

Duke and Duchess of Cambridge conclude their visit to Pakistan

TRH began the day by visiting the recently opened Army Canine Centre in Islamabad, which breeds and trains Arms and Explosive Search (AES) Dogs to assist in the discovery of explosive devices. The Duke and Duchess joined UK and Pakistani expert dog handlers as they trained dogs to find explosive materials by scent. They also took some of the puppies through their paces on an agility training course.

The Army Canine Centre is modelled on the UK's Defence Animal Training Centre located at Melton Mowbray. The training witnessed forms part of the UK's Defence Engagement activity of which, a major part is the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device capacity building programme.

TRH visit was the first Royal Visit since the Prince of Wales toured Pakistan in 2006. During their trip the Duke and Duchess have seen the many sides of the modern, aspirational, dynamic Pakistan – from the vibrant, leafy Islamabad to the cultural capital Lahore, from the fragile to the remote communities in the mountainous north.

Notes to Editors

Army Canine Centre

The UK has provided CIED training and advice to Pakistan for over 10 years. The training aims to increase the capacity of both military and civilian forces to deliver Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD), Advanced Search, Explosive Scene Investigation training and AES dog and handler training.

The programme has been a success. Since the introduction of the programme, the IED threat in Pakistan has reduced significantly and the Pakistani military have opened a National Centre of Excellence for IEDD and search training and a world-class AES training facility (ACC). To date 90 AES dog handlers (Police and Military) and 96 AES Dogs have been taught by UK training teams under Operation HALLEX.

All those taught have been deployed or are currently deployed on CIED operations across Pakistan. They have been responsible for discovering thousands of kilograms of military and homemade explosives and as a result have saved countless lives. Additionally, 54 AES dog handlers have been trained in the UK as Master AES Dog Trainers; these individuals are now instrumental in delivering Pakistan's AES dog training programme.

The ACC opened in Aug 19 was self-funded by Pakistan and modelled on the UK Defence Animal Training Centre at Melton Mowbray.

For further updates

For updates on the British High Commission, please follow our social media channels:

Contact
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Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visit the culture capital of Pakistan

They began their day by visiting the SOS Children's Village, a charitable organisation at the heart of Lahore that provides a home and family structure to over 150 young children. The Duke and Duchess then joined a birthday party for one of the children, which games, music and traditional Pakistani food.

TRH then visited the National Cricket Academy in Lahore. To enjoy Pakistan's most popular sport they participated in a match with children from the British Council's DOSTI programme. DOSTI promotes sport as an integral part of children's development and encourages social integration, increased self-esteem and the development of important life skills. The Duke and Duchess also had the opportunity of meeting Pakistani cricketing icons Waqar Younis, Hasan Ali, Sana Mir and others at this event.

In the afternoon TRH visited the iconic Badshahi Mosque for a tour and a discussion with faith leaders to better understand how they are promoting interfaith harmony within their communities.

Finally, the Duke and Duchess visited to start-of-the-art Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre. This was visited previously by the late Princess of Wales. The Duke and Duchess took time to visit the children's ward, talking to patients undergoing treatment at the hospital and some of their families.

Notes to Editors

SOS Children's Village

There are an estimated 4,400,000 orphans in Pakistan. These children face numerous challenges, including limited access to food, education and financial stability. SOS Children's Village is an international organisation active in 135 countries. Its head office is in Austria.

This is the largest child welfare organisation in the world. It focuses on providing community projects including schools, medical centres, agricultural projects, vocational training and production centres. There are 10 SOS villages in Pakistan. The Children's Village in Lahore has been running since 1977 and provides a home for 150 children.

SOS Villages aim to provide a home, family and community for the children. They generally comprise of 15 family homes, a community hall, administration offices, mosque, director's residence, grocery shop, workshop, dispensary, essential staff residences and large playgrounds.

