

## The Government have refused to set out their state pension age plans – McDonnell

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on the Government's refusal to set out their State Pension age plans, said:

"Today the Government have refused to set out their plans for the State Pension age before the election, despite the legal requirement to report to Parliament before the 7th May.

"It comes on the back of the Prime Minister's continued refusal to commit to the State Pension triple-lock.

"This is yet more worrying news for pensioners already hit by a squeeze to their living standards. Labour is calling for clarity from the Tories on their plans for the future of the State Pension age.

"Pensioners, and working people, cannot afford not to know the future of the State Pension age.

"This is more evidence that this election is a choice between a Tory party that fails working people and a Labour Party that will stand up for working people and deliver a better, fairer Britain."

Ends

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## Speech: PM statement following talks with Japanese Prime Minister Abe: 28 April 2017

The United Kingdom's relationship with Japan is vital to our prosperity and security.

And the fact that Prime Minister Abe is the first world leader I have hosted at Chequers underlines that fact. And it gives me great pleasure to welcome him here today.

With both of our nations facing a range of global challenges, we have discussed ways in which we can deepen our strong and vital partnership.

Today we have reaffirmed our commitment to work together to support the

rules-based international system and the promotion of free trade and democratic values.

Throughout our talks, I have been clear that this is not the time for the UK to step back from the world but rather to step up, and continue to stand tall alongside our friends and allies.

## **Brexit/trade**

During our discussions, I updated Prime Minister Abe on our preparations for Brexit and reiterated our determination to make sure the UK remains the best place in Europe to run and grow a business, whether it's one operating at home or abroad.

And we are building from a position of strength.

Japanese companies have already invested a total of more than £40 billion in the UK. The UK is the second most popular destination for Japanese investment after the US.

And around 1,000 Japanese companies including Honda, Hitachi and Mitsubishi employ 140,000 people in the UK.

Since the vote for Brexit, Japanese businesses have continued to show confidence in the UK, with Japan's Softbank making a record £24 billion purchase of ARM Holdings and committing to double the number of jobs.

Nissan announcing that they will build the new Qashqai model at their plant in Sunderland, and Toyota committing to a £240 million investment at its plant in Derby.

It is clear that our strong economy, high level of skills, and low levels of taxation continue to make Britain an attractive destination for investment.

In our talks today, I have reaffirmed the UK's desire for an enduring deep and special partnership with the EU, including a bold and ambitious free trade agreement which gives British companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets – and allows European businesses to do the same in Britain.

## **G7**

We remain a global, outward-facing Britain, and the UK and Japan co-operate closely on the international stage, including in the G7.

This is a vital grouping, through which countries with shared views on free trade, democratic values and the importance of the rules-based international system can work to create societies and economies that work for everyone.

And I would like to congratulate Prime Minister Abe on Japan's recent successful presidency, which saw significant progress.

This May the G7 will meet again, in Italy, and today Prime Minister Abe and I discussed our priorities for the summit.

We will once again push to lower barriers to trade and create economies that share the benefits of globalisation across our 2 countries.

And on migration we agreed that we need an international approach that is in the interests of all those involved, and that protects men, women and children from trafficking, sexual violence and labour exploitation.

## **Global issues**

In an uncertain world, unity among friends and allies is more vital than ever. And Japan is our closest Asian security partner.

Last year RAF Typhoons took part in exercises in Japan, the first time that a country other than the US had done so, while Japanese troops exercised in the UK for the first time ever.

But our strong and well-equipped military is just one of the tools at our disposal.

In our discussions today we agreed that we should continue to stand firm in the face of destabilising Russian activity, whether in Ukraine or Syria.

And that one of the ways to do this is through economic pressure including the use of sanctions.

We are clear that these sanctions must remain in place until the full implementation of the Minsk Agreement.

We have also highlighted our opposition to any actions on the South and East China Seas likely to increase tension. Stability in this region is of global concern and we encourage all parties to resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law.

