

## Judicial efficiency improved through reform: top court

The efficiency of Chinese courts has been improved by 20 percent since 2013, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced Monday.

The SPC Monday released two white papers on judicial reform and court transparency from 2013 to 2016, recording progress made in fields including judicial accountability, trial mechanism and adjudicative power operation.

According to the SPC, over 26 million court documents have been posted on China Judgement Online, the court document website, and the site has clocked up six billion hits by users from over 200 countries and regions.

China's courts have improved the way in which they protect human rights, preventing and correcting cases in which people were unjustly, falsely or wrongly charged or sentenced.

From 2013 to 2016, courts nationwide overturned 34 cases, involving 54 people, deemed to be miscarriage of justice, according to the SPC.

To improve litigation, nearly all courts in China have established supporting systems, the SPC said.

The top court also pledged to improve how cases are filed and legal aid accessed.

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## Press center for annual political sessions opens

The press center for the upcoming annual legislative and political consultative sessions opened Monday.

More than 3,000 reporters from home and abroad have registered to cover the sessions, including an increased number of foreign reporters, according to the press center.

The National People's Congress, China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, will convene their annual sessions on March 5 and March 3, respectively.

Located in the Media Center Hotel in downtown Beijing, the press center will hold a number of press conferences with leading officials in various fields,

and respond to public concerns.

As 2017 is a crucial year for the country's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), hot topics will include macro-economic development, supply-side structural reform, the RMB exchange rate and China's stock and real estate markets.

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## [Sneaking out announcement asking departments to model cuts of 3 per cent and 6 per cent is no way to manage public spending – John McDonnell](#)

**John**

**McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor**, commenting on reports that the Treasury has asked government departments to prepare for cuts of 3 per cent and 6 per cent, for 2019/20, said:

"For all Hammond's talk of 'resetting' the Tory Government's economic policy last summer it is now beyond doubt that Hammond represents more of the same Tory austerity.

"Sneaking out an announcement asking departments to model cuts of 3 per cent and 6 per cent for 2019/20 is no way to manage public spending.

"Hammond urgently needs to explain why this announcement was made in the way it was and why after seven years of failed austerity he thinks more of the same will now work."

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## [News story: Minister Wharton reinforces UK support for refugees in](#)

# Uganda

During the week that famine has been declared in some parts of South Sudan, Minister Wharton saw the life-saving impact of UK aid in Uganda when he visited a centre where refugees are registered and longer term refugee settlements near the border with South Sudan. Uganda now hosts over one million refugees, with the vast majority from South Sudan.

With five million people in neighbouring South Sudan facing the threat of going without enough food and almost 2,400 people every day being forced to flee their homes from devastating conflict and cross the border into Uganda, the UK's support is getting urgently needed food, water and medicine to those in desperate need.

Minister Wharton met with women and children at Impevi refugee centre and Rhino settlement area in Northern Uganda, who have been displaced by the horrors of war and sexual violence. He heard about the challenges of getting life-saving humanitarian aid to those who need it.

In 2016, the UK's support to refugees in Uganda has provided:

- food for 650,000 people including 45,000 children
- shelter for 56,250 people
- blankets, water containers and sanitary towels for 64,000 people and
- vaccinated 210,000 children.

International Development Minister James Wharton said:

South Sudan faces an urgent and severe humanitarian crisis with almost half the population in desperate need, which impacts on the whole region. The first famine for six years has now been declared and the threat of starvation and ongoing violence is forcing over one million people to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda.

"Uganda is now home to more refugees than any other country in Africa, and I was proud to see first hand that lives are being saved every day with the UK's support. Alongside this, Uganda has one of the most progressive refugee policies in the world, where refugees are given land, jobs and integrated into communities, giving people fleeing conflict hope for the future.

"The UK will continue to play a leading role in helping encourage the longer-term stability of both South Sudan, Uganda and the broader region."

Minister Wharton also met with British businesses in Uganda and the Ugandan Minister for Trade Amelia Kyambadde to discuss further trade and investment opportunities which will boost economic development and help the poorest stand on their own two feet, while also benefiting UK companies.

As set out in [DFID's Economic Development Strategy](#), UK support is helping Uganda and other countries industrialise faster, trade more and create new and productive jobs for its growing young population.

