

# Deadly fire was 'human error'

A fatal blaze at a foot massage parlor in eastern China was caused by an electrical fault in a steam room, China's top work safety watchdog said on Wednesday.

Flames engulfed Zuxintang Foot Massage in Tiantai, Zhejiang province, at 5:26 pm on Feb 5, killing 18 people and injuring 18 others.

A preliminary investigation showed the fire started after the steam room's heating system malfunctioned, causing rising temperatures that ignited some flammable objects, according to the State Administration of Work Safety.

"It was an accident caused by human error," Su Jie, a spokeswoman for the watchdog, said at a news conference on Wednesday.

The management of the parlor—which occupied the first and second floors of a six-story building in a downtown community—and the relevant local government department should take the blame, Su said.

However, she added that an investigation into the case is ongoing.

Police in Tiantai detained four people in connection with the incident on Feb 7, local media reported.

At the news conference on Wednesday, the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety also provided an update on its investigation into an explosion at Zubao Coal Mine in Lianyuan, Hunan province, on Feb 14 that killed six people and left four others missing.

Yang Fu, deputy director of the agency, said the authorities are looking into whether the mine covered up the death of a miner in the accident, which happened when 29 people were underground.

He said rescuers are trying to find the missing workers and that local authorities have formed a work group to investigate the cause of the blast.

"Investigators have found traces of a coal dust explosion in the shaft after entering the mine several times," Yang said, adding that the watchdog will punish those responsible if any cover-up is discovered. Police have detained a manager at the mine, surnamed Liu, who is suspected of covering up the miner's death, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Three officials are also under investigation, including two vice-mayors of Lianyuan and the local production safety chief, according to the report.

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# Press release: £229 million of industrial strategy investment in science, research and innovation

- Greg Clark announces Industrial Strategy investment for UK research and development.
- Funding of £126 million announced for a world class research centre at the University of Manchester for development of advanced materials.
- Government confirms investment of £103 million in Rosalind Franklin Institute (RFI), creating a new national centre of excellence for life and physical sciences.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark has today (Thursday 23 February 2017) announced £229 million worth of investment in the development of cutting-edge advanced materials and a new centre of excellence for the life and physical sciences as part of the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#).

Included in the investment is £126 million in grants for the Sir Henry Royce Institute for Advanced Materials, supporting the creation of a world-leading research centre at the University of Manchester, with satellite centres at the Universities of Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool, Cambridge, Oxford and Imperial College.

As an international beacon for UK expertise, the Royce Institute will encompass nine key areas of materials research including graphene and proposed research areas will be grouped into four themes – energy, engineering, functional and soft materials.

Greg Clark has also announced £103 million Government investment in a new national centre of excellence for life and physical sciences, at the Rosalind Franklin Institute (RFI), located at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Oxford. The centre will build on the UK's world-leading reputation in these fields and effectively bring together academia and industry.

## **Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:**

“Research and development has a proven track record of making our economy more competitive and creating new products, services and better ways of doing business. For these reasons, we've placed the UK's strengths in science, research and innovation at the core of our modern Industrial Strategy.

“Government investment in these two centres for advanced materials and life and physical sciences will support growth across a range of sectors, provide the skills and training to grow our expertise in these cutting-edge fields, and facilitate positive collaboration between industry, academia and Government.”

## **Chief Executive Officer of AstraZeneca Pascal Soriot said:**

“As a long-standing investor in UK science and partnerships with academia, we believe the creation of vibrant geographic areas of excellence would truly catalyse discovery and innovation. Supported by transport and housing infrastructure that facilitate collaboration and attract the best talent, these clusters would boost the knowledge economy and anchor industrial activity throughout the UK.”

Building on today’s announcements, Ministers from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be visiting businesses and universities across the East of England and Midlands today to hear and discuss the views of businesses, workers and academics on the Government’s vision for an Industrial Strategy.

Climate Change and Industry Minister Nick Hurd is going to the Advanced Propulsion Centre in Coventry while Small Business and Consumer Minister Margot James visits John Lewis and River Island distribution centres in Milton Keynes.

Lord Prior of Brompton will be visiting Resonate in Derby to see signalling and traffic management systems that are delivering capacity increases on Network Rail routes.

The Business Secretary and Ministers will then be hosting an evening reception with business leaders, start-ups and local leaders in Birmingham at the Innovation Birmingham Campus; home to 170 businesses that employ approximately 1,100 staff in total.

The government published its Industrial Strategy green paper in January, inviting industries, businesses and consumers to visit the GOV.UK website and [respond to the consultation](#).

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## **[News story: Prisons and Courts Bill: what it means for you](#)**

The Prisons and Courts Bill will transform the lives of offenders and put victims at the heart of the justice system, helping to create a safer and better society.

