MI5 launches two inquiries into missed terror warnings

Questions over how terror killer dropped off radar

Rudd refuses to comment but hits out at Corbyn

More arrests and house raids in Manchester

Disease and desperation in the world’s most toxic town

Sarah Butler

British Airways could face a bill of at least £100m for compensation, additional customer care and lost business resulting from an IT breakdown that affected more than 1,000 flights over the weekend.

“Many of our systems are up and running today. All my British Airways colleagues on the ground and in the air are pulling out all the stops to get our operation back up to normal as quickly as we possibly can ... we’re not there yet.”

“I know this has been a horrible time for customers. Some have missed holidays, some have been stranded on aircraft, some separated from bags and some stuck in queues. I want to give them the information. On behalf of everyone at BA I want to apologise for the fact you had to go through these very trying experiences,” said Cruz.

As hundreds of passengers remained stranded, the GMB union blamed job cuts at BA for the IT problems that were thought to relate to a power outage. Mick Rix, GMB national officer for aviation, said: “This could have all been avoided.”

“BA in 2016 made hundreds of dedicated and loyal IT staff redundant and outsourced the work to India. BA have made substantial profit in a number of years, and many viewed the company’s actions as just plain greedy,” said Rix.

“BA was asking passengers not to turn up at 9-10 minutes before their flights because there is no evidence of a cyber-attack, the airline said.”

Almost a century of lead mining and smelting has created the world’s most toxic town. The legacy of generations of children – and where it is youngsters who swallow the most, particularly damaging to children. But car batteries, is a potent neurotoxin destined for children, but at last a

It is hoped that the new children’s hospital will be a game-changer for Kabwe, where there are thousands of children with a history of lead poisoning.

“I’d like to be a doctor,” says seven-year-old Martin, sitting quietly in his midst home in Kabwe, Zambia. But the truth is that Martin struggles with his schoolwork, and his dream seems unlikely to become a reality.

Kabwe is the world’s most toxic town, according to pollution experts, where lead poisoning has almost certainly damaged the brains and other organs of generations of children – and where they continue to be poisoned every day.

Almost a century of lead mining and smelting has left a toxic legacy, in the once-thriving town of 220,000 people in central Africa’s Copperbelt, 60 miles north of the capital, Lusaka. But the real impact on Kabwe’s people is yet to be fully revealed, and while the first steps towards a clean-up have begun, new dangers are emerging as desperately poor people scavenge in the vast slag heap known as Black Mountain.

“Having been to probably 20 toxic hotspot cities around the world, and seeing mercury, chromium and many contaminated lead sites, I can say the scale in Kabwe is unprecedented,” says Professor Jack Caravanos, an environmental health expert at New York University, on his fourth visit to the town. “There are thousands of people affected, not hundreds as in other places.”

The fumes from the giant state-owned smelter, which closed in 1994, have left the soil in the surrounding area with extreme levels of lead. The metal, still used around the world in car batteries, is a potent neurotoxin particularly damaging to children. But it is youngsters who swallow the most, especially as infants when they start to play outside and frequently put their hands in their mouths.

Martin’s mother, Annie Kabwe, first noticed her children getting stomachaches, pains and fevers and losing weight when they were very young. “I thought it might be HIV, but the tests were negative,” she says.

Then blood tests revealed very high levels of lead. “I thought they would...
Photographs by Larry C. Price

Brain damage, paralysis and blindness: the price Kabwe's children pay for pollution

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Galleries

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The slow, insidious nature of lead poisoning stays with children for decades or longer. It is invisible. Parents and doctors are unaware that it is happening. The results are shocking.

A family's home in Kabwe, Zambia.

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400

10,000

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