

News story: Alok Sharma marks 45 years of UK-China Ambassadorial ties

In Beijing on Thursday 16 February, Mr Sharma met Chinese Assistant Foreign Ministers Liu Haixing and Kong Xuanyou for wide-ranging political talks to strengthen the global partnership between the UK and China. The Minister emphasised the UK's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative and explored opportunities to develop closer infrastructure and finance partnerships.

The Minister's visit to Beijing follows a three-day tour of south China, leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen. The delegation showcased world class UK expertise and explored trade and collaboration opportunities across the region.

Speaking at a reception in Beijing, Mr Sharma said:

Throughout the last 45 years, the UK-China relationship has been steadily strengthening. Personal ties and mutual understanding are at the heart of any successful relationship. That is why promoting business, cultural and educational links is so important to us. Forty-five years ago, there were 200 Chinese students in the UK and today we welcome over 150,000 Chinese students at universities, colleges and schools across the UK. Through our Generation UK programme, we are working to increase the number of British students studying in China from 5000 currently to 20,000 by 2020.

As we look ahead to the future for the UK and China, it is important to reflect on what our two countries have achieved over the last 45 years. Trade is clearly a key element of our partnership. In 45 years, trade between our two countries has increased by an incredible 200-fold to CNY 553 billion. We want to do even more. We are also working together to address some of the significant challenges facing the world today, such as conflict in the Middle East and international terrorism. Our Infrastructure Alliance will allow us to work together to build the capacity of third countries, and we are tackling global health issues such as anti-microbial resistance.

An anniversary is always a good moment to reflect on our past achievements. This one is no exception. In the past 45 years since our countries established diplomatic full diplomatic relations, the pace and scope of what we have achieved individually and together is extraordinary.

Further information

Follow Foreign Office Minister Alok Sharma on twitter [@AlokSharma_RDG](#)

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[News story: UK urges Coalition to maintain momentum against Daesh](#)

With Daesh losing in both Iraq and Syria, Ministers considered the Coalition campaign plan for 2017. This included plans for the operation to liberate Western Mosul, which the Defence Secretary reviewed with the Iraqi Prime Minister and Defence Minister during his visit to Iraq last weekend. With eastern Mosul recently liberated by Iraqi forces, operations to free the west of the city from Daesh's tyranny will start shortly.

The RAF has been in action, striking Daesh around the approaches to the city in recent weeks ahead of the launch of the operation, including sinking a Daesh heavy machine gun team last week on a boat on the River Tigris. On Tuesday careful surveillance operations allowed a building on the north-western outskirts of Mosul to be identified as a Daesh headquarters. With Iraqi forces keeping close watch from across the Tigris, a flight of Typhoons were able to conduct a highly accurate attack late at night – two Paveway IVs demolished the target.

[RAF Typhoons bomb a Daesh HQ](#)

RAF fast jets and remotely piloted aircraft have now carried out over 1,200 airstrikes against Daesh, second only to the United States in numbers of Coalition strikes.

In Syria, where the picture is more complicated, the Defence Secretary confirmed that by spring the operation to isolate Raqqa, the last major city Daesh holds in Syria, would be complete. It is expected that thereafter the liberation of the city itself will begin.

As the fight against Daesh enters a new phase, Ministers reviewed Coalition requests to make the training effort more flexible. The Defence Secretary last month authorised UK personnel to deliver training at secured and protected locations in Iraq, in addition to the training sites at Taji, Al Asad, Besmayah and Irbil, where personnel are already deployed. By training forward Britain will now deliver the infantry skills, counter-IED, combat first aid and bridge-building training where Iraqi forces need it. British forces previously mentored Iraqi forces carrying out bridge building ahead of

the liberation of eastern Mosul.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Daesh is losing ground, fighters, and funding. Now we need to keep up the pressure on Mosul and Raqqa to deal Daesh a decisive blow. Britain will continue playing its leading role providing vital intelligence, precision airstrikes, and training Iraqi forces where they need it.

The meeting of Coalition Defence Ministers took place following discussions the day before on what more NATO would do to protect its southern borders. Sir Michael confirmed that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training and capacity building mission in Iraq. This effort will help Iraqis defeat Daesh with training including in countering explosive devices. This commitment builds on the work that Britain is already doing in the country, where, we are helping to train Iraqi forces at an unprecedented level, with over 3,000 being trained a month.

Read more about UK activity against Daesh [here](#)

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay](#)

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Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay

Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay in succession to Dr Jeremy Hobbs, who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Hedges will take up his appointment in August 2017.

