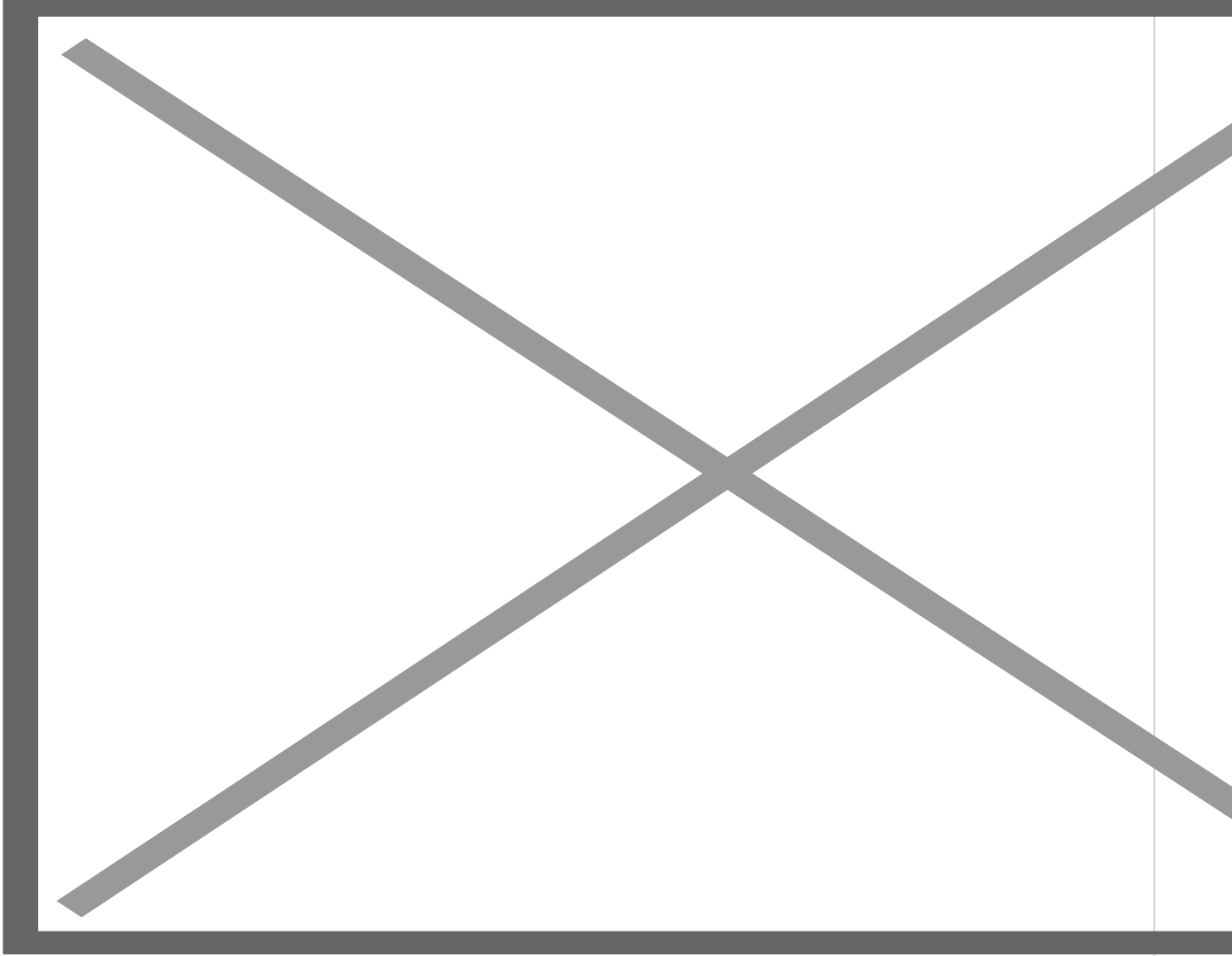


UK government denies corruption claims over Conservative Party donors

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The government has been embroiled in a corruption row over the past week, with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson forced to abandon plans pushed through parliament to protect one of his MPs who was found to have broken lobbying rules [UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/Handout via Reuters]

London, November 8 (RHC)-- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has rejected fresh accusations of corruption after a newspaper investigation found major donors to his Conservative Party were offered seats in parliament's upper chamber.

The government has been embroiled in a corruption row over the past week, with Johnson forced to abandon plans pushed through parliament to protect one of his MPs who was found to have broken lobbying rules.

The role of Conservative treasurer has become the most ennobled job in the UK, the newspaper said, ahead of leaders of the country's institutions and charitable organisations and even former prime ministers. "Boris Johnson's Conservative Party is corrupt, dodgy, sleazy and on the take," opposition Labour Party deputy leader Angela Rayner wrote on Twitter.

Environment minister George Eustice rejected the accusations. "They are philanthropists who give huge amounts to charity, who have been very successful in business and therefore on those grounds ought to be considered for the Lords," he told the BBC.

Eustice also described the furore over Conservative politician Owen Paterson, who quit parliament after the government's U-turn on plans to overhaul the system for combatting parliamentary corruption, as a "storm in a teacup."

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky News it was "difficult" to see a future for Kathryn Stone, the independent parliamentary commissioner for standards, after Conservative MPs blocked her recommendation to suspend Paterson, Sky News reported on Thursday.

Adam Bienkov, correspondent for the Byline Times said on Twitter: "It says a lot about the current political culture in the UK that the only person under any threat of losing their job over Owen Paterson's breach of anti-corruption rules is the independent investigator who exposed him."

The row has raised fresh questions about Johnson's ethics. He has faced other accusations of wrongdoing, including plans to have party donors secretly contribute to a luxury renovation of his Downing Street flat. Johnson has said the government followed the rules over the refurbishment.

Johnson's personal approval rating has fallen to its lowest level on record, according to an Opinium poll for the Observer newspaper, while the Conservatives' lead over Labour has fallen to a single percentage point.

Parliament is due to hold an emergency debate on standards on Monday. "The prime minister is trashing the reputation of our democracy and our country," Labour leader Keir Starmer told BBC television on Sunday. "It is a pattern of behaviour from a prime minister who doesn't know how to uphold standards in public life."



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