

## [Additional UK government borrowing continues to reduce](#)

The latest figures for UK government borrowing show it ended the most recent financial year to March at £52 bn, a little below the March 2016 forecast. It confirms that the UK economy has done well over the last year, bringing in extra tax revenues from growth to pay more of the bills for public services. Total state debt stood at 86.6% of GDP on the official definition. If we adjust this for the debt the Bank of England has bought up, the figure falls to 65%.

This level of additional borrowing shows the recovery from the extreme levels of additional debt at the end of the last decade has gone reasonably well, though a bit slower than the original plans in 2010. These figures exclude future state pension liabilities, as they also exclude future tax contributions to pay for those pensions on the pay as you go model all governments have operated. The figures do now include the debts of Network Rail, guaranteed by the government, which the Labour government classified as private sector debt.

There is no need to raise taxes from here to reduce the deficit further. A bit more growth will be the best way of cutting borrowing, as more people get jobs reducing their need for benefits, and as more tax revenue comes in from the growing turnover of the economy.

The aim of policy should be to boost productivity and output by encouraging entrepreneurship, and ensuring government is run more efficiently to assist in economic improvement.

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## [China's first home-built aircraft carrier hits the water](#)



Launch ceremony of China's first home-built aircraft carrier 001A in Dalian, Liaoning Province, on Apr. 26, 2017. [Photo/WeChat]

China launched its second aircraft carrier Wednesday morning in northeast China's Dalian shipyard in Liaoning Province.

The new carrier, the first domestically-built one, was transferred from dry dock into the water at a launch ceremony that started at about 9 a.m. in Dalian shipyard of the China Shipbuilding Industry Corp.

It is China's second aircraft carrier, which comes after the Liaoning, a refitted former Soviet Union-made carrier that was put into commission in the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy in 2012.

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## [25 Beijing underpasses undergo renovations](#)



Pedestrians walk through a renovated underground passage under the Xidan section of Chang'an Avenue in Beijing downtown on Saturday. [Photo/China Daily]

Beijing will finish restoring 25 pedestrian underpasses this year along Chang'an Avenue, the capital's central thoroughfare, to upgrade their function and appearance.

The underpasses, built between the mid-1980s and early '90s, stretch from Jianguomen on the East Second Ring Road to Fuxingmen on the West Second Ring Road.

The city's transport authority started the revamp at the end of last year after it was deemed that the outdated pathways failed to fit in with the modern streetscape of Chang'an Avenue.

Work on two underpasses, Xidan West and Tian'anmen West, has been completed, and the other 23 are expected to be restored by the end of this year, the authority said. It did not reveal how much was being spent on the project.

A white marble plaque at the entrance of Xidan West underpass bears its name. In the underpass, a gold-mounted jade plaque with the name Chang'an Avenue is on one side of the marble wall and a golden statue with the design of Xidan Memorial Arch is on the other.

"The goal of our design for those underpasses is to be solemn and dignified," said Liu Yong, deputy chief engineer at the Beijing Municipal Engineering Professional Design Institute.

He said this project should match the style of the streetscape upgrading work along Chang'an Avenue this year.

Duan Wenzhi, head of engineering at Beijing's road maintenance and management office, said the 25 underpasses will feature similar decorations, but each will have its own characteristic design that takes in the surrounding landmarks.

In addition, Duan said they also fixed issues such as leaks and upgraded the drainage system.

Some will find the underpasses brighter than before, he added, since they adopted LED lights that are stronger, have a longer service life and save energy.

Tu Gang, a commuter who uses the Xidan West underpass to get to work, said he was happy to see the new look.

"I know the restoration was paid for by the municipal government, which means money from every citizen in the capital, but I think it is worthwhile as long as it can last for at least 100 years," he said. "Most important, the design of the art should have more cultural and historical meaning and artistic elements."

Chang'an Avenue runs between Tian'anmen Gate, the entrance to the Palace Museum, and Tian'anmen Square.

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## [Chinese gov't targets obscene strip shows in rural areas](#)

China's Ministry of Culture said Tuesday it has launched a campaign against strip shows in rural areas to better regulate and rectify the rural performance market.

Following recent media exposure of several strip shows in east China's Anhui Province, local law enforcement agencies have initiated investigations, said a ministry statement, without giving further details on the punishment.

Strip show is illegal in China. The ministry vowed to step up supervision and severely punish violators, adding that those involved will face criminal charges.

It also invited the public to offer clues of violations in the performance market. To report to the ministry, individuals and organizations can call 12318, or visit [www.12318.gov.cn](http://www.12318.gov.cn).

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## Ministry to oversee cleanup of dump sites in Hebei, Tianjin



Ponds filled with industrial waste—about the size of 21 soccer fields—in Dacheng, Hebei Province, have been targeted for cleanup. [Photo/China Daily]

The Ministry of Environmental Protection said on Tuesday that it will supervise the treatment and restoration of polluted dump sites in Langfang, Hebei Province, and Tianjin's Jinghai District.

The move came three days after pictures of two large dumping pits in Langfang's Dacheng County went viral.

The two pits, measuring 170,000 and 30,000 square meters, accumulated waste of various types through years of illegal dumping of acidic waste and materials laced with heavy metals. The pollution has found its way into water and soil in the area, authorities said.

Hebei will treat all its polluted dumps by July following a comprehensive examination across the province, its environment watchdog announced on Monday.

All 13 cities in the province have been ordered to monitor the water quality near the pits and to identify the sources of pollution discharges, the Hebei Environmental Protection Bureau said.

If the water quality does not meet safety standards, further investigation of the soil in and around the dump sites will be carried out, possibly including

checks of underground water quality, it said.

Waste handling will be checked at factories that discharge heavy metals and other hazardous pollutants. After the inspection, all polluted pits will be treated and good environmental conditions will be restored, the bureau said.

In addition, those discharging pollution will be held accountable, and government officials will be punished if they are found to have neglected their environmental duty.

Langfang's Dacheng County has invited professionals from Tsinghua University, the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, and the Chinese Academy for Environmental Planning to monitor the water and soil quality of the dump sites.

It also said it will take measures to curb pollution in towns and villages, and check on local factories that discharge acids.

The county has already punished eight government officials for failing to effectively control pollution.

Two waste treatment companies were contracted to bring the area's water quality back to normal but they failed, according to the Dacheng government.

"It's because they didn't thoroughly figure out where the pollution came from and what the state of water quality was at the time," Peng Yingdeng, an expert at the Beijing Municipal Research Institute of Environmental Protection, was quoted as saying by Beijing News.

Peng said an overall examination is necessary. After that, the government can develop procedures for dealing with the pollution. Restoring water and soil to clean condition is costly and time-consuming, Peng added.

Similar polluted dump sites were also found in Tianjin's Jinghai District.

According to the Tianjin Environmental Protection Bureau, the city has started an investigation and begun remedial treatment where necessary.

Zhao Xu, a Tianjin resident who majored in environmental engineering, said the governments' reactions to the incident has been quick and serious.

"But what if the pits hadn't been exposed?" Zhao asked.

Action must be taken before any harm is done to the public, Zhao said.