

Doctors, teachers may face graft charges

BEIJING, Nov. 25 -- Doctors and teachers may now face bribery charges if they receive monetary and other forms of reward in exchange for favors made through their work, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) said in a new judicial interpretation issued Monday.

Under the interpretation, medical staff face being charged with commercial bribery if they receive bribes from sales agents of pharmaceutical companies and suppliers of medical equipment, or if they help promote pharmaceutical products through their prescriptions for the benefits.

Similarly, teachers face the charges if they accept bribes from sales agents of textbooks, teaching facilities, school uniforms and other related items during the course of their work. Organizers of sports and cultural activities will also be covered under the interpretation.

Members of judicial or evaluation groups, members of committees for the procurement of items and members of bidding procurement groups, can also be punished for crimes committed under the circumstances of receiving illegal returns.

Those found guilty of the crimes could be jailed.

The latest move by the SPC and SPP is in accordance with two amendments to the Criminal Law issued in November 2005 and June 2006.

Previously, the Criminal Law stipulated that crimes of bribery were limited to government officials or employees of State companies.

An interpretation released last November included commercial crimes of non-government officials and employees to the legal definition.

Public servants, State company employees and those who were "employees of other institutions" were also previously subject to commercial bribery laws.

The new interpretation has clarified that the "other institutions" include State organs, social institutions, community residents' committees, village committees and organizing committees for sports and cultural activities.

"The interpretation further clarifies the circumstances in facing crimes of bribery, especially the affirmation of commercial bribery, to staff of companies, enterprises and other institutions," the SPC and SPP said.

The interpretation also clarified that rewards of monetary value given to suspects will be considered bribes, including home furnishing, travel packages and shopping coupons.

Bribery cases have been on the rise in recent years.

From 2002-2007, official records showed that the SPP dealt with 19,963 commercial bribery cases involving government officials.

Since 2006, the SPC and SPP have reportedly cracked down on commercial bribery by focusing on areas ranging from construction, land transfer, property transactions and the purchase of medical and pharmaceutical products, to bank loans, securities, and commercial insurance.

(Source: China Daily)

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