Minister for the Middle East visits Tehran

Dr Murrison had meetings with senior Iranian government representatives, including Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, the Chairman of the Strategic Council of Foreign Relations Dr Kamal Kharazi, and the Deputy Head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran Behrouz Kamalvandi.

The UK has an important ongoing diplomatic dialogue with Iran; this was the third UK ministerial visit in 12 months. At this time of heightened tensions, the UK continues to use all diplomatic tools available to us to prevent escalation and miscalculation.

The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa, Dr Andrew Murrison, said:

> This visit has provided an important opportunity for open, frank and constructive engagement with the Iranian Government.
>
> In Tehran I was clear about the UK's long-held concerns over Iran's activities in the region.
>
> I reiterated the UK's assessment that Iran almost certainly bears responsibility for recent attacks on tankers in the Gulf of Oman. Such activity, which carries a high risk of miscalculation, needs to stop to allow for immediate de-escalation of rising tensions.
>
> And I was clear that the UK will continue to play its full part alongside international partners to find diplomatic solutions to reduce the current tensions.
>
> I reiterated the UK's determination to maintain the nuclear deal which is in our shared security interests. I was clear that Iran must continue to meet its commitments under the deal in full – including the limits imposed on its low-enriched uranium stockpile.
>
> While in Tehran, I also pressed again on behalf of the UK Government for the urgent and unconditional release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and all British-Iranian dual nationals who are being arbitrarily detained.

Further Information

Boost for space technology essential to keep UK in first place for future of auto industry

The new Darwin programme aims to test seamless highspeed data connections using 5G and satellites. Next generation telecoms satellites will ensure that vehicles stay connected outside of towns and cities which typically have good mobile signals.

Connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) will transform travel with safer, smoother and smarter road journeys through high levels of automation facilitated by being able to communicate with other vehicles and to road infrastructure around them.

However, they require robust and seamless high-speed data connections to operate their complex systems effectively.

O2 research shows that CAVs are expected to generate unprecedented levels of data – 4TB per hour – highlighting the need for next generation connectivity.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

> Our world-beating space and auto industries have a proven track record in driving forward pioneering research, while the UK's satellite services are constantly enhancing services such as the quality of our communications, healthcare and environmental monitoring.
>
> This new partnership between Government and industry will build on our world-leading reputation in the development and manufacture of satellites even further, to bring together two of the UK's great strengths – automotive and space. Putting us at the forefront of the next generation of self-driving cars of tomorrow – a key ambition in our modern Industrial Strategy.

Since 2014, the Government has invested significantly into the research and development of CAVs – including £120 million in CAV projects, with a further £68 million coming from industry contributions.

Catherine Mealing-Jones, Director of Growth, UK Space Agency, said:

> Autonomous vehicles require robust high-speed mobile data connections to operate effectively, so building the technology to link autonomous vehicles to telecoms satellites means that you will be able to take your car wherever you want to go, not just where there's decent mobile signal.

> The future of mobility is one of the UK government's Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges, so I'm delighted to support Project Darwin to ensure that this critical technology is developed in Harwell, bringing expertise, jobs and growth to Britain.

This research will be based at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Oxfordshire, and is co-funded through the UK Space Agency's investment in the European Space Agency's programme of Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES).

Other partners are Oxford and Glasgow universities, telecoms business O2 Telefonica, Spanish satellite operator Hispasat, and the Darwin Innovation Group Oxford.

Darwin is developing an ARTES 'Partner Study' programme with UK support (first phase £2m) to help define all the different elements needed to deliver the larger programme. The future of mobility is one of the UK government's Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges. UK Space Agency is working closely with Darwin and O2 to support this ambition in the UK.

Derek McManus, COO at O2 said:

> Project Darwin is an important piece of the connected and autonomous vehicle puzzle. The research taking place at Harwell during the next four years will be vital in the creation of new transport ecosystems for the UK public and the the companies that will offer these services. Our approach to this project is part of our wider strategy to collaborate with British businesses, partners and start-ups to unlock the possibilities of 5G for customers and wider UK economy.

5G connectivity delivered by converged networks will also support remote and rural enterprise and provide ubiquitous communications, one of the UK Space Agency's strategic priorities in telecoms.

Dr Stephan von Delft, University of Glasgow Adam Smith Business School, said:

> Ecosystems that connect data, technologies and users create opportunities for business model innovation. However, new business models for 5G connected ecosystems will not emerge fully formed. Firms must therefore systematically explore, test and adapt new business models as conditions change. Our research aims to support Project Darwin in this process.