As we meet today, North Korea continues to take provocative action in the Asia-Pacific region. And the United Nations Security Council is meeting to discuss this very issue.

In the face of this belligerence we stand steadfast in our condemnation of such destabilising activity.

Their nuclear and missile tests are a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and international obligations, and a risk to global peace and stability.

Prime Minister Abe and I have agreed that we will continue to work with our international partners to maintain pressure on North Korea and counter the security threat posed by its illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons and work towards a peaceful solution.

## Conclusion

On all of these issues, Prime Minister Abe and I have agreed that the UK and Japan should work closely together for the benefit of both our great nations, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the face of our shared challenges, promoting our shared values, and looking positively to the shared opportunities that the future will bring.

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## [News story: Vaccination for Meningitis B at University of Surrey](#)

Public Health England (PHE) is working closely with NHS partners following 3 confirmed cases of meningitis among students at the University of Surrey.

Sadly one of the students died while travelling home from a sports club tour to Italy. Passengers from the coach in which the student travelled were offered antibiotics as a precautionary measure. The other 2 students are recovering well after receiving appropriate treatment.

Detailed analysis of the bacteria that caused the disease in 2 of the students confirms that the cases were due to meningococcal group B (MenB) infection. PHE is arranging for all full-time undergraduate students who live in University of Surrey halls of residence to be vaccinated against MenB.

The University has written to students and staff advising them of the planned action and highlighting signs and symptoms of meningitis along with advice on what to do if they suspect they are infected.

The wider population in the town and non-students who visit but do not live on the university site are not considered within the at risk group because the higher risk is associated with the lifestyle of an undergraduate student, rather than simply being on campus.

Dr Peter English, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, PHE South East of England said:

Meningococcal infection is comparatively rare and the risk of transmission is relatively low. People who have prolonged, close contact with an ill person are at a slightly increased risk of becoming unwell in the following days. This is why immediate contacts of the cases have already been offered antibiotics as a precautionary measure.

After considering the medical evidence, we have decided to offer vaccination to around 4,200 students living in halls of residence

at the university to reduce risk of further cases next term.

I would like to reassure other students, teachers, their families and the local community that the risk of catching this infection remains very low, and any higher risk is confined to those being offered the vaccine.

I would still urge everyone to be aware of the symptoms of both meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning).

I would also remind students to check their eligibility for the MenACWY vaccine with their GP. This vaccine protects against a number of different strains of meningococcal infection.

PHE is encouraging students to share awareness and care for one another. Don't assume an illness is a hangover or a touch of flu. Learn the symptoms of [meningitis](#) and [septicaemia](#) and if you think a friend or housemate is ill then check on them regularly and if you are worried seek medical help.

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## **Press release: British High Commission Abuja celebrates Queen Elizabeth II at 91**

The British High Commission Abuja on Wednesday, 26th April marked the 91st birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and celebrated the strong partnership between the UK and Nigeria. More than 500 guests attended the event including Nigeria's Senate President, Dr Bukola Saraki, former Nigerian Vice President, Atiku Abubakar and governors of Edo, Jigawa and Kaduna States. Other guests included federal legislators, current and former ministers, business leaders, the diplomatic corps, media and sports personalities and the local community.

In his welcome remarks British High Commissioner to Nigeria Paul Arkwright thanked guests and partners for attending this year's celebration. He said:

Today we celebrate Her Majesty's 91st Birthday. In a world which seems to be changing at a bewildering pace, I'd like to pay tribute to a remarkable woman whose devotion to duty, steadfast faith and sense of service to her people is, I would say, unparalleled – and a lesson to us all. I would also like to pay tribute to all of those, including all of you here, who are striving to make Nigeria a better place, where people are treated equally; where corruption can find no hiding place; where government, the private sector and

civil society organisations work together to create jobs and promote growth. In a country where over 2 million young people enter the job market every year, the task is more important than ever – and more urgent. The UK and Her Majesty's Government are playing a key role in that effort. Nigeria is our biggest and most important post in Africa, with 7 offices in the country; with over 800 people working for the British Government.

