

Beijing orders city-wide investigation after deadly fire

Cai Qi, secretary of the Communist Party of China Beijing Municipal Committee, has ordered a city-wide safety check after a deadly fire killed 19 people and injured eight others.

A fire broke out on Saturday night at a three-story apartment at Xinjian Village, Daxing District in the southern suburb. A total of 19 people died. Eight people were sent to hospital, and seven of them have been out of danger.

Preliminary investigation showed there was a refrigeration facility in the basement of the apartment, where fire was likely to have started, fire fighters said. Fire fighters said there was heavy smoke in the building but no large flames.

Cai Qi and acting mayor Chen Jining led other officials to the site of the fire on Sunday morning and stood in silent tribute to the victims.

On Sunday afternoon, Cai convened a city-wide conference.

“Lessons of the fire is extremely grave. The city must be on high alert. We must take actions and protect people’s lives and safeguard the safety and stability of the capital,” he said.

Cai ordered a clean-up of industrial compounds, illegal construction and disorderly venues in order to eliminate fire risks.

Local officials must check every village and every courtyard for security risks, he said.

An investigation team has been set up to ascertain the cause of the fire and punish those who are responsible.

China expands smart court system

China’s court system intranet has been extended to 3,523 local courts and 9,277 tribunals across China, enabling all judicial officers to receive the same information when doing legal work, according to an official from China’s supreme court.

“Based on advanced technology, the smart court system enables us to manage all of our work online, make judicial process information open to the public in accordance with the law, and provide comprehensive intelligent services,”

said Xu Jianfeng, director of the Supreme People's Court Information Center, on Friday.

China's national database of legal documents, the biggest in the world, now includes information on 122 million legal cases, more than 6 million trial records and 240,000 items of judicial personnel data.

Xu noted that judges now can use the database to share information with the Ministry of Public Security, National Administration for Code Allocation to Organizations, Ministry of Agriculture, and banks.

"We will also cultivate legal technology professionals to help build the smart court, modernize the judicial system and boost judicial capacity in the future," said Xu.

China included the building of a smart court in the State Informatization Development Strategy issued in 2016, elevating it to the level of national strategy.

[China organizes 19-unit standby peacekeeping force](#)

The Army of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has organized a standby peacekeeping force of 19 units.

An army statement on Saturday said the 19 units are divided into six services – infantry, engineer, transport, guard, quick reaction and helicopter crew.

China registered an 8,000-strong standby peacekeeping force at the United Nations in September, according to the Ministry of National Defense.

Currently the army has nine troops serving the UN peacekeeping missions, accounting for 91.5 percent of China's peacekeeping force.

With a standby force, China's peacekeeping force will improve its combat readiness and be able to respond to emergencies more efficiently, said You Haitao, vice commander of the PLA Army.

About 36,000 Chinese servicemen and women have served in UN peacekeeping missions, with 13 sacrificing their lives in the past 27 years.

HK starts launch of XRL joint checkpoint process



Guangdong governor Ma Xingrui (left) and Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor pose for photos after signing a deal of Co-operation Arrangement Between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Port at the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link for Implementing Co-location Arrangement in Hong Kong, November 18, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The express rail link connecting Hong Kong and Guangzhou in South China's Guangdong province saw a major progression on Saturday, signaling the start of the finishing work on the customs arrangements of the much-anticipated high-speed rail route.

The Hong Kong SAR government signed a co-location cooperation deal with Guangdong municipal government on Saturday, marking the start of the "three-step" process of implementing a joint checkpoint plan at Hong Kong's high-speed rail terminus.

The deal, called the Co-operation Arrangement Between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Port at the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link for Implementing Co-location Arrangement, laid a legal foundation to place designated areas within the West Kowloon terminus to allow both authorities to go through customs checks at one-go.

After the signing, the SAR government and mainland will jointly seek a decision by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) in approving and endorsing the arrangement, before Hong Kong starts working on local legislation of the co-location plan.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor said while meeting the press on Saturday afternoon that she was informed that the NPCSC would deliberate the deal in December and the government would table the deal to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in February 2018 as soon as possible.

The plan is expected to be implemented along with the operation of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) in the third quarter of 2018.

According to the deal, areas on the B2 and B3 levels, the platform areas on the B4 level and the connecting passageways, the Mainland Clearance Area and back office, the waiting hall for departing passengers, station platforms and the connecting passageways and escalators are designated as Mainland Port Area, subject to mainland laws.

Meanwhile, the compartments of trains in operation on the XRL within the area of the Hong Kong SAR (including trains which are in motion, stationary and during embarkation or disembarkation) are also regarded as part of the Mainland Port Area.

The co-location arrangement would fully unleash the transport, social and economic benefits of the Hong Kong Section of XRL, Lam said after signing the deal with Guangdong Provincial Governor Ma Xingrui on Saturday morning.

Lam also noted that the government would carefully consider views from the Legislative Council and other social sectors on implementing the plan, and take appropriate follow-up action.

Besides signing the deal, both sides also agreed to set up a port liaison and coordination mechanism to ensure “the safe, smooth and efficient operation of the Mainland Port Area and its effective regulation”, and an emergency handling mechanism to assist the mainland in handling sudden or emergency incidents which may occur in the Mainland Port Area in the course of operation.

[HK starts launch of XRL joint checkpoint process](#)

《內地與香港特別行政區關於在廣深港高鐵西九龍站設立口岸實施「一地兩檢」的合作安排》簽署儀式

Ceremony of the Co-operation Arrangement between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Port at the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link for Implementing Co-location Arrangement

Hong Kong, 18.11.2017



Guangdong governor Ma Xingrui (left) and Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor pose for photos after signing a deal of Co-operation Arrangement Between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Port at the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link for Implementing Co-location Arrangement in Hong Kong, November 18, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

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