

[Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement on Syria sanctions](#)

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said;

“New EU sanctions against those involved with chemical weapons use in Syria represent a significant step in holding those who have used chemical weapons to account. We are sending a clear message that chemical weapons are completely unacceptable. Along with our international partners, the UK will continue to seek justice for the victims of these heinous attacks and to deter the further use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.”

Note to editors:

For further details, the EU press release can be read [here](#).

Further information

[Government Aims To Make India A Global Biotech Hub By 2020](#)

The Minister of State for Science and Technology & Earth Sciences, Mr. Y. S. Chowdary, has said that biotechnology will be the leader among the knowledge based industries of the 21st century. He said producing affordable products will be major issue for India.

[News story: Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal names new jetty for Navy's giant aircraft carriers](#)

The Princess unveiled a plaque at Portsmouth Naval Base this afternoon (Mon 20 Mar 17) officially naming the vast berth as The Princess Royal Jetty. It will be home to the Royal Navy's two new 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

Formerly known as Middle Slip Jetty, the berth has been upgraded and

strengthened to support the carriers as part of a raft of infrastructure upgrades taking place ahead of the arrival of the first ship – HMS Queen Elizabeth – later this year.

The Princess Royal Jetty from above

Her Royal Highness met some of the workers involved in the jetty's two-year refurbishment, as well as Royal Navy bomb disposal experts responsible for safely disposing of historic ordnance. A number of wartime devices have been recently uncovered by dredging work in preparation for the arrival of the two new aircraft carriers. The Portsmouth Naval Base Commander, Commodore Jeremy Rigby, hosted the visit by The Princess Royal. As Commodore-in-Chief for Portsmouth, she is a frequent visitor to the naval base and takes a keen interest in activities there.

Cdre Rigby said:

It was a privilege to welcome Her Royal Highness back into the naval base to officially name this historic jetty.

Work continues at a pace to get our naval base ready for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth later this year and the excitement builds as we now enter the final stages of work, testing and training ahead of her arrival.

The jetty, parts of which date back over 90 years, has been refurbished in addition to the dredging of the approach channel, inner harbour area and berth in order to make them deep and wide enough for the new ships, moving three million cubic metres of clay, sand and gravel from an area the size of 200 football pitches.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

The work on The Princess Royal Jetty is a fantastic example of how we are investing in the future of the Royal Navy and is the culmination of £100m of infrastructure upgrades in Portsmouth in preparation for our two new aircraft carriers.

The Queen Elizabeth class carriers, together with our F-35 jets will transform our ability to project power around the world.

Bespoke navigational lights, a high-voltage electrical supply and specialist carrier-specific gangways, known as 'brows', are also being provided as part of the £100m programme of works. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with VolkerStevin and BAE Systems to deliver the package of infrastructure needed for the carriers.

Last week, the giant American supply ship USNS Robert E Peary tested the strength of the new jetty by coming alongside in Portsmouth. The US ship,

which despite its mammoth size is still 200ft shorter than the Queen Elizabeth carriers, was the first vessel to use the jetty since its completion.

[News story: Defence Minister and Prince Harry celebrate 200 year relationship with Nepal](#)

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, who served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself, was at a special ceremony at the Nepali Embassy in London this afternoon to celebrate the end of the 200th year of UK-Nepal relations by the Nepali calendar.

The Minister and His Royal Highness Prince Harry met Gurkha families and watched Nepali cultural performances, including a traditional Khukuri dance by a Brigade of Gurkhas.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Having served in the Brigade of Gurkhas myself, I'm particularly proud of our brave Nepali Gurkhas and the key part they play in our Armed Forces and Britain's role on the world stage. This bicentenary year has been a unique chance to celebrate this and, as well as looking back, we can look forward our special relationship continuing long into the future.

With formal relations between the countries ratified in March 1816, the Brigade of Gurkhas of the British Army has recruited soldiers from Nepal since the 19th century. Gurkha soldiers fought bravely in both the First and Second World Wars, the Falkland Islands and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. Gurkha servicemen from Nepal have won 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest British award for gallantry.

They remain a fully integrated part of the British Armed Forces and, with a unique set of local knowledge, language skills and engineering experience, they also played a vital role in the humanitarian relief effort after Nepal suffered a devastating earthquake in 2015. They, along with the UK's C-130 RAF Hercules aircraft which delivered vital aid to vulnerable people, contributed to the UK's overall response to the disaster.

Press release: Foreign Secretary's Nowruz message 2017 (1396)

Boris Johnson wishes those celebrating in Britain and around the world a happy new year

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

“I want to give my best wishes to all those celebrating Nowruz around the world.

“People from many countries, communities and backgrounds will be gathering with their loved ones to celebrate the New Year and mark the start of Spring.

“Nowruz is an opportunity to look back on the year that has passed and look ahead to the year to come. So, however and wherever you are celebrating the New Year, I wish you health and happiness for the future. Nowruzetan piruz.”

Further information