The UK is a partner to Nigeria; partners in the UN – the recent United Nations Security Council visit to Nigeria was organised and led by the UK – partners in the Commonwealth, and partners in tackling global issues such as terrorism, climate change and illegal migration

Mr Arkwright commended the warm and welcoming nature of Nigerians. He said:

In the past 18 months there have been frustrating challenges around government, and the closure of Abuja airport. But I have also experienced the warmth and joy; the spontaneity and the kindness; the resilience and the optimism. And I share that optimism. Like it or not, this country gets under your skin. And that's because of the people here; people who embrace strangers, people who are desperate for you to appreciate Egusi soup and Tuface; and people who present a face which can only make you smile.

Highlights of the celebration included a video display showing the work of British Council and the Premier League joining up to establish the Premier Skills programme – an innovative way to engage and develop the skills of young people in Nigeria, some thrilling ball juggling by a footballer, a slideshow of numerous UK sports stars and facilities and a beautiful rendition of the UK and Nigerian national anthem by the Abuja Holy Trinity Catholic Church choir.

The theme for this year's Queen's Birthday Party celebration in Abuja is Sport is GREAT, to reflect the UK's record as a hub for sports, and to highlight the value of sports to both the UK and Nigeria. Speaking on the theme the British High Commissioner said:

For us the Queen's birthday celebration is a moment to draw on some of the strongest things that bring our unity to the surface. The UK and Nigeria are both very passionate about sports. In both our countries sports serve not only a recreational, business or entertainment purpose; it serves as a real tool for unity and the promotion of our national identity. Sport has also strengthened the friendship between our nations. Team GB draws support from millions of Nigerians when British athletes of Nigerian origin are in the contest. The Premier League is as massive in Nigeria as it is in

the UK. It's widely believed some Premier League clubs have more fans in Nigeria than they do in the UK.

The celebration also featured an exhibition of photographs by Fati Gangaran from the series 'Bits of Borno', highlighting the impact of the conflict in the north east of Nigeria on women and girls.

Wednesday's celebration was the second this year by the UK mission in Nigeria in honour of the Queen's 91st birthday. On April 20, the British Deputy High Commission in Lagos hosted a party widely attended by business leaders, government officials, music and movie stars as well as traditional leaders. The Lagos QBP celebrated British and Nigerian music where guests were treated to a special music performance by the Yinka Davies Band.

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## Scotland's female STEM struggle revealed

28 Apr 2017



The SNP need to do more to encourage females into participating in STEM subjects, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The calls come after latest figures from the SQA show that girls are significantly underrepresented in STEM subjects at Higher and National 5 level.

Of those taking Higher exams, only 9 per cent of engineering science, 27 per cent of physics and 17 per cent of computing students were female.

National 5 level also revealed a lack of female participation – 7 per cent of engineering, 27 per cent of physics and 18 per cent of computing examinees being girls.

Those girls who did take STEM subjects were shown to have performed better than boys – 81 per cent of girls achieving grades A to C compared to 72 per cent of boys.

**Scottish Conservative shadow secretary for education, Liz Smith MSP said:**

"These statistics are further proof of the extent of the STEM challenge facing the Scottish Government.

"The number of female students entering key subjects is only a very small fraction of the total entries from their male counterparts.

“Therefore, it begs the question about the effectiveness of the Scottish Government’s STEM strategy – a strategy that is already facing criticism from some academic bodies like the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

“Those female students who do enter for STEM subjects generally perform very well indeed, so it is even more disappointing that there are such low entries.

“Almost every report published by the science and technology industries tell us how important STEM subjects are to the future of the Scottish economy and how important women are to these new employment opportunities.

“The Scottish Government has much to do to address these concerns. Scotland needs many more graduates skilled in STEM subjects and women must be a very important part of that.”

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Statistics were taken from SQA’s Annual Statistical Report 2016 available via this link: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63001.html>