

UK announces sanctions on gemstone company linked to the military regime in Myanmar

- Foreign Secretary announces new sanctions against Myanmar Gems Enterprise
- the move will deprive the junta of a key source of funding – the gem trade is a multi-billion dollar business for Myanmar
- the UK has already sanctioned senior Myanmar military officers and their economic interests following February's military coup

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has announced additional measures targeting the Myanmar regime today (17 May) with new sanctions imposed against Myanmar Gems Enterprise (MGE).

MGE is a state owned enterprise which oversees all gemstone activities in Myanmar and is now under the junta's control following the military coup on 1 February.

The designation against MGE will cut off a key source of funding for the military junta, which continues to subvert democracy and is responsible for the violent repression and serious human rights violations against the people of Myanmar, including the killing of children. Myanmar is one of the world's largest producers of rubies and jade – trade in jade for example is a multi-billion dollar business for the country.

Enforced with immediate effect, the sanctions are the first since the UK laid new Myanmar sanctions regulations in parliament on 29 April. They demonstrate the UK's commitment to targeting the military junta's funding streams to put pressure on them to immediately end the coup.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

The military junta in Myanmar continues to crush democracy and attack its own people with brutal ferocity. We are working with our allies to impose sanctions that hit the junta's access to finance, and deliver a return to democracy.

The asset freeze imposed by the sanctions prevents anyone from dealing with funds or economic resources which are owned or controlled by the designated entity and held in the UK. It also blocks others from providing funds or economic resources to the designated individual or entity – in this case MGE.

Today's announcement, made in conjunction with the United States and Canada, follows the recent G7 and ASEAN meetings which reiterated the strong and united view of the international community in opposition to the actions of the military junta in Myanmar. The UK, alongside the G7, is urging all

countries to immediately suspend arms sales to Myanmar and welcomes the recent suspension of sales by Japan and the Republic of Korea.

The UK is clear that ASEAN has a central role to play in resolving the crisis and that the military regime must implement the ASEAN Five Point Consensus without delay. The UK calls for all companies to cut ties with military-linked businesses with direct effect.

Gary Pugh appointed Forensic Science Regulator for England and Wales

News story

The Regulator ensures that the provision of forensic science services across the Criminal Justice System complies with a high standard of scientific quality.



The Home Secretary has appointed Gary Pugh OBE as the new Forensic Science Regulator.

Mr Pugh will begin on 16 May 2021 and carry out the role for three years, taking over from the Interim Regulator Rupert Shute.

The Regulator ensures that the provision of forensic science services across the Criminal Justice System complies with an appropriately high standard of scientific quality and is carried out with objectivity and impartiality.

Responsibilities of the Forensic Science Regulator include:

- establishing, and monitoring compliance with, quality standards in the provision of forensic science services to the police service and the wider Criminal Justice System (CJS)

- ensuring, where applicable, the accreditation of those supplying forensic science services to the police, including in-house police services and forensic suppliers to the wider CJS
- setting and monitoring compliance with, quality standards applying to national forensic science intelligence databases
- providing advice to Ministers, CJS organisations, suppliers and others as seems appropriate, on matters related to quality standards in forensic science
- dealing with complaints from stakeholders and members of the public in relation to quality standards in the provision of forensic science services.

Mr Pugh, a former Director of Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police Service, is a forensic scientist of over 40 years, with experience of leading national governance boards and operations.

The new Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021 is intended to provide the Regulator with statutory powers.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Ensuring that the UK remains at the cutting edge of forensic investigation is vital and Gary Pugh brings a wealth of experience to the role of Forensic Science Regulator.

Working for many years at the top of his field, he will ensure police are working to the very highest scientific standards when investigating crimes, pursuing criminals and seeking justice for victims.

So much progress has been made in implementing quality standards, but science is constantly evolving, and the Forensic Science Regulator plays a vital role in setting those standards.

Gary Pugh said:

I am delighted to be appointed to the post of Forensic Science Regulator.

I look forward to building on the solid work of my predecessors and working with the team that support my role to ensure the effective operation of forensic quality standards.

The Royal Assent for the Forensic Science Regulator Bill will put

my role on a statutory footing recognising the importance of forensic quality standards and their critical contribution to delivering justice.

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[COVID-19 Charter for holidaymakers](#) [Launched](#)

- Passenger COVID-19 Charter published as people allowed to begin travelling again internationally for leisure
- charter details how holidaymakers can travel safely, including information on passenger rights and responsibilities, what to do if things go wrong and how to stay safe abroad
- Aviation Minister reminds public that travel will be different this summer, and to expect longer checks at the borders to protect public health

The government has today (17 May 2021) published the [Passenger COVID-19 Charter](#), providing a clear and accessible source of information for passengers outlining their rights and responsibilities when travelling this summer.

As first set out by the [Global Travel Taskforce](#), the charter will guide passengers on what to do if their travel plans change, including:

- what they are entitled to through their passenger rights
- expectations of the providers they are booking trips with
- their own responsibilities to ensure a smooth journey

Aviation Minister Robert Courts said:

If you are heading aboard this summer, you need to be aware that travel will be different and prepare accordingly.

That's why we have developed the Passenger COVID-19 Charter, to simply set out the steps passengers should consider taking as we start to holiday once again with greater confidence.