The SOS Village is run through donations and sponsorship. 25% of the funding comes from private donations. Stories of former orphans can be found [here](#)

National Cricket Academy Lahore and the DOSTI Programme

The sport event showcases the British Council's DOSTI programme. This is a 'sports for peace' initiative that aims to break social barriers and promote community cohesion. It helps children facing challenges such as gang-related crime or low school retention. It promotes sports as an integral part of children's lives and demonstrates the benefits to health, social integration, and self-esteem. There will be an opportunity to speak to the children to hear about how sports have helped their everyday lives and community.

The two teams have a mix of boys and girls from underprivileged backgrounds. One team will be captained by a boy and the other by a girl. There are two sets of children: 10 from Karachi (in the South of Pakistan) who will be playing the cricket match, with their age between 10-14 years. 20 from Sheikhpura (a city in Punjab) who will be spectators, with their age between 8-9 years.

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[UK – CY Alumni reception](#)

Your Excellency President of the House of Representatives and acting President of the Republic, Mr Dimitris Syllouris, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I apologise for disrupting the DJ. I hope you've been enjoying his music, as well as the fish and chips, and the gin, and perhaps feeling a little nostalgic for those student days and perhaps some misspent nights in the UK.

On behalf of myself and my wife Denise I extend a very warm welcome to this very special gathering of very special people. That's you: the Cypriot alumni of British universities, from around the island.

In some ways it's surprising we've not had a reception like this before. With over 40,000 Cypriot alumni of UK universities it's not easy to organise an island-wide gathering of you all: the garden simply isn't big enough, especially on a wet evening. But I'm delighted to start with this select group this evening: you are obviously the most active and ambitious alumni!

Having studied in the UK you don't need me to tell you about the benefits of a UK education. Perhaps like me you saw the recent report which reveals that Cyprus is the 10th most important source country for international students in the UK. My guess is that means Cyprus sends more students to the UK per head of population than any other.

High Commissioner delivers his speech alongside HE the President of the House of Representatives and the Director of British Council Cyprus.

Not that education collaboration is a one-way street. UK institutions are increasingly looking to deliver British education here in Cyprus – through Cyprus-based campuses and departments, joint degree courses and distance learning. And I would like to pay tribute to President Syllouris for the strong personal support which he has offered for these transnational education initiatives, which are helping position Cyprus as a higher education hub in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Meanwhile research collaboration between Britain and Cyprus goes from strength to strength. We're showcasing many of these research collaborations and educational partnerships this evening, and welcoming representatives of three of the biggest research collaborations in Cyprus, which are all with UK universities: KIOS, RISE and Maritec-X with Imperial, UCL and Southampton respectively. You'd be surprised if as High Commissioner I didn't mention Brexit. As you know events appear to be reaching a climax, with some increasingly positive indications about the prospects for reaching a deal at the European Council in Brussels.

Whatever your views on Brexit, I want to assure you that the UK Government is fully committed to an even stronger and deeper relationship between Britain and Cyprus, based on shared values, shared membership of the Commonwealth, and the wealth of personal connections of which you are part. While we have chosen to leave the EU, we are not leaving Europe. We were close partners before Britain or Cyprus joined the EU, and with your help and support, I am confident that we will be even closer partners in future.

Let me close with a few words of thanks:

To our sponsors for this evening: PWC Cyprus and Laiko Cosmos Trading

To the representatives of over 30 UK universities who have joined us here: they are in Cyprus for the British Council's annual Study UK Fair.

To the UK university alumni groups on the island. They have well-established networks of alumni, and are enthusiastic proponents of staying in touch with their institutions and keeping alive the connections they made there. We have joined forces in organising tonight's reception, and I thank them for introducing many new faces to the High Commission.

And above all, to you Your Excellency, Mr President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for joining us tonight. I encourage you to stay in touch with us, directly, through your university alumni groups or through our UKalumniCY page on Facebook.

Thank you very much.

[Z3R0 EM15510N future: government to introduce green number plates](#)

- consultation launched on introducing green number plates to celebrate and encourage uptake of electric vehicles
- green licence plates mean cleanest cars will be easily identifiable, helping their drivers to benefit from local incentives such as free or cheaper parking
- announcement will turbo-charge the zero emission revolution and help the government achieve its target of net zero emissions by 2050

Electric vehicles may become even greener, the government has announced today (22 October 2019) with the launch of a [consultation on introducing green number plates for zero emission cars](#).

