

Middle East Minister visits Gulf to deepen economic ties

Minister for Asia and the Middle East Amanda Milling has completed her second trip to the Gulf this week, visiting Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The visit came as ties between the UK and the Gulf Co-operation Council are strengthening quickly. Last month the UK announced that GCC countries will be exempt from visa requirements, joining the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme and also launched Free Trade Agreement discussions.

During a one-day visit to Bahrain, Minister Milling met Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Dr Abdullatif Al Zayani, where they further reflected on the strong bilateral relationship. Ms Milling congratulated the Minister for Bahrain's continued progress in human rights and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to support Bahrain's work in this area.

She also had productive meetings with the Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance and National Economy. Ms Milling heard from influential young Bahrainis about their hopes and aspirations, met senior business figures, and visited the UK Naval Support Facility for a briefing on UK security contributions in the region, alongside the US and other defence partners.

In Qatar, the Minister met with her counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister and HE Sultan Saad Al Muraikhi to discuss strengthening the bilateral partnership, building on the recent visit to the UK by His Highness the Amir, including areas of regional and international security.

The Minister also met with Nasser Al Khater, CEO Qatar 2022 ahead of the World Cup to discuss what England and Wales fans can expect during the tournament, the Minister of Labour Dr. Ali bin Samikh Al-Marri to discuss labour rights and the Minister of Public Health, Dr Hannan Al Kuwari to discuss cooperation on global health matters.

In the UAE, Minister Milling met with key Emirati officials such as Dr Anwar Gargesh and HE Sheikh Shakhboub bin Nahyan to discuss how to drive forward the 'Partnership for the Future' (P4F) agreement signed by the PM and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan during a Guest of Government visit to the UK in September 2021.

Minister of State for Asia and the Middle East, Amanda Milling MP said:

Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE are close friends of the UK. We are making it easier for UK companies to trade with companies in the Gulf through a Free Trade Agreement and for citizens of the Gulf to travel to the UK through our Electronic Visa Authorisation scheme.

In Bahrain, I reiterated that the UK is a reliable partner and

we'll continue to work closely together on many areas, including regional security, human rights and trade and investment.

In Qatar I had the opportunity to discuss on-going preparations for the World Cup, and our support for a safe and enjoyable experience for British fans.

In the UAE, my counterparts and I discussed the full range of shared priorities outlined in the Partnership for the Future, from boosting bilateral trade to regional stability and development.