

Joint UK-India statement on Enhanced Trade Partnership progress

Press release

A joint statement from Liz Truss, Secretary of State for International Trade and Shri Piyush Goyal, India's Minister for Commerce and Industry



UK International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and India's Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal

1. The Minister for Commerce and Industry of India, Shri Piyush Goyal, and UK Secretary of State for International Trade, Ms. Elizabeth Truss MP, met on Saturday, 6th February 2021, at New Delhi to discuss the India – UK trade and investment relationship. They were joined by the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry from India, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri.
2. Discussions were carried out on the entire range of bilateral trade and economic relations in a spirit of mutual understanding of each other's priorities and trade sensitivities. Both Ministers reiterated their commitment to long term India-UK partnership and agreed to deepen trade cooperation between the two countries through an Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP). They also reviewed progress in removing market access barriers on both sides and ongoing cooperation in response to COVID-19.

Development of Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP)

1. Taking forward their commitment from the 14th JETCO on 24th July 2020, India and UK Trade Ministers reviewed the ongoing engagements between the two sides for an ETP, as part of the development of a roadmap that would lead to a potential comprehensive FTA, including considerations on an Interim Agreement on preferential basis.

2. In a significant step forward, the Ministers agreed that this partnership would formally be launched during the visit of the UK Prime Minister to India, later this year. To this effect, the Ministers committed themselves to make concrete progress on trade & investment front to deliver quick gains for both countries including joint timelines for further advances.
3. The Ministers agreed to further accelerate the process towards launch of the ETP, and committed to interact on a regular basis, while identifying quick and concrete bilateral deliverables that could cement the ETP and immediately benefit the people of both countries.

COVID-19 cooperation and Working with business

1. The Ministers welcomed the deepening of bilateral health cooperation between the two countries, including on vaccines, which is enabling our countries to act as a global force for good during these challenging times.
2. The Ministers committed to relaunch the UK-India CEO Forum and agreed on the CEO Forum meeting at the earliest. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to work with businesses to improve the business environment and collectively address the challenges to post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

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[7-year ban for caterer who failed to pay taxes](#)

Patrick Olusoji Ekundayo (66), from Edmonton in London, was the sole director of Peaches Limited. The company, incorporated in August 2010, provided catering services and managed social events.

At its most successful trading period, Peaches Limited hosted up to 60 functions per year and took an average of £10,000 to £15,000 per event.

By March 2013, Patrick Ekundayo's company turnover had significantly exceeded the VAT registration threshold and in January 2014 the caterer was advised to register for VAT by his accountant.

Patrick Ekundayo, however, failed to register the catering company and this caused the tax authorities to compulsorily register Peaches Limited for VAT in November 2017, backdating registration to March 2013.

Despite the registration, Patrick Ekundayo did not submit any tax returns and in July 2018, Peaches Limited went into liquidation, owing more than £500,000 in taxes.

The catering business' insolvency triggered an investigation by Insolvency Service, which confirmed that Patrick Ekundayo's failure to register for VAT was deliberately non-compliant and he was issued with a penalty of more than £128,000 by the tax authorities.

Enquiries also found that the caterer had underdeclared Corporation Tax and National Insurance contributions of more than £264,000.

On 14 January 2021, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy accepted an undertaking from Patrick Ekundayo, after he did not dispute that he had failed to ensure that Peaches Limited registered for VAT, failed to submit VAT returns and under declared Corporation Tax and National Insurance contributions.

Patrick Ekundayo's ban started on 4 February 2021 and he is banned from from directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Lawrence Zussman, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations at the Insolvency Service, said:

Patrick Ekundayo failed to register his company for VAT and did not submit any VAT returns throughout the company's lifetime resulting in more than £500,000 in lost taxes to the public purse.

This behaviour was deliberately non-compliant and we have now removed him from being involved in any business for a period of seven years.

Patrick Olunsoji Ekundayo's date of birth is September 1954.

Peaches Limited (Company Reg no. 07345602).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct is available.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Chancellor eases burden on more than a million businesses through Pay as You Grow flexible repayment options

- Bounce Back Loan borrowers will now have the option to tailor payments according to their individual circumstances
- Chancellor makes support even more generous with the option to delay all repayments for a further six months
- Pay as You Grow will be available to over 1.4 million businesses, which collectively took out nearly £45 billion through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme

The Treasury's Pay as You Grow repayment flexibilities enable borrowers to tailor their repayment schedule, with the option to extend the length of their loans from six to ten years (reducing monthly repayments by almost half), make interest-only payments for six months or pause repayments for up to six months.