On a trip to a local family planning clinic in Kanyogoga, a settlement in Kampala, the Minister met people who are benefiting from a UK-aid supported programme that is increasing access to quality family planning services in Uganda, where half of the population of is under 15 and women have, on average, six children. Family planning is an integral part of planning for Uganda's future.

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## **Jonathan Ashworth calls for guarantees over NHS lost letters scandal**

**Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary**, following the statement in the House of Commons about the 700,000 patient letters lost by NHS Shared Business Services, has today written to Jeremy Hunt to demand further assurances for the public and said:

"The statement contained no reassurance that you had got to the bottom of what happened in the first place.

"You repeatedly blamed the problem on contractors but failed to acknowledge that this error was committed by a company part owned by your Department, over a period of several years during your time as Secretary of State.

"How on earth did it happen that NHS Shared Business Services, failed to send so many letters and instead just left them lying in a warehouse?

How much money and staff time has been wasted by this incident?

"Patients and their families will need much more reassurance that the Government actually has a plan to make sure this never happens again."

**Ends**

### **Notes to editors**

· In  
Section 12 of the NHS SBS Standard Purchase Terms and Conditions it clearly states that there should be regular updates including of data breaches –  
"12.3.1  
*have a named person able to communicate with NHS SBS, who will take the lead for information governance and from whom NHS SBS and the Client shall receive regular reports on information governance matters, including but not limited to details of all incidents of data loss and breach of confidence"*

Full Sopra Steria Terms and Conditions here:

<http://www.soprasteria.co.uk/docs/librariesprovider41/Policy/nhs-sbs-standard-terms-and-conditions-v2-jan2015>

· Full text of Jonathan Ashworth letter to Jeremy Hunt below.

Dear Jeremy

### **Follow up letter on NHS Shared Business Services**

Thank you for your response to the Urgent Question in this House this afternoon about the 700,000 letter undelivered by NHS Shared Business Services between 2011 and 2016. The public will be relieved

to hear that, through sheer luck, no incidents of patient care have yet been identified. However it is enormously frustrating that you had to be forced to the House to give this update. Will you commit to publishing the advice you received on which basis you chose not to make the details of this incident clear at an earlier date?

The statement contained no reassurance that you had got to the bottom of what happened in the first place. You repeatedly blamed the problem on contractors but failed to acknowledge that this error was committed by a company part owned by your Department, over a period of several years during your time as Secretary of State. How on earth did it happen that NHS SBS failed to send so many letters and instead just left them lying in a warehouse? How much money and staff time has been wasted by this incident? Patients and their families will need much more reassurance that the Government actually has a plan to make sure this never happens again.

Who in your Department was responsible for keeping a watch on this company? Sopra Steria's contract for delivering the NHS SBS service states: "NHS SBS and the Client shall receive regular reports on information governance matters, including all incidents of data loss." How often did you receive updates about the work of this company part owned by his Department, as required under the contract signed by Sopra Steria? Will you publish these updates? Will you publish any reports relating to data loss which were received by NHS SBS or your Department since 2011?

Your initial statement last July said the problem was limited to three areas of the country – South West England, East Midlands, and North East London – will you commit to publishing a full breakdown of the whereabouts of the patients who were affected, as promised to Members today? What guarantees can you offer about the delivery of letters to

patients in other parts of the country?

Where was this warehouse where all these letters were lying undelivered, and had anyone from your Department been there during the years 2011 to 2016? What guarantees can you give that no further warehouses of undelivered patient letters are yet to be discovered? Were these all the letters that NHS SBS were commissioned to deliver during this time or only a part of them? Were NHS SBS paid for the delivery of these letters, and if so will this money be recovered? What action are you taking to address this astonishing waste of public funds on your watch? Has an apology been offered to the NHS staff, both in hospitals and GP surgeries, whose time and effort has been wasted by this case?

Finally will you commit to returning to the House once your enquiry is finally completed to update the house on the final cost and impact for patients, and to explain what measures you are putting in place to make sure an incident like this never happens again?

Yours sincerely

Jonathan

Jonathan Ashworth

**Shadow Secretary of State for Health**