Curriculum Vitae

Full name Matthew James Hedges

2015 – 2016 Princeton University, Master in Public Policy – International Relations

2012 – 2015 Rangoon, Deputy Head of Mission

2009 – 2012 Tokyo, Head of Political Section
2008 – 2009 Turks & Caicos Islands, Head of Governor's Office
2006 – 2008 House of Commons, International Development Select Committee,
Senior Clerk
2005 Basra, Head of Chancery
2005 – 2006 FCO, Team Leader, EU Constitutional Treaty/Future of Europe, EU
Directorate
2001 – 2005 Rabat, Second Secretary Political
2000 UK Mission to the UN in New York, Adviser
1999 – 2000 FCO, Desk Officer, NATO Enlargement, Security Policy Department
1999 Joined FCO

Further information

[News story: Appointment, reappointment and extensions of Parole Board members](#)

Ministers have approved the appointment, reappointment and extensions of Parole Board members. Appointments are subject to security clearance.

Parole Board members are appointed under Schedule 19 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The appointment of Parole Board members are made after an open, transparent recruitment process which complies – save for judicial members – with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA). There are currently 214 Parole Board members.

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

The Parole Board was established by the Criminal Justice Act 1967. It is an Executive Non Departmental Public Body sponsored by the MoJ.

Appointments

Ministers have approved the appointment of 104 Parole Board members:

Independent members

The members below were appointed from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2019:

- Shazia Ahmed
- Katy Barrow
- Daniel Bunting
- Dr Rob Cawley

- Joanne Chambers
- Michelle Coulson
- Jo Dowling
- Jacki Duff
- Robert Edmondson-Jones
- Hedd Emrys Vine
- Melanie Essex
- Paulene Gandhi
- Victoria Goodfellow
- Christine Lawrie
- Elaine Moloney
- Douglas Paxton
- Alison Pearson
- Wendy Poynton
- Margaret Prythergch
- Elizabeth Rantzen
- Lisa Sanderson
- Karol Sanderson
- Victoria Scott
- Helena Suffield-Thompson
- Bill Warren
- Sarah Wells
- Jeremy Weston
- Cassie Williams

The following were appointed from 1 July 2017 and until 30 June 2021.

- Sarfraz Ahmad
- Sally Allbeury
- Nicola Auguste
- Joanna Cain
- Rachel Cook
- Amy Coyte
- Angharad Davies
- Emma Davy
- Stefan Fafinski
- Paul French
- Chris Fry
- Philip Hindson
- Gill Hirst
- Lisa Lamb
- Timothy Lawrence
- Siobhan McBride
- Fran McGrath
- Lynn O'Malley
- Helen Potts
- Jayne Salt
- Alex Simmonds
- Alice Sims
- Rebecca Sims
- Robert Smith

- Kay Taylor
- Julia Thackray
- Carol Trimmer

Ministers have approved the appointment from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020, the following serving Parole Board members who were successful applicants in the recent open recruitment process.

- Graham Bull
- Sue Dale
- Malcolm Davidson
- Sian Flynn
- Alan Harris
- Bill Mayne
- Clare Mitchell
- Susan Smith
- Ilana Tessler

Judicial members

Ministers have approved the appointment of the following judicial members from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2019.

- HH Anthony Ansell
- HH Pamela Badley
- HH Roger Chapple
- HHJ Stephen Dawson
- HH John Dowse
- HHJ John Evans
- HH Peter Grobel
- HH Simon Hammond
- HH John Harrow

These members below have been appointed from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020.

- The Hon Sir David Calvert-Smith
- HH Nick Coleman
- HH Michael Lawson
- HHJ Philip Wassall

Psychiatrist members

Ministers have approved the appointment of Luke Birmingham and Huw Stone from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020.

Ministers have appointed two serving members: Lynne Daly and Caryl Morgan from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020.

Ministers have approved the appointment of Tim McInerny, Chris Jones and Sajid Muzaffar from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2021.

Psychologist members

Ministers have approved the appointment of the following members. From 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020:

- Abby Fenton
- Jane Gilbert
- Victoria Magrath
- Mary McMurran
- Rebecca Milner
- Wendy Morgan
- Brendan O'Mahony
- Sue Vivian-Byrne

From 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2021.

- Fiona Ainsworth
- Pamela Attwell
- Elina Baker
- Claire Barker
- Linda Blud
- Vivien Le Fort
- Lindy Maslin
- Libby Payne
- Rachel Roper
- Georgina Rowse
- Alyson Smith
- Claire Smith

Re-appointments

Judicial members

Ministers have approved the reappointment of four Judicial members. Details of those reappointed and the duration of each reappointment are provided below.

