company’s Holographic Software Development Kit (Holo-SDK). Utilizing the company’s sample application, Holo-Mars, the three-hour workshop enables students to make holographic applications using Holo-SDK through a little game that involves an astronaut exploring Mars with his rovers and satellite.

The software aka “Holo-SDK” utilizes Augmented Reality (AR) technology, enabling users to create their own version of a volumetric display. The software creates the illusion of 3D objects and scenes on any of your ordinary 2D monitor using just a computer, webcam, and 3D glasses (anaglyph glasses).

Students with basic coding skills can enhance their programming skillset and expand their portfolio using Holo-SDK. With such positive feedback, the company plans to do more of these similar workshops with the school and expand to other schools in Thailand and worldwide with an aim to build future technological entrepreneurs and professionals, building upon necessary digital skills of the 21st century – coding.

‘We want to educate our young students to be technology entrepreneurs, be creators, not consumers. This is why we organized the workshop to teach students at a very young age.’ said, Perception Codes’ Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Krisada Chaiyasarn said.

“It is good to see students being challenged with activities outside of the classroom. I can see that Desktop AR applications can be integrated as

teaching tools to increase the level of engagement and interactions with lessons.” said, Alison Cantrill, Head of Careers and Student Pathways, Bangkok Prep International School.

Founded by Dr Sirisilp or “Dr. Rabbit”, CEO, who has been working on the Desktop AR during his research 7-8 years ago. The company secured its first seed funding back in 2019. Receiving immense attention as a cost-effective alternative to expensive Augmented Reality, the company then secured the 2nd round of funding from investors and angels in late 2020.

Despite being less than 2 years old, the now, UK based start-up is looking to making technology accessible by putting the tools required for creating Desktop AR applications into the hands of developers.

Its recent business decision to expand to the UK with support from the UK government’s Department for International Trade’s Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP) will see the company partnering with schools and museums, both in Thailand and the UK to enhance learning experience. With the covid-19 strikes, students and people are not able to go to museums, their Holo-SDK is the tool to allow people to access 3D contents at home with minimal costs, re-connecting history and learning with even more people than ever before.

“I’m excited to see more representations from Thailand under the Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP) this year. With the current travel limitations as a result of covid-19, Desktop AR is certainly a technology of the future, removing barriers to learning and experiencing for learners around the globe. I very much look forward to Perception Codes bringing their technology to the UK, and helping them to reach even more consumers on the global stage.

If you are a deep tech entrepreneur in Thailand with a bright idea, do not hesitate to reach out to us at the Department for International Trade” said, Richard Porter, Commercial Counsellor, Department for International Trade.

‘Desktop AR is the technology of the future, all future computer applications will be holographic!’ said, Dr. Sirisilp Kongsilp, Founder and CEO, Perception Codes LTD.

Perception Codes is one of the 3 Thai companies to qualify for the UK’s Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP). The programme supports overseas tech entrepreneurs to expand and use the UK as a springboard for scaling up and accessing the global market.

Since its conception in 2004, the programme has helped more than 100 overseas entrepreneurs raised more than £1 bn in total by helping them tap into the UK’s financial resource and advice from the programme’s dealmaker to expand internationally.

[Learn more about GEP](#)

[Visit Perception website](#)

Most people believe inequality has increased due to the pandemic

Nearly six in ten people believe the pandemic has increased the gulf between social classes, according to a new poll from the Social Mobility Commission.

The Social Mobility Barometer, 2021, unveils deep concern that social division in Britain has increased as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Four in five adults (79%) now believe there is a large gap between different social classes and over half the public (56%) think the pandemic has increased social inequality.

A third (33%) say that inequality has increased by a lot, and 23% by a little, according to the survey of 4,693 adults in the UK, carried out by YouGov.

The findings coincide with growing evidence that those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are being most affected by the pandemic. Young people from the poorest backgrounds are losing their jobs, while families are trapped in cramped housing, sometimes unable to afford basic necessities. Children from disadvantaged families, often without digital access, are falling behind at school.

Our annual Barometer also shows significant public concern about mental health. 55% of UK adults think the pandemic has had the most impact on mental health, while 44% say difficulties caused by a lack of social contact. 26% believe employment opportunities have been most affected with 22% citing access to education.

