

UK and India to accelerate collaboration on vaccines to prevent future pandemics

Experts from India and the UK will join forces through a new virtual hub to deliver vaccines for coronavirus and other deadly viruses, the UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced in India today (Wednesday 16 December).

The Foreign Secretary met Prime Minister Modi to discuss the UK and India working together as a force for good and launching the pioneering new vaccines hub which will share best practice for regulation and clinical trials, and foster innovation. He also visited a Delhi health clinic where Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines will be administered.

India's Serum Institute is poised to make over a billion doses of the coronavirus vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca. Unlike other vaccines, it can be stored at normal fridge temperatures, making it easier and cheaper to produce and keep – and distribute around the world.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

This Serum Institute and Oxford University partnership demonstrates the UK-India relationship at its best: a vaccine developed in the UK and made in India, drawing our brightest minds together to save lives as a global force for good.

A global pandemic requires a global solution. Scientific cooperation has made breakthroughs on coronavirus vaccines at record-breaking pace and the UK-India Vaccine Hub will now build on these innovations, to bring this crisis to an end and protect us all against future pandemics.

Millions of the doses made by the Serum Institute will be distributed to the world's poorest people via the global COVAX initiative, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Gavi, the vaccine alliance.

The UK has championed equitable access to any coronavirus vaccine for those who need it and has committed up to £619 million to COVAX to secure both the UK's access to coronavirus vaccines and distribute Covid-19 vaccines across the world.

India supplies more than 50% of the world's vaccines and 25% of the NHS's generic drugs. Closer UK-India cooperation on medicines and vaccines approvals will ensure speedy access for the UK to Indian-produced pharmaceuticals and help safeguard future supplies to the NHS.

The new hub will enable British and Indian experts to share knowledge on

clinical trials and regulatory approvals and get vaccines to people who need them most in a safe, secure and energy-efficient way.

It will protect the UK and India by enhancing cooperation on the development and distribution of coronavirus vaccines, better aligning the international regulation of vaccines and fostering partnerships to develop innovation 'moonshots' that can define vaccine delivery over the next decade and beyond.

During his meeting with Prime Minister Modi today, the Foreign Secretary signalled his ambition for a closer UK-India relationship as part of a wider UK focus on our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. They also spoke about the 10-year roadmap which heralds a new era for the UK and India with an ambitious plan for an Enhanced Trade Partnership.

The Foreign Secretary also met Minister for Education Ramesh Pokhriyal and agreed to work together on mutual recognition of academic qualifications, starting with master's degrees, over the next year.

The Foreign Secretary welcomed the signing of a new agreement between the University of Edinburgh and the Indian State of Gujarat to open a new biotechnology university in Gujarat in July 2021. This will be the first foreign university collaboration of its kind in India.

Notes to editors

- The UK is one of the biggest global funders of the World Health Organization and the single biggest donor to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI) and to Gavi.
- Of the £619 million the UK has committed to COVAX, a global initiative designed to provide countries equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, up to £548 million will go towards helping developing countries get coronavirus vaccines to those who need them. COVAX is co-led by Gavi, CEPI and WHO.
- The UK and India also announced today a new memorandum of understanding between India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and the United Kingdom Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (UK MHRA) agreeing to more frequent discussions on UK-India vaccine and pharmaceutical regulations, improving standards and sharing information to control against the trade of unlicensed products.
- In addition, the UK and India announced a new partnership to help UK and Indian scientists unlock the power of data, including the data within our genes, to deliver better diagnostics and enhanced life-saving treatments for cancer, diabetes, maternal health challenges and rare diseases.
- Free-to-use photos from the Foreign Secretary's visit to India are available to download [here](#).

Improving contingent liability management

News story

GAD has been announced as a key partner to help establish the new Contingent Liability Central Capability function for government.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has been selected as a key partner to establish a function to monitor and understand the evolving nature of the risks which can affect government.

Proposal and objectives

In March 2020 HM Treasury [published proposals](#) to improve the management of guarantees and insurance provided by government. GAD played a key role in developing the proposals, the objectives of which are to:

- improve the expertise within government to quantify and price risk
- improve compensation which government receives for risks it takes on
- establish incentives to reduce the probability of the risk materialising and the cost when it does
- clarify risk ownership to provide more certainty surrounding how the costs will be shared between government departments, the Exchequer and the private sector

Approval and funding

Central to these proposals is the establishment of the new Contingent Liability Central Capability (CLCC), which gained approval and funding in the [Spending Review 2020](#).

The CLCC will support government departments in the evaluation, pricing, and management of guarantees and insurance. It will monitor and report on the government's overall portfolio of risk from contingent liabilities.

Due to its risk management expertise, GAD was selected by HM Treasury to work with UK Government Investments to establish the CLCC in 2021.

GAD Actuarial Director Matt Gurden sits on the steering board guiding implementation of the CLCC. He said: “This is an important development, as this new function is designed to help government improve its understanding and management of risks. Our risk management experts will play a central part in the formation and ongoing capability of the CLCC.”

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Movement Assistance Scheme to support agrifood traders

New support for traders and businesses goes live today with the launch of the [Movement Assistance Scheme](#) (MAS), to help them meet new requirements for moving animals, plants and associated products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland after the transition period ends.