The Chancellor has now extended the flexibility of the third option, which will now be available to all from their first repayment, rather than after six repayments have been made. This will mean that businesses can choose to make no payments on their loans until 18 months after they originally took them out.

These Pay as You Grow options will be available to more than 1.4 million businesses which took out a total of nearly £45 billion through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

This is in addition to the government covering the costs of interest for the first year of the loan.

Pay as You Grow's additional support, first announced by the Chancellor in September, will give borrowers the option to tailor repayments to their individual circumstances.

This will provide more time and greater flexibility to repay the loans.

From today, lenders will begin reaching out to borrowers to provide information on repayment schedules and how to access flexible repayment options.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Businesses are continuing to feel the impact of extended disruption from Covid-19, and we're determined to give them the backing and confidence they need to get through the pandemic.

That's why we're giving Bounce Back Loan borrowers breathing space to get back on their feet, through greater flexibility and time to repay their loans on their terms.

Lenders will proactively and directly inform their customers of Pay as You Grow, and borrowers should only expect correspondence three months before their first repayments are due.

It will provide businesses with the following options:

1. Extend the length of the loan from six years to ten
2. Make interest-only payments for six months, with the option to use this up to three times throughout the loan
3. Pause repayments entirely for up to six months

Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, added:

The comprehensive and generous financial support package we have delivered across the UK has protected jobs, saved businesses and kept local economies on the move.

While our vaccine rollout is moving at an incredible pace and the end is in sight, we know times are still tough for many companies and extra support is needed.

These flexible repayment options will give businesses the time they need to recover from the pandemic before paying back loans, giving them the breathing space and confidence to build back better.

Further Information

The British Business Bank run the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

The government has made clear that lenders are expected to offer PAYG options to all borrowers under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Following discussions with lenders, all borrowers should receive identical information on PAYG being offered.

The Financial Conduct Authority's conduct rules require lenders to show due consideration and appropriate forbearance to borrowers in difficulty.

Under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, no repayments or interest are due from the borrower during the first 12 months of the loan term.

Please see a [summary of existing support](#).

Vaccine rollout and variant mitigation

Earlier this week, we saw one of the greatest milestones in our fightback against this virus, as the number of people who received their first dose ticked over 10 million, and has now surpassed 12 million.

We're now vaccinating at an incredible pace, and during one hour on Saturday we delivered nearly 1,000 jabs a minute across the United Kingdom.

The vaccine is our way out of this pandemic, and it is thanks to the hard work of everyone involved that we have vaccinated over 90% of over 75s and visited every eligible care home possible with older residents in England.

From the moment COVID-19 was identified over a year ago, the global community of researchers, scientists and manufacturers have concentrated all their expertise and their efforts into vaccines and treatments so we can beat this virus.

The emergence of other variants is yet another challenge they are rising to meet.

Our world-leading genomics capacity has allowed us to identify these different strains when they have appeared in the UK. Where we have seen evidence of the South African variant or other worrying mutations, we have moved to deploy surge testing to try and stop it spreading any further.

It is a timely reminder that currently, even with the vaccine rollout going well, we all need to live by the national restrictions and act as if we might have the virus to stop us spreading it.

We have also taken stringent measures to stop new variant cases coming into the country, with travel bans for over 30 countries identified as having the highest risk of importing these variants. This is in addition to the negative test you need to arrive in the country, and the 10-day quarantine you must undertake once you are here.

I know the government is working at speed to introduce a further measure of enforced hotel quarantine for arrivals from high-risk countries to introduce yet another barrier against these variants coming into the UK.

Our brilliant scientists and medical advisers are now working on the potential for new versions of existing vaccines to offer further protections against COVID variants. Last week we announced an agreement with the manufacturer CureVac to allow new varieties of vaccines based on messenger RNA technology to be developed quickly and to procure 50 million doses of a new version of a vaccine, if it is required.

But we should bear in mind that recent studies show the vaccines being deployed right now across the UK appear to work well against the COVID-19 variants currently dominant in the UK. In terms of other variants, not in the UK, we need to be aware that even where a vaccine has reduced efficacy in

preventing infection there may still be good efficacy against severe disease, hospitalisation, and death. This is vitally important for protecting the healthcare system.

While it is right and necessary to prepare for the deployment of an updated vaccine, we can take confidence from the current roll out and the protection it will provide all of us against this terrible disease.

We are ready to protect our most vulnerable and stay a step ahead of the virus, whatever it throws at us.

Thanks to the work you're doing, we're getting safer every day. But even though this programme is accelerating rapidly, this is still a lethal virus that is capable of causing devastation and disruption.

So while the vaccinators do their work, we must all keep following the steps that we know make a big difference: hands, face, space, and if you have symptoms get a test.