When asked, however, what the government's key priorities should be in any pandemic recovery plan, the largest number of respondents said employment opportunities (47%) followed by addressing mental health issues (46%) and improving access to education (33%).

In general, two-thirds (64%) of the public believe those who are 'just about managing' are not getting enough support from the government. Similarly, more than half (52%) the public think those who are the least well off are not getting enough government support.

Steven Cooper, interim Co-Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, says:

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on jobs, training and mental health, particularly among the most disadvantaged groups. This poll dramatically underlines public concern about growing social inequality. Government, employers and educators should listen and act. The most disadvantaged – at home, school or work –

should now be put centre stage in any recovery plan.

Regional differences are also laid bare. Overall 74% of people think there are large differences in opportunities across Britain. Within England there is still a stark north/south divide in terms of how people feel about their prospects. Only 31% of people in the north-east believe opportunities to progress in their area are 'good', compared to 74% in London.

The poll comes just before the Social Mobility Commission moves to the Cabinet Office. This arm's length body hopes to use its new location to inform the government's levelling up agenda to create a more equal society, particularly in the regions. This year the Commission is planning to work with central government, local leaders and metro mayors to share best practice and encourage more targeted action in the "coldest spots" across England.

Other key findings include:

- Only a third (35%) of adults across the UK believe everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their hard work will take them. Only one in four (25%) people from black and ethnic minority groups believe we live in a fair society.
- On average 39% of the public think it is getting harder for people from less advantaged families to move up in British society (28% think it is the same as it was and 23% think it is getting easier). 42% of those aged 25 to 49 think it is getting harder.
- Nearly half the public (48%) consider themselves to be working class, and 36% middle class. Those aged 50-64 are most likely to think of themselves as working class (54%).
- People tend to think they are better off than their parents in terms of education (64%), financial situation (49%), standard of living (48%) and housing (37%). But they believe they are worse off in terms of job security with 33% saying they have experienced less job security than their parents.
- People say that central (53%) and local (42%) government should be doing more to improve social mobility and provide opportunities for everyone.
- An increasing number of people think that employers should have to take action to improve social mobility – 42% in 2021 compared with 31% in 2019. Ethnic minorities are more likely than average to say that employers should act (58%).
- Generation X (born in the 1960s and 1970s) is seen to have enjoyed the best financial situation (25%) and access to good housing (33%). Generation Z (born since 2000) is thought to have the least job security.

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Second wind for the Humber, Teesside and UK energy industry

- £95 million government investment for 2 new offshore wind ports to be constructed in the Humber region and Teesside, creating 6,000 new jobs
- GE Renewable Energy first company confirmed to build new factory at the new Teesside port
- first major step in delivering Prime Minister's green pledge to provide enough energy from offshore wind to power every home in the UK by 2030

Two new ports on the Humber and on Teesside to build the next generation of offshore wind projects will be constructed as part of an up to £95 million investment to boost the UK's world-leading industry and create 6,000 new jobs in the North, the government announced today (Thursday 11 March).

Able Marine Energy Park, on the South Bank of the River Humber, will receive up to £75 million government investment, and Teesworks Offshore Manufacturing Centre, on the River Tees, will benefit from up to £20 million. Construction will begin later this year to upgrade the 2 ports with new infrastructure – helping to revitalise these historic industrial heartlands.

Together these new ports will have the capacity to house up to 7 manufacturers to support the development of the next-generation offshore wind projects, substantially boosting the UK's offshore wind manufacturing base while directly creating around 3,000 new jobs each.

The first offshore wind manufacturer to invest in the Teesside port has also been confirmed by the government today.

Thanks to Teesside receiving free port status, as well as government backing, GE Renewable Energy will build a new state-of-the-art offshore wind blade manufacturing factory at the site, which will directly create around 750 of the 3,000 high quality jobs created by the Teesside port and approximately 1,500 indirect jobs in the area. Due to open and start production in 2023, the blades produced by GE Renewables will be supplied to the Dogger Bank wind farm, located off the North East coast, which when completed in 2026 will be the largest offshore wind farm in the world and will be capable of powering up to 6 million homes.