The bill covers:

- prison safety and reform
- court reform
- the judiciary
- whiplash compensation

# Latest news on the Prisons and Courts Bill

The bill was introduced on 23 February 2017. Follow its progress on the Parliament website.

## Join the conversation

Follow [@MoJGovUK](#) for the latest updates on the bill. Use #PrisonReform and #CourtReform to join the conversation on Twitter.

## What the Prisons and Courts Bill covers

The Prisons and Courts Bill paves the way for the biggest overhaul of prisons in a generation and the delivery of a world-class court system. Victims and vulnerable witnesses are central to the Prisons and Courts Bill, with a range of measures that will bolster their protection in court.

### Prison safety and reform

The Prisons and Courts Bill sets out a new framework and clear system of accountability for prisons. It will enshrine into law that a key purpose of prison is to reform and rehabilitate offenders, as well as punish them for the crimes they have committed.

Governors will take control of budgets for education, employment and health and they will be held to account for getting people off drugs, into jobs and learning English and maths. League tables will measure prisons on key areas such as safety and progress on education and work.

Across the country, more than 2,000 new senior positions are being created for experienced prison officers to be promoted into. These posts, which cover specialist mental health training, will have a salary of up to £30,000.

Could you see yourself as a prison officer? Find out more and [apply here](#).

### Court reform

Measures relating to courts underline a commitment to victims and the most vulnerable, as well as improving the system for those who use it every day.

The use of virtual hearings will be extended, allowing victims to take part without running the risk of coming face-to-face with their assailant.

Many hearings, such as bail applications, will be resolved via video or telephone conferencing, allowing justice to be delivered more swiftly.

Offenders charged with some less serious criminal offences, such as failure to produce a ticket for travel on a train, will be able to

- plead guilty online

- accept a conviction
- be issued a penalty and
- pay that penalty there and then.

## **The judiciary**

This bill will provide a better working environment for judges, with modern court facilities and better IT that will help manage cases more efficiently.

It will be easier for the judiciary to deploy judges more flexibly, allowing judges to gain experience of different types of cases. It also gives the judiciary more flexibility when it comes to handling case backlogs.

## **Whiplash compensation**

Car insurance premiums will be cut by around £40 a year, with new fixed tariffs capping whiplash compensation pay-outs and a ban on claims without medical evidence.

We held a wide-ranging [consultation](#) on our plans for reform.

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# **Press release: Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss unveils landmark Prisons and Courts Bill**

- Historic Prisons and Courts Bill will transform the lives of offenders and put victims at the heart of the justice system, helping to create a safer and better society.
- New legislation underpins measures outlined in the ground-breaking Prison Safety and Reform White Paper, which will transform how our prisons operate.
- Modernisation of our courts will improve access to justice, better protect the vulnerable and further enhance our status as a world-leading centre for dispute resolution.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss today (23 February 2017) unveiled the historic Prisons and Courts Bill, paving the way for the biggest overhaul of prisons in a generation and the delivery of a world-class court system.

This key piece of legislation will underpin measures in the recently

published Prison Safety and Reform White Paper, and will help transform how our prisons are run. Prisons will punish people who break the law and give offenders the skills they need to turn their lives around, driving down the £15 billion annual cost to society of reoffending.

It sets in law for the first time that a key purpose of prisons is to reform offenders, as well as punish them for the crimes they have committed.

Victims and vulnerable witnesses are also central to the Prisons and Courts Bill, with a range of measures that will bolster their protection in court.

The government is giving courts the power to put an end to domestic violence victims being quizzed by their attackers in the family courts, calling time on what the Justice Secretary has described as a “humiliating and appalling” practice. This follows an urgent review she commissioned last month.

Car insurance premiums will also be cut by around £40 a year, with new fixed tariffs capping whiplash compensation pay-outs and a ban on claims without medical evidence, helping to crack down on the compensation culture epidemic.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

Prison is about punishing people who have committed heinous crimes, but it should be a place where offenders are given the opportunity to turn their lives around.

I want our prisons to be places of discipline, hard work and self-improvement, where staff are empowered to get people off drugs, improve their English and maths get a job on release.

Our courts should be places where victims get the justice they deserve, and where our outstanding independent judiciary can flourish and focus on the cases that matter.

Changes announced today build on and underpin measures contained in the Prison Safety Reform White Paper, which highlights how the government will drive reform in our prisons.

Governors will take control of budgets for education, employment and health and they will be held to account for getting people off drugs, into jobs and learning English and maths. Data for league tables detailing how prisons are performing in these areas will be publicly available from August 2017.

Across the country, more than 2,000 new senior positions are being created for our valued and experienced officers to be promoted into. These posts, which include specialist mental health training, will have a salary of up to £30,000.

Prisons and Courts Bill measures relating to courts underline the government’s commitment to victims and the most vulnerable, as well as improving the system for those who use it every day. We are making our courts

more open and modern to help cement our place as a world-leader.