[Building back better with apprenticeships](#)

Today (8 February) marks the start of National Apprenticeship Week 2021, which this year shines a light on the apprentices and employers who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

To kick off the week, the government has announced brand new sector specific traineeship pilots in construction and rail to start this summer so more young people can gain the skills and confidence they need to get a job, or progress into an apprenticeship in key sectors of the economy. The experience from these traineeship opportunities will enable more young people to fast track their career, with many able to potentially complete their apprenticeship more quickly as a result of prior learning covered in the traineeship programme.

Apprentices from all walks of life have been working on the front line and many have played a key role in supporting the country throughout the pandemic, including on the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine that is helping the country overcome the virus. [Emilia Reyes Pabon](#), an apprentice Technician Scientist at the University of Oxford, worked on the UK's first COVID-19 vaccine to enter clinical trials. This vaccine, which Emilia worked on, gives people good protection against the new coronavirus variant which is now dominant in the UK.

Advanced Engineering Apprentices [Jack Day, Christopher Robinson and Christopher Young](#), at the Science and Technology Facilities Council, helped

in the national effort to produce 20 years' worth of mechanical ventilators in just 12 weeks.

Elsewhere, [Ethan Brennan](#) has worked during the pandemic on a respiratory ward, carrying out daily healthcare duties. As with all apprentices he was offered the opportunity to move to a more low risk area, but declined as he wanted to remain in his original placement to care for the elderly patients and support the team.

Apprenticeships and traineeships play a vital role in making sure people have the skills they need to get a well-paid job. They play a key part in the government's Plan for Jobs, designed to protect, support and create jobs for all ages as we build back better from the pandemic.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan said:

Coronavirus has had a huge impact on lives and livelihoods. As we build back better from the pandemic, we need to make sure people are able to take advantage of the opportunities apprenticeships provide.

“Whether it’s the benefits to the individual – the chance to earn while you learn, opening up new career paths that can transform lives. Or the benefits to business giving access new talent from all backgrounds.

This National Apprenticeship Week we should celebrate the apprentices up and down the country who have been stepping up throughout the pandemic to support the national effort. I am calling on everyone to get involved in to raise awareness of all the fantastic opportunities that are out there and share their inspiring stories.

Employers across the country including BT, Amazon, Accenture and Metropolitan Police have also continued to invest in and recognise the benefits apprentices are bringing to their workplaces, by pledging to offer thousands of exciting apprenticeship opportunities.

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries – everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management and banking. They are also supporting businesses of all sizes up and down the country to future proof their workforces, helping the country and the economy to build back better.

The highly successful traineeship programme has already helped nearly 120,000 young people get on the path to a great career since 2013. [Recent figures](#) show that 66% of trainees get a job, take up an apprenticeship or go on to further study within 6 months of completing their programme.

The programmes last between 6 weeks and 12 months, and focus on developing

vital employability skills, alongside additional English, maths and digital skills, combined with a work placement lasting a minimum of 70 hours.

Steve Radley, Director of Strategy and Policy at CITB said:

Getting more college students into construction jobs is a big challenge which the new Construction Traineeship should make a lot easier by providing a springboard for learners to start work or an apprenticeship. With job opportunities currently growing faster in construction than in many other industries, this is the right time for industry, Government, colleges and CITB to work together on practical solutions to bridge the gap between FE and work. Starting with bricklaying and moving on to the other occupations in a few months, we can make real progress this year.

Neil Robertson, Chief Executive at the National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR), said:

Through Traineeships NSAR is delighted to be creating new opportunities for talent to access the Rail sector. At a time of great challenge for Business, young people, and our future workforce, it is critical that we accelerate our ambitions to engage, attract and recruit for industries future skills needs. The development and delivery of high quality Traineeships will be a key entry point for members alongside, Apprenticeships, T-Levels and Kickstart. I am pleased that NSAR, with the support of side key industry leads and government, has been able to establish this provision in a collaborative, coherent and timely manner.

At its heart, the new Rail Traineeship gives employers more opportunities to create relevant, engaging and work relevant training, alongside quality partners.

[Thousands of virtual events](#) will take place throughout National Apprenticeship Week with leading employers including Rolls-Royce, Capgemini and Virgin Media, giving people the chance to find out more about the amazing benefits apprenticeships offer.

To support employers to take on more apprentices the government is offering up to £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire. Almost nineteen thousand applications have been submitted by employers. The cash boost is available until March 2021, so businesses can create even more opportunities and give more people the life changing chance to start a great career.

Employers can also now apply for a [£1000 cash boost](#) to help them take on new trainees.