As the UK moves at pace towards net zero emissions, the initiative aims to raise awareness of the increasing number of zero tailpipe emission vehicles on UK roads, help their drivers to benefit more easily from local incentives like free or cheaper parking and encourage greater uptake of new vehicle technology.

The announcement marks another milestone for the government's [Road to Zero Strategy](#), a £1.5 billion package of support which aims to make the UK the best place in the world to own an electric vehicle. Since the strategy's publication, the UK has seen record numbers of zero emission vehicles registered and the government has marked its intention to be the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050.

Through the introduction of green number plates, local authorities would have a useful visual identifier should they wish to introduce incentives to promote the use of zero emission vehicles, such as allowing these drivers to use bus lanes and to pay less for parking. A similar scheme was trialled in Ontario with drivers of electric vehicles given free access to toll lanes and high occupancy vehicle lanes. Ontario saw an increase in electric vehicle registrations.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK is in the driving seat of global efforts to tackle vehicle emissions and climate change and improve air quality, but we want to accelerate our progress.

Green number plates are a really positive and exciting way to help everyone recognise the increasing number of electric vehicles on our roads.

By increasing awareness of these vehicles and the benefits they bring to their drivers and our environment, we will turbo-charge the zero emission revolution.

Elisabeth Costa, Senior Director at the Behavioural Insights Team, said:

The number of clean vehicles on our roads is increasing but we don't notice as it's difficult to tell clean vehicles apart from more polluting ones.

Green number plates make these vehicles, and our decision to drive in a more environmentally-friendly way, more visible on roads. We think making the changing social norm noticeable will help encourage more of us to swap our cars for cleaner options.

Potential plate designs include:

- a fully green number plate with black lettering
- the addition of a green flash on the plate
- the addition of a green dot or symbol

The consultation seeks views from industry and the public on a number of aspects surrounding the scheme, including vehicle eligibility, number plate design and the rollout of the plates.

It follows the Transport Secretary's recent announcement that he has [doubled funding for chargepoints on residential streets, to help make charging an electric car easier for those without access to off-street parking](#). The government is also currently reviewing responses to the consultation on requiring chargepoints to be built into all new homes with a parking space.

Government introduces landmark Withdrawal Agreement Bill to Parliament

The Government has today introduced its [landmark Brexit bill](#), which enshrines the new deal we have negotiated with the EU in UK law.

This deal abolishes the backstop in the old deal. The Government put forward a reasonable compromise, based on the key principles of consent for the people of Northern Ireland, and the UK leaving the EU Customs Union whole and entire, which was agreed at European Council last week. The EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill puts those internationally agreed obligations into domestic law.

This week MPs will have the chance to pass this bill, to respect the result of the referendum and to leave with a deal on October 31 in an orderly and friendly way. MPs voted overwhelmingly to trigger Article 50 in 2017 to start the process of leaving the EU and supporting this bill is the final stage to make that happen. This will allow the country to move on and for the Government to return its focus to delivering on the people's domestic priorities: investing in the NHS, tackling serious and violent crime, and levelling up funding on schools.

The bill will implement the new deal agreed with the EU in UK law:

- Delivering Brexit, with a deal, on October 31
- Ending vast annual payments to Brussels
- Protecting the integrity of the UK as we leave the EU, without the need for the backstop
- Protecting the rights of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens in UK law so that they can continue to live, study and work in the UK
- Securing an implementation period to give businesses continuity and greater certainty as they prepare for the change in relationship we will have with the EU.

Brexit Secretary, Steve Barclay, said:

“The Prime Minister has successfully negotiated a great new deal without the anti-democratic backstop which many said would be impossible.

“MPs and Peers today have in front of them a bill that will get Brexit done by October 31, protect jobs and the integrity of the UK, and enable us to move onto the people's priorities like health, education and crime.

“This is the chance to leave the EU with a deal on October 31. If Parliament wants to respect the referendum, it must back the bill.”