Today's announcements are a huge leap forward in delivering the Prime Minister's [10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution](#) and meeting his target to quadruple the UK's offshore wind capacity to produce 40GW of energy

from offshore wind by 2030 – enough to power every home in the country. This lays the groundwork for the UK to take advantage of the booming offshore market in the UK and internationally, support up to 60,000 jobs in the industry, and help eliminate the UK's contribution to carbon emissions by 2050.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

During the Industrial Revolution over 200 years ago, wind powered the sails of ships from the Humber and Teesside trading goods around the world.

Now the Humber and Teesside will put the wind in the sails of our new green industrial revolution, building the next generation of offshore wind turbines whilst creating 6,000 new green jobs in the process.

Our multi-million-pound investment in these historic coastal communities is a major step towards producing the clean, cheap energy we need to power our homes and economy without damaging the environment.

The government funding will be provided through the £160 million investment to upgrade port infrastructure and support manufacturing announced by the Prime Minister in October 2020.

Once complete, the 2 ports will have the capacity to support the development of up to 9GW of energy offshore wind projects each year – enough electricity to power around 8 million homes.

Through the 2 new ports, businesses – including smaller suppliers – across the UK will be well-placed to win contracts and attract further investment from energy companies around the world, increasing their competitive standing on the global stage.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The offshore wind sector is a major British industrial success story, providing cheap, green electricity while supporting thousands of good-quality jobs. While the UK has the largest installed capacity of offshore wind in the world, we are determined to ensure we are fully capturing the economic benefits in this country.

To ensure our businesses, supply chain and high-skilled workforce can fully share in the sector's success, today's investment in the Humber region and Teesside will put the UK in pole position to land new offshore wind investors. In the process it will ramp up our domestic manufacturing base and create thousands of good jobs in our industrial heartlands.

With the Humber region already home to 6 operational offshore wind farms including the largest one in the world – Hornsea One – and Teesside recently agreeing the world’s largest offshore wind turbine deal, these 2 regions are well-established offshore wind hubs.

Today’s announcements will significantly speed up the development of the next generation of wind turbines in the UK and will be gateways to the rest of the world, making it easier for businesses to trade. This will create new opportunities for the Humber and Teesside to lead the world in new industrial sectors and low carbon technologies, significantly growing the UK’s offshore wind manufacturing supply chain.

Peter Stephenson, Executive Chairman of the Able Group said:

The government has set clear policies that provide the offshore wind sector with far greater certainty and market visibility. At the same time the sector itself has responded with remarkable innovations and cost reductions which now see it successfully competing with other energy sources.

We will seek to maximise the benefits, locally and nationally, through increased UK content, new jobs and new opportunities for local businesses.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said:

This monumental deal reached today with GE Renewables, to bring their manufacturing facility to Teesside and create more than 2,000 local jobs, is a major step forward for my plan to bring skilled good-quality jobs to local people.

Just last week our plans to regenerate the Teesworks site were turbocharged when the Chancellor gave the green light to the Teesside Freeport – the UK’s biggest freeport.

The mark of the infant Hercules can still today be seen and felt across the world, but this is not our past. It is our today and our future. With this new beginning we will continue to build a new, clean green and brighter world.

Councillor Rob Waltham, leader, North Lincolnshire Council, said:

This further demonstrates the confidence in North Lincolnshire’s plans and is a clear commitment from government for levelling up in the north. This development directly create even more well-paid, highly-skilled jobs and drive further investment into the area.

We have the skills and experience, and we are perfectly positioned

as part of the development of this world-leading industry. The people of North Lincolnshire will benefit from this for many years to come.

President and CEO of GE Renewable Energy Jérôme Péresse said:

This new plant will contribute to the development of an industrial cluster dedicated to offshore wind in the North East of England. We are delighted to announce such a commitment for the renewable energy industry, we believe it will help develop a strong talent pool through the hiring and more importantly training of future colleagues. The UK's target to commission 40GW of offshore wind by 2030 is ambitious and requires that we invest in local production capabilities to accompany this effort.

