

Press release: UK and Japan forge new alliance to shape 21st Century

The UK and Japan will announce an ambitious programme – and £30m of initial funding – for cutting-edge technology to boost innovation, create high-skilled jobs and improve people’s quality of life.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will today (Thu 10 Jan) meet Prime Minister Theresa May for their first talks in Downing Street, following her successful visit to Tokyo and Kyoto last year.

For the first time British and Japanese researchers and industry experts will work side by side on projects to tackle the Grand Challenges identified by the UK’s modern Industrial Strategy and Japan’s Society 5.0.

These include designing robotic systems to allow our ageing populations to live independently in their home for longer, finding new treatments for chronic conditions like dementia and heart failure, and new forms of greener transport and energy storing to ensure a cleaner world for future generations.

Figures show wider adoption of such technology could create 175,000 new jobs and boost the UK manufacturing sector by £455bn over the next decade.

The UK and Japan will also explore how businesses and innovators can use big data legally, ethically and safely in the future.

In their talks, the leaders will discuss the economic opportunities that exist for both nations as the UK leaves the European Union.

Following positive discussions at the G20 in Buenos Aires, Prime Minister Abe will reiterate Japan’s commitment to an ambitious bilateral arrangement with the UK, building on the agreement between Japan and the EU. This will give businesses stability, support jobs, and ensure greater choice and lower prices for consumers.

Japan will also scrap the existing export ban on British beef and lamb, in place since 1996, worth £127 million to British farmers over five years.

Ahead of today’s visit, Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The UK and Japan are natural partners. We face many of the same challenges. But also the same immense opportunities. By agreeing to forge a new, dynamic partnership, we not only back some of the most cutting-edge sectors in our economy, but will also improve people’s lives and shape the 21st Century for the better. This is our modern Industrial Strategy in action.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, we raise our horizons towards

the rest of the world. Our relationship with Japan is stronger than ever, and this visit will enhance co-operation in a wide range of areas. From trade and investment, to science and innovation, and our unwavering commitment to defence and security – the close bond between our nations will help us achieve our shared goals.

Prime Minister Abe will receive a military Guard of Honour for the first time ahead of bilateral talks in Downing Street. The two leaders will also attend a briefing chaired by Security Minister Ben Wallace where senior representatives from emergency services will share the UK's experience of hosting large international events ahead of this year's Rugby World Cup and 2020 Olympics in Japan.

The UK and Japan will also agree to:

- Build on last year's Joint Declaration that stepped up our defence and security partnership. The UK will increase the number of combined exercises between our defence forces and strengthen maritime co-operation.
- Deploy HMS Montrose to Japan in early 2019, to enforce sanctions against the DPRK as part of our joint determination to a peaceful resolution to tension in the region and the complete denuclearisation of North Korea.
- Collaborate on new defence technologies, including co-operation on future combat aircraft, missile development and autonomous systems that will ensure our forces remain an effective deterrent, as well as supporting high-skilled jobs.

Strengthen cultural ties, with the National Gallery sending a major exhibition of its masterpieces to Japan – including the famous 'Sunflowers' by Vincent Van Gogh – as part of a year-long UK-Japan Season of Culture starting next September.