

Business rates

The media have been running two popular causes in recent days. The campaigners want the government to spend more on social care. Campaigners also want no business rate rises in places where property prices have risen. This highlights the perpetual tension. How do you raise enough money for good purposes without overtaxing the people and businesses which generate so much of the national income?

Taxing work and enterprise is never a popular idea, nor helpful to promoting growth. It is a necessary evil as the country wants to have decent public services. The skill is how do you raise enough from those who earn the money without doing too much damage to enterprise?

The decision to tax business property is commonplace around the world. The political difficulty in the UK comes from the need for periodic revaluations of properties. In the areas where these have risen a lot businesses face large increases in rates bills. In the areas where values have gone down other businesses benefit but are not so vocal about the changes.

Is this a good system for taxing business? If you did not raise business rates, how would you replace the revenue?

I favour setting income and profits tax rates that people and business will pay and can pay, to avoid too much damage to incentives and to keep business and enterprise at home. I have no problem with the principle of business rates but would be interested in comments on the current levels.

Attack in Somali capital a reminder of extremists' indifference towards human life – UN envoy

19 February 2017 – Strongly condemning today's terrorist attack at a marketplace in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, which reportedly killed at least 25 people and injured dozens more, the United Nations envoy in the country stressed that incident is a brutal reminder of the retrograde tactics employed by violent extremists.

"Killing civilians is despicable and achieves nothing except to remind Somalia of the indifference of extremists to human life and suffering," underscored Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and the head of the UN mission in the country (UNSOM), in a statement.

“The perpetrators need to be brought to justice swiftly,” he added.

Earlier today, at about 13:00 local time, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated at the Abagedo market near Kawa Guudey in the Dharkenley district of Mogadishu, claiming the lives of pedestrians and shopkeepers in the vicinity.

According to UNSOM, no group has yet claimed responsibility.

The attack comes at a time when Somalia is preparing for the inaugural celebrations of its newly elected Federal President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed ‘Farmajo’, who came to office earlier this month amid an “extraordinary public outpouring of euphoria marking the beginning of a new chapter in Somali history that is ripe with opportunity and promise,” noted the statement.

In the statement, Mr. Keating also praised the work of the country’s security forces and first responders in the aftermath of the attack, and offered his condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed.

[UN, international organizations condemn attacks on civilians in parts of Central African Republic](#)

19 February 2017 – Voicing deep concern over the security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR), in particular in the Ouaka and Haute-Kotto prefectures, the United Nations together with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union (AU), the Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) and the European Union (EU) have commended the acts of violence that have exasperated an already alarming humanitarian situation.

According to a joint statement issued by the five organizations, violence perpetrated by the *Front populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique* and its allies, as well as *Mouvement pour l’Unité et la Paix en Centrafrique* caused heavy civilian casualties as well as significant population displacement, adding to the humanitarian woes in the region.

Demanding that the belligerents cease the hostilities immediately, the organizations emphasized that “all attacks against the civilian population, UN and humanitarian personnel may be subject to judicial prosecution, in line with the [national] legislation and international law.”

They also expressed their deep appreciation for “robust action” undertaken by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the

CAR, popularly known by its French acronym MINUSCA to protect civilians and help put an end to violence in the areas threatened by the belligerents and encouraged the mission to continue its efforts.

REALTED: Central African Republic: UN mission reinforces presence in restive Bambari

In the joint statement, the organizations also welcomed the measures put in place for the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court.

They also underlined that only dialogue, in strict adherence with the constitutional and democratic order, will allow the concerned Central African actors to find the appropriate and sustainable responses to their legitimate grievances.

In this regard, they reiterate the importance of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation led by the AU, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and supported by Angola, the Republic of Congo and Chad, noted the joint statement.

In addition, expressing their commitment to work together for the success of the Initiative, in support of the efforts of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra aimed at sustainably promoting reconciliation and inclusive governance in line with the conclusions of the Bangui Forum, the five partner organizations underscored that those armed groups that engage in new violent acts run the risk of excluding themselves from the African Initiative and expose themselves to additional international sanctions.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

PM pays tributes to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his Jayanti

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Press release: £12m pay boost to strengthen prison frontline and attract new recruits

- Prison officers at 31 prisons to receive immediate pay increase
- Thousands of staff to benefit from specialist training opportunities in skills such as self-harm and suicide prevention – further professionalising and building pride in the service

Thousands of frontline staff in London and the South East will benefit from an immediate boost to their pay, thanks to a new £12 million package announced today by Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss.

The new package will mean prison officers at the 31 establishments will see a pay boost of up to £5,000, with new recruits receiving higher starting salaries. New starters will receive up to £29,500 – an increase of £5,000 – while a prison officer in London could see earnings increase to £31,000.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

Prison officers do a challenging and demanding job day in and day out. I want frontline staff to know that their work, experience and loyal service is valued. We also want to attract the best new talent into the service, ensuring we recruit and retain the leaders of the future.

These hard-working, dedicated staff are key to delivering our ambitious reform agenda, and it is right that we offer them greater support as we move ever closer to transforming prisons into places of safety and reform.

Thousands of new learning and development opportunities which will help staff progress in their career will also be made available nationwide.

As part of a comprehensive strategy to further professionalise and upskill the service, staff who take part in the new training scheme will be required to support and mentor colleagues – handing down knowledge and supporting future leaders.

They will also be given specialist training in mental health and self-harm prevention, boosting their pay and progression in the Prison Service.

This investment supports the government's nationwide recruitment drive to recruit the best talent from around the country.

Governors at 30 prisons across the country have also been given greater freedom and flexibility to attract and recruit locally, reducing the time it takes to get new recruits through the door. Applicants will also be able to visit the prison before they take up post, and be in touch with a mentor while the recruitment process is underway

This wholesale, organisational reform will be supported by measures within the Prisons and Court Bill, which will set out a new framework and clear system of accountability for prisons, building on the wide-ranging reforms set out in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.

Today's news comes just days after ministers announced a new frontline service focused on reforming offenders and cutting crime, to launch from April 2017. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service will have full responsibility for the operational management of offenders in custody and the community, including strengthening security in prisons, tackling extremism and building intelligence about criminal gangs.

Notes to editors:

The pay increase will be granted to Band 3 Officers on Fair and Sustainable (F&S) terms at eligible prisons.

The prisons include: Aylesbury, Bedford, Bullingdon, Coldingley, Cookham Wood, Downview, Elmley, Feltham, Grendon, High Down, Highpoint, Huntercombe, Medway, Send, Stanford Hill, Swaleside, The Mount, Woodhill, Brixton, Belmarsh, Isis, Pentonville, Rochester, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubs, Erlestoke, Lewes, Whitemoor, Chelmsford, Guys Marsh and Littlehey.

The new award replaces existing pay increments for staff at the most difficult-to-recruit prisons.

Since publication of the White Paper

- 389 job offers have been made to new recruits wanting to join the Prison Service which puts the government on track to recruit the first 400 of the additional frontline officers committed to be in place by March 2017
- we are appointing 75 mentors for new starter Prison Officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time
- we have started targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need
- we are launching a new Prison Officer apprenticeship scheme that will help increase diversity and make it easier to join the Prison Service
- we have launched a new graduate scheme to attract people from top universities to join the Service
- we have launched a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the Prison Service after leaving the military.