CEO of RenewableUK Hugh McNeal said:

GE Renewable Energy's new blade turbine manufacturing plant will transform a former steelworks site on Teesside into a high-tech clean energy powerhouse, creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs in our UK supply chain. This announcement marks the start of the next generation of offshore wind manufacturing.

Together with planned stringent requirements on supporting UK manufacturers in government-backed renewables projects, the creation of new ports and the development of new factories will support industry to reach its target of 60% of offshore wind farm content coming from the UK supply chain.

Last week, the Chancellor named both Teesside and Humberside as freeports – which will encourage free trade and bring investment to all regions of the country through lower taxes and cheaper customs.

We have had significant interest in the offshore wind manufacturing investment programme which we opened in February and for which the first bidding window closed on Sunday 7 March. We are delighted that so many companies are keen to invest in the UK and construct new manufacturing facilities, creating new skilled jobs across our regions.

About GE Renewable Energy

GE Renewable Energy is a \$15 billion business which combines one of the broadest portfolios in the renewable energy industry to provide end-to-end solutions for our customers demanding reliable and affordable green power.

Combining onshore and offshore wind, blades, hydro, storage, utility-scale solar, and grid solutions as well as hybrid renewables and digital services offerings, GE Renewable Energy has installed more than 400 gigawatts of clean renewable energy and equipped more than 90% of utilities worldwide with its

grid solutions. With nearly 40,000 employees present in more than 80 countries, GE Renewable Energy creates value for customers seeking to power the world with affordable, reliable and sustainable green electrons.

Supporting the work of the OSCE

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Supporting the work of the OSCE – UK statement at the Security Council

- UK calls on participating states to continue to support OSCE efforts, and urges equal and meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution
- UK urges Russia to adhere to its OSCE commitments and end its unlawful control of Crimea

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen at the Security Council briefing on the OSCE, 10 March 2021

Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me also thank Foreign Minister Linde for her briefing. I'm not sure if she can hear us, but I hope she can anyway because I wanted to say that the United Kingdom is a firm supporter of the OSCE and we're looking very much forward to working with Foreign Minister Linde as Chairperson in Office over the next year. We share her view that the OSCE is an important pillar of the international system with principles and commitments that provide a roadmap for enhancing the security of all participating states.

Madam President, protracted conflicts in the OSCE region continue to undermine regional security and blight the lives of affected civilians. We call on all participating states to support OSCE efforts. I want to welcome the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan last November to end fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. And we support the efforts of the Minsk Group co-chairs to secure a lasting peace. We also highly value the OSCE's conflict mediation efforts in Georgia and in Moldova.

In all conflict resolution, Madam President, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women brings more informed decision-making and more sustainable results on the ground. And I want to commend Foreign Minister Linde's focus on the Women Peace and Security agenda. The United Kingdom shares this priority and also supports the importance of women's economic empowerment as an essential aspect to achieving this.

The United Kingdom will support Chairperson of Office Linde's chairing this year through our role chairing the Security Committee of the OSCE. We are focussed on addressing transnational organised crime as well as counterterrorism, countering violent extremism and cyber security.

The OSCE plays a vital role in enhancing Euro-Atlantic security, and the UK remains committed to OSCE's conventional arms control and confidence and security building instruments. We call on Russia to engage constructively at the OSCE to increase military transparency and reduce military risk, including through modernisation of the Vienna document.

Madam President, Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014 remains one of the most serious security threats in the OSCE region. And I want to urge Russia to match Ukraine's political will and meet its commitments so that progress can be made.

In that regard, I want to echo Foreign Minister Linde's call for the opening of the two crossing points in the Luhansk Oblast. We discussed this issue before in this Council and I understand that the Government of Ukraine has opened the crossings on their side. So I would ask our Russian friends to use their influence over their proxies, in the interests of the people of the region to improve lives on a daily basis.

Madam President, let me conclude by saying on the seventh anniversary of the illegal annexation, the United Kingdom also calls on Russia to end its unlawful control of Crimea. Russia has deployed military troops to the peninsula in blatant violation of its OSCE principles and commitments. The ongoing human rights violations in Crimea are unacceptable, and we condemn Russia's attempts to destabilise security in the region.

Thank you, Madam President.