

Foreign Secretary goes East to seize economic opportunities of South East Asia

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will join a meeting of ten South East Asian countries in Bangkok today (31 July) as the Government gets ready to leave the EU and strengthen ties with countries around the world.

On his first visit overseas since taking office, the Foreign Secretary is set to meet with foreign ministers from countries that collectively represent a market of 650 million people and have bilateral trade links with the United Kingdom worth £36 billion per year. This trading relationship is only set to grow, with economic growth forecasted for ASEAN countries, to be significantly above the global average over the next 5 years and the ASEAN region on course to become the world's fourth largest economy by 2030.

Speaking about his first visit, the Foreign Secretary said:

For too long, our trade focus has been on Europe. We need to expand our horizons, and raise our game. That means grasping the enormous global opportunities for the UK – and my first trip as Foreign Secretary will look to strengthen our friendships across Asia.

This region is already worth £36 billion per year in trade with the UK – and there are opportunities for us to boost that trade to benefit UK businesses and consumers. I'll also be looking at how we can strengthen our regional security cooperation, and work together on global challenges like climate change.

The Foreign Secretary will attend the opening ceremony of the annual meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers on 31 July and the gala dinner on 1 August. He will also hold a bilateral meeting with Thailand's Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai.

Alongside economic issues, the Foreign Secretary is also expected to discuss a range of regional security challenges and how to deepen co-operation to strengthen the rules-based international system.

Notes to editors

- ASEAN countries – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam,
- As part of the FCO's diplomatic expansion, the UK will open a new permanent British diplomatic mission in Jakarta specifically dedicated to growing our links with the ASEAN group later this year. By the end of 2020 the UK will have 282 posts in 180 countries & territories including representation at 10 international organisations.

Further information