Some examples of the information the charter will provide customers includes:

- if your flight, ferry, cruise or package holiday has been cancelled, you have the legal right to a full refund

- you may not be entitled to a refund if any changes in restrictions or travel advice affect your travel plans but do not result in the provider cancelling the booking, but you should contact your provider to discuss amending travel dates or destinations as soon as possible – travel providers should provide clear terms and conditions when booking
- travel providers should share their standards and policy on keeping consumers safe – you must be prepared to have the right certifications, vaccines or exemptions for your destination
- where appropriate, assistance should always be available according to your needs, and airports, ports and train terminals should give clear information about the processes for assistance with travel
- your provider should make reasonable efforts to inform you where restrictions or changes will affect your plans
- any personal and health information should only be shared or processed in line with specified purposes

Travelling abroad this year will be different as a result of the pandemic, with longer queues expected at borders and strict testing requirements.

Passengers arriving from all destinations will still need to provide a [passenger locator form](#) and show [proof of a negative pre-departure test](#) to maintain our robust measures at the border.

Ahead of today's cautious restart of international travel, passengers are also now able to easily search for different test packages before travelling. Following the launch of a new, user-friendly list, people can use filters to easily find the [tests required for 'green list' and 'amber list' arrivals](#) based on several criteria, including cost.

Passengers should continue to check and sign up to Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office [travel advice](#) updates to understand the latest entry requirements and COVID-19 rules at their destination. Restrictions will be formally reviewed on 28 June 2021 to take account of the domestic and international health situation.

The charter's launch follows the government's confirmation last week that [international travel could safely resume to a small number of 'green list' countries](#), including Portugal, Singapore and Iceland, among others. People should not travel to amber list countries or territories.

And from today, people in England who have both vaccine doses will be able to [demonstrate their COVID vaccination status](#) via the [NHS app](#); those without access to the app can request a [letter from the NHS](#) proving their vaccination status by calling 119, from 17 May. Test results will not yet be stated in the app and the process for booking and presenting test results for travel remains unchanged.

Dstl unveils requirements for future anti-armour capabilities project

News story

Dstl is working with the British Army, DE&S and industry partners to create the next generation of protection from armoured vehicles and other threats.



Known as Battle Group Organic Anti-Armour (BGOAA), the work covers 4 areas:

- Close-In Self Defence (CISD): portable light weight munitions carried by Infantry sections
- Mounted Close Combat Overwatch (MCCO): a long range system providing anti-armour coverage to the battle group, with concepts carrying multiple missiles weighing up to 50kg with a range of up to 10km or more
- Close Combat Anti-Armour Weapons (CCAAW): Mounted and Dismounted, capable of destroying armoured vehicles even if hidden from view

The Land Weapons project aims to increase combat effectiveness by modernising the Army's Guided Weapons that have been in service for over a decade. Using technology that can be launched at a greater distances and with increased force both outranging and overmatching the threat. A significant objective is to increase commonality and interchangeability between different platforms, providing greater flexibility and lower costs. Dstl is also exploring how such modular systems might enable launchers and missiles to be mounted across different trucks and armoured vehicles.

The new systems will incorporate a range of advanced technologies such as:

- Non line-of-sight capability
- Third-party/remote targeting and control
- New sensors to overcome 'active protection systems' and defeat the enemy's electronic or electro-magnetic defences

The current focus is the development of the MCCO capability. Dstl is leading work with support from industry partners including Lockheed Martin, MBDA and Thales, generated through Dstl's [weapons sector framework contract](#). The long-

range system will be capable of engaging targets up to 10km away with missiles weighing up to 50kg.

Dstl gave a presentation on the research to the media; find out more in [Army Technology](#) and [Janes](#).

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[Local government to receive enhanced support for home-building efforts](#)

Press release

Homes England are inviting council officers to join a Summer Learning Programme aimed at sharing knowledge on topics ranging from effective project management to principles of market failure.



Homes England

Councils are set to receive enhanced support for their home-building efforts after Homes England cut the ribbon on its Local Government Capacity Centre today.

As part of the initiative, the Government's housing delivery agency is inviting officers to join a Summer Learning Programme aimed at sharing knowledge on topics ranging from effective project management to principles of market failure.

The Capacity Centre was conceived as Homes England looked to structure itself to work more productively with local government and help meet the Government's ambition of creating 300,000 homes a year by 2024.

Now, following extensive research and consultation on where the sector most needs support, the centre will begin to offer a range of tools and initiatives to boost skills and help authorities with their end-to-end development plans.

Peter Freeman, Chair of Homes England, said:

Effective partnerships are essential if we are to build the homes the country needs, so it is vital that we offer accessible tools, skills, funding and people.

I'd like to thank our local government colleagues for their input as we've developed the capacity centre. I'm confident it marks a real step forward – so please join us on the summer learning programme where we can build deeper and more fruitful partnerships.

As part of the centre's work, Homes England is making it easier for local government to access relevant information, including:

Housing Minister, Rt Hon Chris Pincher MP, said:

Local government is crucial in creating the homes and places people need and Homes England has a central role to play in supporting their capacity and skills development. I look forward to seeing how the new centre supports local government in delivering the homes this country needs.

The summer learning programme will run from 14 to 25 June. [You can book onto a session here](#)

Notes to Editors

1. The summer learning programme sessions are aimed at planning, housing delivery, regeneration, housing policy, housing strategy, development, legal and finance staff.
2. Local and combined authority staff interested in finding out more about the Local Government Capacity Centre can contact their regular Homes England contact, or email enquiries@homesengland.gov.uk

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