

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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January 2025

BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon KCMG, former Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, United Nations, and the Commonwealth. Paid appointment with the Asian Media Group

1. You sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (the Committee) under the government's Business Appointments Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules) on your role as Non-Executive Director with the Asian Media Group (AMG), a British-Asian media company.
2. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. The Committee has considered the risks associated with the actions and decisions you made during your time in office, alongside the information and influence you may offer the AMG. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex.
3. The Committee's advice is not an endorsement of the appointment- it imposes a number of conditions to mitigate the potential risks to the government associated with the appointment under the Rules.
4. The Rules¹ set out that a former minister must abide by the Committee's advice. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment. Former ministers are expected to uphold the highest standards of propriety and act in accordance with the 7 Principles of Public Life.

¹ Which apply by virtue of the Civil Service Management Code, The Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, The King's Regulations and the Diplomatic Service Code.

The Committee's consideration of the risks presented

5. There is a broad overlap between your time as a minister and this work - given you had dealings with various external organisations, foreign governments, and their officials whilst in office. You did not have contact with AMG. You did not have any involvement in decisions specific to AMG during your time in office. Therefore, the Committee² considered the risk this appointment could reasonably be perceived as a reward for decisions made, or actions taken, in office is low.
6. You had oversight over South Asia and the Commonwealth in office, which could be seen to offer unfair insight to any organisation working in this context. AMG's publications have a target audience that is largely Asian and/or of Asian descent, and routinely report on foreign policy matters arising from South Asia and the Commonwealth, on which you may have privileged insight. However, the risk you offer an unfair advantage is limited considering the FCDO is not aware of any privileged information that would offer improper insight to AMG and/or its publications.
7. As with any former minister, there are risks associated with your contacts and influence within government and the potential for AMG to gain unfair access or influence as a result. You confirmed your role as Non-Executive Director excludes any dealings with government, reducing the risk you could be perceived to be lobbying government - which all former ministers are prevented from doing for two years after leaving office.

The Committee's advice

8. The Committee determined the risks identified can be appropriately mitigated by the conditions below. These make it clear that you cannot make use of privileged information, contacts or influence gained from your time in ministerial service to the unfair advantage of AMG.
9. In accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with **Asian Media Group** be subject to the following conditions:
 - you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in ministerial office;

² This application for advice was considered by Andrew Cumpsty; Hedley Finn OBE; Sarah de Gay; Isabel Doverty; Dawid Konotey-Ahulu CBE DL; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Michael Prescott; and Mike Weir. Baroness Thornton was unavailable.

- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of the Asian Media Group (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the government and/or ministerial office to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage the Asian Media Group (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); and
 - for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not provide advice to the Asian Media Group on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of the UK Government.
12. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous role in government only; they are separate from rules administered by other bodies such as the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Registrar of Lords' Interests.³ You are reminded that as a Member of the House of Lords you are prevented from any paid lobbying under the House of Lords Code of Conduct. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations they may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.
13. By '*privileged information*' we mean official information to which a minister or Crown servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act, the Ministerial Code or otherwise.
14. The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that you "should not engage in communication with government (ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place – with a view to influencing a government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office".
15. You must inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, or if it is announced that you will do so. Please inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your role as, depending

³ All Peers and Members of Parliament are prevented from paid lobbying under the the House of Commons Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords. Advice on your obligations under the Code can be sought from the Parliamentary Commissioners for Standards, in the case of MPs, or the Registrar of Lords' Interests, in the case of peers.

on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.

16. Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

Annex – Material Information

The role

1. You said you have been offered a paid, part-time appointment with the Asian Media Group (AMG), which is Britain's largest Asian publishing house that operates globally in the UK, USA and India, and owns:
 - Garavi Gujarat
 - Eastern Eye
 - Asian Trader
 - Pharmacy Business
 - Asian Hospitality
2. According to information available online, AMG also hosts events including black-tie dinners, seminars, roundtables, conferences and award shows which cover sectors spanning business & trade and arts, culture & entertainment. AMG also has several partnerships with various charities/ organisations as part of its philanthropic endeavours.
3. In your paid role as Non-Executive Director, you stated that you would:
 - Contribute to senior management /board meetings.
 - Support programmes and events of the Group in line with company objectives.
 - Attend key company events and represent the group at meetings in agreement with the Executive team.
 - Advise and work with the Executive team on future events and development of strategy.
 - Have no contact with nor lobbying of the UK government.

Dealings in office

4. You said that you had no involvement in policy development, contractual and/or commercial decisions specific to AMG. You also said that you did not have official dealings/ contact with AMG during your time in office. You stated that there is no relationship between AMG and the FCDO. You also said that you did not have any access to privileged information of specific relevance to this role.

Departmental assessment

5. The FCDO were consulted on this appointment. The department confirmed the above information and provided the following:
 - You did not make any regulatory, commercial or policy decisions that would have affected the AMG.
 - There is no relationship between the FCDO and AMG.
 - You do not possess sensitive information that would confer an unfair advantage to AMG. You did not make any funding or contractual/commercial decisions that affected the AMG.
6. The FCDO recommended the standard conditions.