- HHJ Jeffrey Burke QC from 31 August 2016 until 30 August 2018
- HH Robert Brown from 1 September 2016 until 30 August 2018
- HH Michael Burr from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2018
- HHJ Nicholas Webb from 1 October 2016 until 26 September 2020

Psychiatrist members

Ministers have approved the reappointments from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2018 of:

- Ian Keitch
- John O'Grady
- Helen Whitworth

Psychologist members

Ministers have approved the reappointment of 13 members. Details of those reappointed and the duration of each reappointment are provided below.

- Martha Blom-Cooper from 17 April 2016 until 16 April 2018
- Joanna Homewood from 31 August 2016 until 30 August 2018
- Eleni Belevanaki from 7 November 2016 until 6 November 2021
- Jacqueline Bates-Gaston from 28 November 2016 until 13 November 2021

From 28 November 2016 until 27 November 2021;

- Eliza Harris
- Julia Higginbottom
- Claire Hunt
- Sarah Khan
- Sharon Leitch
- Lorraine Mosson-Jones
- Caroline Preston
- Kate Seward
- Anne Williams

Extension of appointment

The CPA also agreed an exemption from the provisions of the Code of Practice in order that Ministers might extend the appointment of a number of serving Parole Board members so that they might support the mentoring and training of newly appointed members. These were as follows:

Independent members

Ministers have approved the extension of the appointments from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2018 of:

- Ms Kim Evans
- James Haines MBE
- Peter Haynes
- Andrew Mimmack
- Emma Pusill
- Alan Rayner
- Denise White

Psychiatrist members

Ministers have approved the extension of the appointments from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2018 of:

- Dawn Black
- Derek Chiswick
- Rosmarie Cope
- Paul Courtney
- Sukh Lally

Declarations of political interest

The following Members have declared that they have political interest within the last 5 years:

- Victoria Scott has declared that she had canvassed on behalf of the Labour Party or helped at election, she also acted as a teller outside the local polling station.
- Nicola Auguste has declared that she had canvassed on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Party or helped at the previous 2 general elections by assisting with the organisation of election day activities. This included co-ordinating door to door canvassing and updating databases. She also attended polling stations to ask if voters would give their voter number.
- Sian Flynn has declared that she canvassed for the Conservative Party in the 2015 General Election.
- Chris Jones has declared that he is an active member of the Labour Party and holds an Executive Committee position in his local constituency party. In 2015, he stood as a Parliamentary candidate. In 2016, he stood as the Labour and Cooperative candidate in the Police and Crime Commissioner election.
- Peter Haynes has declared that he stood as an Independent member of Eccleston Parish Council from 2006 to 2011.

[News story: UK's national cyber security centre to help improve skills in Wales](#)

Opened officially by Her Majesty The Queen on Tuesday 14 February 2017, the National Cyber Security Centre's operational nerve centre in London will manage incidents, analyse threats and offer advice for online security.

By working with businesses, educational facilities and authorities across the UK, the centre will enable generations to navigate the internet safely and be protected from the growing threat of online attack.

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Ben Gummer, toured the centre and outlined the important role UK regions will play in boosting British cyber security.

He said:

Although the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is based in London, cyber attacks can happen anywhere, at any time – and we need to be prepared.

That is why we are expanding our outreach programmes such as CyberFirst, GCHQ degrees and academic centres of excellence, so we can increase skills, build capability and fight cyber attacks wherever they occur.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

Cyber security is of growing importance in our daily lives and I am pleased Wales is playing its part through offering GCHQ-certified degrees.

Hackers are no respecters of national boundaries and businesses and Government installations in Wales are under threat as much as anywhere else in the UK. Wales will now be able to produce the highly skilled workforce we need to combat this new frontier in crime.

The Government is fully committed to defending against cyber threats and a five year National Cyber Security Strategy (NCSS) was announced in November 2016 by the Cabinet Office, supported by £1.9 billion of transformational investment.

It has also announced the creation of Industry 100 – a pioneering initiative that will grant 100 highly competitive NCSC secondments to private sector staff who will work in the centre to bring innovation that wouldn't have been possible without collaboration.

A key objective of the NCSC is to reduce risks to the UK by working with public and private sector organisations to improve their cyber security. Industry 100 will see high quality staff embedded into the NCSC to achieve a better understanding of cyber security using wide and diverse thinking.

The NCSC will work closely with law enforcement and the wider public sector, including the National Crime Agency (NCA) to support cyber security awareness campaigns. The NCSC is tirelessly committed to enhancing the UK's reputation of being a world centre for cyber security research, innovation and skills.

The popular CyberFirst programme is inspiring, encouraging and developing a cyber-savvy cohort of students to help protect the UK's digital society.