Key measures within the legislation will make our courts swifter, more accessible and easier to use for everyone. They will be efficient and fit-for-purpose, with facilities across the entire estate that are modern, user-friendly, and work in favour of our dedicated judges and magistrates.

The use of virtual hearings will be extended, allowing victims to take part without running the risk of coming face-to-face with their assailant. Many hearings, such as bail applications, will be resolved via video or telephone conferencing, allowing justice to be delivered more swiftly.

Offenders charged with some less serious criminal offences, such as failure to produce a ticket for travel on a train, will be able to

- plead guilty online
- accept a conviction
- be issued a penalty and
- pay that penalty there and then.

And businesses will be able to recover money much more easily, with digital services that allow them to issue and pursue their cases quickly. This will give them vital confidence to do business here, and will enable our world leading justice system to remain the international destination of choice for dispute resolution.

Justice Minister Sir Oliver Heald said:

Britain has the best justice system in the world, but it should also be the most modern, because we have a vision for a justice system that truly works for everyone. Victims and the most vulnerable are at the centre of our changes, which will help deliver swifter and more certain justice for all.

We want courts that are efficient and fit-for-purpose, with facilities across the entire estate that are modern, user-friendly, and work in favour of our hard-working and dedicated judges and magistrates.

The Prisons and Courts Bill underpins this vision – building on the good progress we have already made in improving the experience of all users and cementing our reputation for global legal excellence so we can go on attracting business to the United Kingdom.

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# **BCC/DHL: Confidence boost for exporters ahead of Article 50 trigger**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), in partnership with DHL, today (Thursday) publishes its latest Quarterly International Trade Outlook, which shows that confidence among exporters that their turnover will improve jumped in Q4 2016, ahead of further moves towards Brexit.

Although the number of businesses reporting that their export sales and orders would improve remained largely constant in the last quarter of 2016, businesses in both manufacturing and services are increasingly confident that they will continue to improve turnover, and that profitability will increase or remain steady in the coming 12 months.

The BCC/DHL Trade Confidence Index, which measures the volume of trade documentation issued by accredited Chambers of Commerce, fell by 1.42% on the quarter – but remains nearly 5% up on the last quarter of 2015.

The results serve as a reminder that businesses are continuing to trade in spite of the uncertainty around Brexit. But to maintain this positivity, the government must focus on the fundamentals of the economy – helping exporters recruit to close a growing skills gap, and provide support for those seeking to navigate currency fluctuations.

## ***Key findings from the report:***

- The BCC/DHL Trade Confidence Index, a measure of the volume of trade documentation issued nationally, fell by 1.42% on the quarter. The Index now stands at 119.96 – and is up 4.81% on Q4 2015
- The balance of manufacturers reporting improved export sales fell slightly to +16, down one point from the previous quarter. Looking at services, the balance of firms reporting improved export sales remained constant at +8
- The balance of manufacturers reporting improved export orders rose to +13 from +12 in Q3, while in services this rose one point to +6
- Looking at expectations of turnover over the next 12 months, the balance of manufacturers confident of an increase rose nine points to +43 – in services this rose seven points to +35
- Confidence that profitability would improve rose to +21 for services companies – up from the four-year low of +15 seen in Q3 2016. The balance of manufacturers remained constant at +22

## **Commenting on the findings, Dr Adam Marshall, BCC Director General, said:**

“Many exporters remain confident, in spite of uncertainty over our relationship with the EU. Our findings serve as a reminder that it is businesses that trade with other businesses, not governments – but they need support if they are to continue to be positive.



“Our economic forecast suggests that inflation is going to rise above the 2% target this year, which will create pressure on many firms. In addition, the fluctuating currency markets are affecting our exporters and importers – so there are warning signs on the horizon.

“The government cannot give businesses much certainty around either Brexit or currency markets, but it can act closer to home. The Chancellor’s Budget must focus on cutting the up-front costs that government imposes on every business, and promote investment and exports.”

**Ian Wilson, CEO DHL Express UK and Ireland, said:**

“UK exporters continue to be undeterred in their ambition to take their products and services overseas, despite turbulent economic times.

“Whilst this confidence might come as a surprise during these uncertain times, the rapid evolution of e-commerce and technology means that more businesses than ever are realising the opportunity that exporting presents.

“With online technology in overseas markets advancing, UK exporters should remain confident that their products are now more accessible than ever.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The Trade Confidence Index is a measure of trade documents issued by Accredited Chambers of Commerce for goods to overseas markets where documentation is required.

Spokespeople are available for interview and a full QITO report is available from the press office.

Balance figures are the percentage of firms that reported an increase minus the percentage that reported a decrease. If the figure is a plus it indicates expansion of activity and if the figure is a minus it indicates contraction of activity. A figure above 0 indicates growth, while a figure below 0 indicates contraction.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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