Daniela Petrovic, Darwin Innovation Group co-founder said:

> Our team at Harwell is thrilled to gather key innovation partners

> like Telefonica, UK Space Agency and ESA, together with a number of start-ups from Oxfordshire with whom we have longstanding relationships, to join forces in this exciting innovation.
>
> Our aim is that Mobility as a Service (MaaS) developed by project DARWIN will benefit society in multiple ways: by creating new apprenticeships in this newly developing area, informing policies and regulations related to connected and autonomous vehicles, and creating a new industry vertical".

Older tyre ban in bid to improve road safety

- government consulting on plans to ban old tyres for buses, coaches, lorries and minibuses
- our priority is keeping people safe on our roads, and we are taking action to reduce the number of people killed or injured
- new law could be introduced this year and come into force early 2020

New laws banning older tyres on large vehicles to improve road safety could be introduced later this year. Tyres aged 10 years and older would be banned from use on buses, coaches, lorries and minibuses in new proposals being consulted on from today (23 June 2019). If supported, the new rules could be in force by early 2020.

The consultation follows a passionate campaign by Frances Molloy, whose son Michael died in a coach crash caused by a 19-year-old tyre in 2012. Her work with the 'Tyred' campaign led to the consultation being launched today.

Road Safety Minister Michael Ellis said:

> Our priority is keeping people safe on our roads, and we are taking action to reduce the number of people killed or injured.
>
> There is increasing evidence that age affects the safety of tyres, which is why I think older tyres should not be used on large vehicles.
>
> I would like to thank Frances Molloy and the Tyred campaign for their work raising this important issue – the changes we are consulting on could save lives.

The consultation, which runs for 10 weeks, asks whether older tyres should be banned on buses, coaches, lorries and minibuses as well as whether this ban should be extended to taxis and private hire vehicles. It follows other measures the government has put into place since 2012.

Bus operators have been advised not to use older tyres at the front of their vehicles. Inspections of 130,000 buses by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency since 2017 showed only 0.06 per cent were in breach of the guidance.

The DVSA also updated its guidance on maintaining roadworthiness to say tyres aged 10 years and older should not be used on the front axles of heavy goods vehicles, as well as buses and coaches.

A growing body of evidence includes research, commissioned by the Department for Transport and published last week, which shows ageing tyres suffer corrosion which could cause them to fail.

The evidence also includes reports from two fatal crashes – one involving a coach on the A3 in 2012, and another on the M5 in 2017, involving a heavy goods vehicle.

The consultation follows continued work to establish the impact of age on tyre performance. Today's consultation comes ahead of a refreshed Road Safety Statement and two-year action plan, which will be published shortly.

MOD appoints first female Chief Scientific Adviser

She will be the first female to hold the role and joins the Department as a distinguished academic with a commitment to science-driven policy. The MOD's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) oversees the Department's core research programme, leads technology strategy, and works closely with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) to develop battle-winning capabilities.

Recent CSA-funded successes include the launch of pioneering space technology, improved body armour for our personnel, and a life-saving test for sepsis.

Professor McLean is currently a Senior Research Fellow in Theoretical Life Science at All Souls College in Oxford University and has previously held a number of other academic appointments, including as a Research Fellow at the Institut Pasteur in Paris.

The announcement comes on the International Day of Women in Engineering, on which military personnel are undertaking engagement activities to increase

female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. This weekend the Army are holding an event in Northern Ireland with over 200 female cadets, while the Royal Navy and RAF will be promoting success stories to increase awareness of STEM career opportunities in the military.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

> The Chief Scientific Adviser plays a key role in ensuring that our armed forces stay at the cutting edge of technology and innovation.
>
> It's poignant that we appoint Professor McLean as our first female Chief Scientific Adviser on International Women in Engineering Day, where we look to increase female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
>
> As a highly respected scientist, Professor McLean is a role model to all those wanting to pursue a career in this area, and will bring extensive knowledge and expertise to the role.

The Chief Scientific Adviser advises on all science and technology matters in Defence, oversees Defence Science and Technology (DST); and works closely with our international allies to build partnerships and tackle shared challenges.

The Chief Scientific Adviser directs Defence's core research programme (set at 1.2% of the Defence budget) to develop and sustain cutting-edge capabilities for the armed forces, drive innovation, and reduce costs. This forms part of Defence's £1.6bn annual investment in research and development under our NATO commitment to invest 20% of the Defence budget on equipment.

