

Welsh Government flies the flag for Wales in celebration of St David's Day

First Minister Carwyn Jones is launching the inaugural 'Wales in London' week in London this morning. He will make a keynote speech promoting Wales as a key investment location at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' (RICS) headquarters in Parliament Square.

The First Minister will also host a St David's Day reception at Lancaster House to engage with London-based foreign diplomats and businesses with an interest in Wales.

On Tuesday, the First Minister is travelling to Washington and New York to meet with companies looking to invest in Wales and will discuss trade and business links with political representatives.

While in New York, the First Minister will host a reception to mark the launch of a new £5 million international tourism campaign. The 2017 Year of Legends campaign will show Wales is a country rich in history, storytelling and creativity.

Meanwhile, Finance and Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford will be celebrating St David's day in Brussels, where he will be hosting the annual evening reception at the British Residence.

Mark Drakeford will also hold a series of meetings with representatives from European Institutions and the UK's Permanent Representative to the EU, Sir Tim Barrow, to discuss Wales' priorities as Britain prepares to leave the EU.

Environment and Rural Affairs Secretary, Lesley Griffiths, is travelling to the United Arab Emirates this week to promote Wales' thriving food and drink industry. During her trip, Lesley Griffiths will join twenty five Welsh food and drink producers at Gulfood, the world's largest food trade event, and hear about plans for the next World Expo, taking place in Dubai 2020.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"St David's Day 2017 marks a step-change in our ambition to promote Wales to the world like never before.

"During these times of great change, there is a need for us to work even harder to raise Wales' international profile and performance. In recent years we have seen record inward investment to Wales; record tourism figures – including an increase of 12% over the last twelve months alone – while our products are now exported across the globe. We are, therefore, well placed to take on the challenge.

"This week, my Cabinet and I will celebrate our national day by promoting Wales around the world and celebrating everything we have to offer. We will use every opportunity to showcase our unique culture, history and language –

and demonstrate that Wales is a great place to visit and do business.”

Global Crude oil price of Indian Basket was US\$ 55.18 per bbl on 24.02.2017

The international crude oil price of Indian Basket as computed/published today by Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell

North China city criticized for worsening air quality

China's top environmental watchdog has criticized authorities of Shijiazhuang, capital city of Hebei Province, which neighbors Beijing, for worsening air quality and insufficient efforts in environmental protection.

The air quality in Shijiazhuang has worsened sharply since October 2016 and most pollution indicators deteriorated in January and February of this year, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said Monday after a recent inspection team to the city led by Chen Jining, minister of environmental protection.

In January this year, PM2.5 density in Shijiazhuang surged 51.5 percent from a year earlier to 200 micrograms per cubic meter, the MEP said in a statement.

Chen attributed the situation largely to lax environmental efforts of local governments, especially those at the county and township levels, inefficient management, a cluster of highly polluting enterprises and poor implementation of response measures to tackle severe pollution.

Chen urged more efforts in locating the source of pollutants, reducing pollutant emission, strengthening supervision over key enterprises, pressing ahead with industrial upgrading and improving efficiency of environmental protection.

Chinese cities suffered from more days of air pollution in January, with Shijiazhuang being the worst polluted among the nation's 74 major cities, the MEP said last week.

China is intensifying efforts to fight pollution and environmental degradation after decades of growth left the country saddled with problems such as smog and contaminated soil.

Nearly £14 million for improvements to Ysbyty Gwynedd A&E department

The significant funding will pay for infrastructure improvements at Ysbyty Gwynedd hospital, creating more capacity to deal with peaks in demand while improving the environment for patients, staff and visitors alike.

The funding is for the period 2017-18 and 2019-20 and it is envisaged that work will start in March 2017. The investment will fund:

- A single point of entry to the department
- Three triage rooms
- A four bay resuscitation area plus a separate isolation bay with external access
- Eight cubicles plus two treatment rooms
- Eight chairs in minor injuries
- An assessment unit including relatives' waiting room
- Paediatrics facilities including three assessment rooms and dedicated waiting rooms.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m delighted that we’ve been able to announce this capital money for Ysbyty Gwynedd, it’ll make a real difference to patients accessing emergency and urgent care in North West Wales.

“What is particularly exciting about this new development is the “One Door” approach to medical care, where emergency and urgent care patients will enter through a single point to get the most appropriate care based on their clinical need. This allows them to be treated and discharged or referred on to other specialist services within the hospital or community setting as quickly as possible.

“Once again this is the Welsh Government investing the future of our NHS in Wales.”

Gary Doherty, Chief Executive at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board said:

“We’re absolutely delighted that Welsh Government has approved the £13.89m

funding required to redevelop the Emergency Department at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

“The current department is too small and is not designed to meet the requirements of modern clinical practice. This major scheme will provide state of the art accommodation for the 52,000 patients who use the service each year and will help us transform medical and emergency care.

“The Welsh Government’s commitment to this area will also provide a much needed boost to our dedicated and hard working staff and will help improve our recruitment potential.”

The NHS and social care

Today Parliament will debate social care and the NHS. Although it will not come across like this, in practice all the main parties are in agreement. All want a high quality free at the point of use NHS. All want extended and caring support for frail and elderly people to live at home or in well run care homes. All agree the amount spent on these services needs to carry on increasing, as it has been doing under successive governments.

So what is the row about? The disagreements come about over the amount of the increase in money, and whether any kind of reform or better management is needed to ensure the spending is well made. Traditionally governments seek reform and try to impose some limit on the amount of the increase in cost, whilst Oppositions demand more money and criticise reforms. It is always easy to criticise past reforms, as it is very difficult for any group of Ministers and senior officials to achieve major change in the NHS, whilst social care is supervised by a wide range of Councils with varying degrees of competence, and widely differing views.

I Agree with those who say we do need to spend more on the NHS and social care. I also think the government and Councils responsible do need to work closely with the senior staff to try to get better value for money and to raise the quality of what is being achieved where it is not good enough. Quality and value for money need not be a variance with one another. Doing things right first time, and avoiding mistakes, saves a lot of money as well as providing a much better outcome for the patient. Jeremy Hunt’s mantra of putting patients first and having full transparency on what hospitals achieve is part of the solution.

There are many ways more efficiency can reduce the strain on resources. Collecting all the fees owing from overseas visitors and foreign governments would provide useful additional revenue. Controlling the release of supplies could cut down on waste. Requiring the return of robust longer term medical equipment for cleaning and reuse would reduce costs. Having more permanent staff and fewer temps and locums would also cut the bills. Putting together prompt and decent social care packages would allow freeing beds in hospitals

for others and would cut the costs of caring for the patient discharged from hospital. .

All these things are easy to see from the outside and easy to write down. We also need to ask why have good people managing the NHS seen this and not done them? There needs to be leadership from the official heads of the NHS that all these things matter, with follow up where they do not occur. Managers also need to work with doctors and nurses over their terms and conditions, to try to reduce the perceived advantage in working as a contractor, locum or temp rather than as a full time member of the team on the permanent staff.