

Enhanced inspection ordered following food poisoning incidents

China's food watchdog has ordered stepped up inspection on food safety in the rural areas after eight people have died from tainted food over the past two months.

In one incident on Dec. 18, 2016, 30 residents came down with food poisoning, two of whom later died, after the cook mistook sodium nitrite for salt during a funeral dinner in Miaoya Village, Bazhong city of Sichuan Province, according to a circular released by the China Food and Drug Administration.

The other two cases included one in a village in Mudanjiang City in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province and one in Huilong Village in Hubei Province in November and December last year. In both instances, methanol was mistakenly served during the banquets, leading to three deaths in each case.

The administration ordered enhanced inspection of the liquor market and strict penalties for illegalities such as selling fake or adulterated liquor.

Regular inspections and supervision of rural catering services should be strengthened and standardized guidance should be released for food safety and banquets in rural areas to prevent such incidents from happening again.

The results of this survey expose the failure of our privatised railways – Andy McDonald

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on the publication of Transport Focus' National Rail Passenger Survey, revealing significant declines in passenger satisfaction for 2016, said:

"The results of this survey expose the failure of our privatised railways.

With promised upgrades delayed or cancelled and fares rising way ahead of wages, it's disappointing but not surprising to see passenger satisfaction down across the board for 2016.

"With

this decline in passenger satisfaction, it's becoming more difficult for the Government to justify allowing private and foreign state-owned companies to take money out of the system that should be used to improve services or hold fares down.

"It's clear that an alternative is needed for Britain's railways. It is time for our railways to be run under public ownership, in the public interest as an integrated national asset in public hands with affordable fares for all and long-term investment in the railway network."

China encourages college grads to work in grassroots

The central government has issued a guideline to encourage more college graduates to work at the community level.

The guideline, which was jointly issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and the General Office of the State Council, has been designed to involve college graduates in economic and social development.

College graduates will be encouraged to find employment in the modern seed industry, agrotechny, countryside tourism, rural e-commerce, rural cooperatives and water conservation projects, according to the guideline.

The guideline says college graduates will be encouraged to work in the middle and western parts of the country, the northeast China and other less-developed and remote areas.

Graduates will also be encouraged to join the army with preferential policies.

The guideline says college graduates will be encouraged to work for small- and medium-sized enterprises, or start their own businesses.

To be attractive to graduates, companies must offer good training programs as well as higher wages and allowances, according to the guideline.

The guideline stipulates that civil servant recruitment in provincial-level agencies will only consider candidates with at least two years of grassroots working experience.

The government estimates that about 7.95 million college students will

graduate this year, accounting for over a half of newly-added urban labor force.

Press release: Integrating the Science and Technology Support for the UK's Defence and Security

An integration has been agreed between the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and the Home Office's Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST). This has been decided following a review to examine the best way to provide enduring and appropriate science and technology (S&T) support to the Home Office and the MOD. The integration will improve the resilience of the S&T support that makes such a major contribution to the nation's defence, policing, security and resilience.

Commenting on today's announcement, Dstl's Chief Executive, Jonathan Lyle said:

Combining our capabilities will improve the science and technology support for the MOD and Home Office, and enhance the nation's defence and security. Dstl and CAST already work closely together on key projects such as forensics, body armour and detection systems. We intend to continue to build on this existing close relationship to make the integration process a success.

The Head of CAST, Andy Bell, added:

This development will enable a more joined-up, coherent approach to science and technology provision for security, policing and resilience in the UK. The move will mean that our customers have access to a wider range of scientific and engineering expertise across government, industry and academia, giving broader access to innovative ideas and solutions. There is a lot of hard work to be undertaken before we complete the move, and we will be providing full support to our staff throughout the transition.

The integration is expected to start in 2017 and end by 2020. CAST's staff and work will move to become part of Dstl, and be primarily based at Porton Down, near Salisbury. An integration programme team will work jointly across Dstl and CAST to support the transfer of staff and capabilities during the transition period, ensuring continuity in support of national security,

defence and policy.

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The Government has today been forced by the Supreme Court to accept the sovereignty of Parliament – Jeremy Corbyn

Jeremy

Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, responding to this morning's judgment from the Supreme Court that Parliament must give its approval to trigger the process of leaving the EU, said:

"The

Government has today been forced by the Supreme Court to accept the sovereignty of Parliament.

"Labour

respects the result of the referendum and the will of the British people and will not frustrate the process for invoking Article 50.

"However,

Labour will seek to amend the Article 50 Bill to prevent the Conservatives using Brexit to turn Britain into a bargain basement tax haven off the coast of Europe.

"Labour

is demanding a plan from the Government to ensure it is accountable to Parliament throughout the negotiations and a meaningful vote to ensure the final deal is given Parliamentary approval."