

Foreign Secretary visit to Southeast Asia to build ties with fastest-growing parts of the world

- Liz Truss on week long mission to strengthen economic links and boost security cooperation in key region.
- Foreign Secretary will visit Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia – the world's fourth largest country by population
- Government has committed to deepen ties with the Indo-Pacific in the Integrated Review

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss will arrive in Malaysia today (Sunday 7th November) as part of a week-long visit to Southeast Asia to deepen economic and security links with fast-growing and increasingly influential countries.

Truss will visit Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia in order to strengthen the UK's relationship with each country, reflecting their growing economic and diplomatic heft. The Foreign Secretary believes UK ties with key Southeast Asian nations are "underpowered" and that deepening them will deliver jobs and opportunities to the UK while boosting security and prosperity in the region.

As COP26 continues in Glasgow, with a week of negotiations ahead, the Foreign Secretary will build closer ties on infrastructure investment into the region and step-up work through the Clean Green Initiative to co-invest in reliable, sustainable infrastructure with friends and partners.

Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss said:

I want to position Britain where the future growth is and to think about who our major partners will be in 2050 and beyond.

Southeast Asia will be the engine of the global economy and I want Britain to be part of that, upgrading our economic and security relations with the region to reflect its growing importance.

Deeper ties are a win-win, delivering jobs and opportunities for British people while ensuring an open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Working with key Southeast Asia partners will help us promote freedom and democracy across the world.

The visit follows the agreement of a new partnership between the UK and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The 'Dialogue Partnership' formalises UK relations with the group, including attendance at annual Foreign and Economic Ministers meetings along with other Ministerial engagements. It will also help advance discussions on closer economic and tech relationships.

ASEAN is a market of 650 million people, predicted to be fourth largest 'single market' by 2030 and trade between the UK and ASEAN nations was worth almost £34 billion in 2020.

All three economies on the visit are projected to grow at a faster rate than the world's largest economy, the US, out to 2050*. Indonesian is forecast to more than quintuple its GDP (PPP\$) by 532% between 2020 and 2050 – with increases in Malaysia and Thailand of 393% and 258% respectively.

In Malaysia, the Foreign Secretary will meet Prime Minister Ismail Sabri to discuss defence cooperation, as well as trade. She will also meet her Malaysian counterpart, Saifuddin Abdullah, to forge stronger ties on maritime security and champion free trade.

The Foreign Secretary will then travel to Thailand where she will meet Prime Minister Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai to discuss deeper digital and tech investment and security collaboration. As part of the visit, Truss will formally open the new British Embassy in Bangkok and visit the Triumph Motorcycle factory to promote British businesses in the region.

Finally in Indonesia, the Foreign Secretary will meet Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi for talks on economic diplomacy, trade and foreign policy issues including the Myanmar crisis and Afghanistan. She will also meet the ASEAN Secretary General to discuss deepening ties and working together to help the region build back better. During the visit, Liz Truss will also forge closer ties with the Indonesians on counterterrorism and cyber security.

*The Economist Intelligence Unit (2021) forecast