This includes advice to businesses through a dedicated helpline and means traders will not need to pay certification costs, which will be reimbursed by government to those certifying the products. Together, these measures will make it easier for traders to continue to move agri-food goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Farming, Fisheries and Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

“As we implement the Northern Ireland Protocol, these arrangements ensure there is unfettered access for traders and minimises the impact of these new requirements.

“The Movement Assistance Scheme will help make it easier to move animals, plants and agri-food goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and will give practical help and support to businesses.”

This follows the publication of the [Command Paper](#) setting out details of an agreement in principle on the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, including movement of agri-food goods.

From 1 January 2021, traders will need to meet new sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements following the end of the transition period given that the island of Ireland is treated as a single epidemiological unit. These SPS requirements include Export Health Certificates and Phytosanitary certificates for specific agri-food goods.

The scheme removes the need for traders to pay certification costs and will

reimburse the costs incurred by those certifying the products up to a set amount. We will monitor the performance of the scheme, and review it after three months to determine how to best provide ongoing support to traders.

In addition to the scheme launched today, the UK Government has agreed that authorised traders, such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers, will benefit from a grace period from certification requirements for products of animal origin, composite products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants and plant products, through to 1 April 2021.

[Guidance on the new scheme](#) and moving agri-food goods to and from Northern Ireland is available.

Consultation launched to improve funding for pension bodies

Press release

Government plans to increase funding for pensions industry protection bodies via the General Levy have been announced today.



The Department for Work and Pensions has launched a consultation on proposals to change the structure of the levy – the annual charge paid by pension schemes – and raise rates for the next three years, from April 2021 onwards.

The levy helps fund three arm's-length bodies sponsored by the DWP: The Pensions Regulator; The Pensions Ombudsman; and The Money and Pensions Service. It also funds part of the development costs for the pensions dashboard.

The levy rates were last increased in 2008/09, and were reduced by 13% in 2012/13. However, the levy deficit is expected to reach approximately £80 million by March 2021.

In considering its options, the government has sought to balance the need to adequately fund the pensions bodies, while also limiting its impact on the pensions schemes that fund it.

Minister for Pensions Guy Opperman said:

Changes within the pensions industry and regulatory landscape have resulted in growing responsibilities for the DWP's pensions bodies, putting additional pressure on their expenditure.

Whilst the government has protected the industry from increases in the levy over a number of years, we can no longer avoid the fact that action is needed to bring levy rates back into balance with expenditure.

The levy is payable by the trustees of registrable occupational and personal pension schemes. The amount levied on individual schemes is calculated based on the number of scheme members.

- Read the [full consultation](#) on GOV.UK.
- The consultation period begins on 16 December 2020 and runs until 27 January 2021.

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statement on UK – UAE Joint Economic Committee

On Tuesday 24th November 2020, the United Kingdom's Department for International Trade and the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Economy held their sixth Joint Economic Committee (JEC) in Dubai. The JEC was established in April 2009 under a Memorandum of Understanding, and aims to strengthen and develop bilateral cooperation between both countries, with a focus on trade and investment ties, creating opportunities for our business communities, and stimulating an exchange of technical expertise. The United Arab Emirates is the United Kingdom's largest trading partner in the Gulf, with total trade in goods and services between our countries reaching £17.8bn in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2020.

The JEC was co-chaired by the United Kingdom's Minister for International Trade, Ranil Jayawardena M.P. and the United Arab Emirates Minister of State for Foreign Trade H.E. Dr. Thani Ahmad Al Zeyoudi. There was a wide-ranging discussion on bilateral trade, ways to increase market access in priority sectors, as well as presentations from local government representatives for Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah on the trade and investment opportunities within their Emirates.

The JEC discussed the work of the United Arab Emirates-United Kingdom Business Council, hearing from the council's co-chairs Lord Udny-Lister and H.E. Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh. Discussion covered plans to expand the business council's membership to include more SMEs and entrepreneurs, as well as run a series of campaigns on priority issues in 2021, such as food security and space sector technology, where there is great potential for closer engagement between businesses in both our countries.

Discussion at the JEC focused on the Joint Trade and Investment Review currently underway between the United Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) too. It is a joint piece of work to provide an overview of the trade and investment relationship between the GCC and the United Kingdom, identify barriers to trade and investment, and draw clear recommendations for future cooperation that both parties can take forward to deepen our bilateral trading relationship in the long term. More details of this work can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

During the JEC, we celebrated the close collaboration between the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and our work to maintain the flow of trade – especially on products such as food and drink. Both delegations recognised the importance of closer collaboration for the post-pandemic recovery phase in order to build back better through technology, innovation and economic partnership; all of which contribute to increased economic diversification, clean growth, supply chain resilience, and strong regulatory environments.

The meeting saw the British and Emirati governments agree to tackle market access barriers and boost trade in a number of sectors ranging from Healthcare and Life Sciences to Intellectual Property. The next meeting of the JEC will be organised by the Department for International Trade and will be held in the United Kingdom's Pavilion at Dubai Expo in late 2021.