Professor Angela McLean said:

> This is an exciting time to be joining the Ministry of Defence, with so much important research going on to keep our armed forces at the forefront of innovation and technology.
>
> Britain's military has a distinguished record in developing and using science and I plan to make sure that we continue to build on that tradition.
>
> I hope to use my skills and experience from the range of issues I've worked on to continue our world-leading reputation in science and technology.

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser said:

> Congratulations to Professor Dame Angela McLean on her appointment as Chief Scientific Adviser to the MOD.

She has had a distinguished scientific career to date and will be a significant asset to the department, bringing deep expertise and broad experience across science.

I would like to extend a warm welcome from me and the network of Chief Scientific Advisers across government, and I look forward to working with her.

More women in engineering 'an absolute necessity' for future of transport

- government calls on more women to consider career in engineering, helping to deliver major transport infrastructure projects like HS2 and Heathrow expansion
- follows meeting of senior women in transport this week to explore barriers facing women in sector, from perceptions of 'men in hard hats' to parent policies
- female engineers needed to meet growing skills demands in transport industry, with over 340,000 extra workers needed in the sector by 2033

The government has today (23 June 2019) called on women of all ages to consider a career in engineering, making clear the transport industry must diversify to meet growing skills demands.

With women currently representing only 12% of the engineering workforce and 18% of the transport sector workforce, hiring more women is essential for the delivery of major transport infrastructure projects like HS2 and Heathrow expansion.

It is estimated that by 2033, there will be a combined shortfall of around 341,000 jobs in the sector.

The call follows the convening of a roundtable on women in transport this week by the Department for Transport's Permanent Secretary Bernadette Kelly, attended by senior female leaders in the sector. Representatives from the Royal Academy of Engineering, Ford, Heathrow Airport, Network Rail, the Women in Maritime Taskforce, and Virgin Atlantic were present.

Key points of discussion included unconscious bias, challenging perceptions, and parent policies.

To coincide with International Women in Engineering Day today, the government is also celebrating the success of the Year of Engineering campaign in increasing the awareness of opportunities in engineering. The campaign delivered an estimated 5.1 million experiences of engineering for young

people in 2018 – far exceeding the one million target.

Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport, Bernadette Kelly, said:

> We want to challenge traditional perceptions of engineering to ensure our transport industry has the skills it needs for the future.
>
> This isn't just the right thing to do, it's necessary for engineering and transport to thrive. We simply need more engineers and people in the industry as investment grows. Currently, we're not making use of a huge section of society and that can't continue.
>
> Building on progress and productive conversations with industry, I hope to help women across the country and of all ages see there are amazing careers in transport – from building site to boardroom.

HS2 minister Nusrat Ghani said:

> In this country, we build roads, rail track, we expand airports, and we need engineers from all corners of the country to help us deliver our ambitions. Engineers are also at the heart of developing greener and more accessible transport, using innovation to design a better world that works for everyone.
>
> The engineering and transport worlds have been too male for too long. A more diverse workforce will not only mean more opportunities for women, but will help the industry reach its potential.

Dr Hayaatun Sillem, CEO of the Royal Academy of Engineering, said:

> It was a pleasure to take part in this roundtable. I'm delighted to see the Department for Transport working to support and encourage people from all backgrounds to pursue careers in engineering, particularly women and people from BAME backgrounds.
>
> From creativity to innovation, motivation, talent retention, health and safety and competitiveness, the evidence base is clear and growing regarding the benefits of diverse teams. The Royal Academy of Engineering is working closely with partners across the profession to ensure that the future engineering workforce truly reflects the society it serves.

Danielle Flynn, Standards and Controls Engineering Apprentice at Jaguar Land Rover, said:

> I was one of the young girls in school who thought an Engineer was a mechanic – a man fixing a car. How little did I know? Engineering opens so many pathways from software development to project management on fast movement projects. It is exciting and not one day is the same. I am into my fourth year of working at Jaguar Land Rover and I am learning more day by day.
>
> To all the younger women thinking of a career in transport industries, do not be put off! I cannot tell you how glad I am that I decided on this route and I would recommend it to everyone. Together we can work together for a better future for women!

The roundtable also discussed progress and successes being made in this area in the transport industry, from Network Rail collecting gender data, to the work groups such as HS2 Ltd providing women with opportunities to get work experience in the industry.

This success is further bolstered by forthcoming research carried out by EngineeringUK, which will show that the desirability of engineering as a career among the core audience of 7 to 11 year-olds has been boosted by 35% among those aware of the government's Year of Engineering campaign.

The government is continuing to give young people from different backgrounds inspiring experiences of engineering through the legacy campaign 'Engineering: Take a Closer Look'.