
Promotion block for officials whose families live abroad

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GOVERNMENT and Party officials in Shenzhen City of Guangdong Province will be denied promotion to leading positions if their spouses and children are living abroad.

The new restrictions drawn by the southern Chinese city government are intended to thwart so-called "naked officials" - a Chinese term for officials who transfer bribes or embezzled public money to their overseas family members so it can't be traced.

With family members abroad, it was easier for those officials to flee the country when their corruption was exposed, said Tan Guoxiang, head of the province's discipline authority.

The regulations also require officials to declare all their possessions before they can be appointed to any post.

If the declaration is found to be false, the appointments will be waived or the officials sacked.

Leading officials will also be held responsible for subordinate officials' mistakes and they are prohibited from involvement in human resources and financial businesses.

Sacked officials cannot work in their former rank for at least one year, according to the regulations.

More than 4,000 officials have fled China and the money involved totaled more than US\$50 billion as of 2004, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Guangdong is the region where the problem is most evident, Tan said.

A case in point is Yang Xiuzhu, former vice director of Zhejiang Province's Construction Department, who is living in Canada with an alleged bribe of 253.2 million yuan (US\$37.1 million).

Yang was implicated in 12 corruption cases and 21 officials involved have been sacked since 2003.

Tan said the release of the city government regulations follows the sacking of former Mayor Xu Zongheng as a result of an investigation that is still ongoing.

Three Shenzhen vice mayors are also being investigated.

Yu Weiliang and Chen Shengxing, both district officials, were also sacked for "serious breaches of Party discipline."

Xie Chuntao of the Central Party School praised the new regulations as novel and practical.

Restrictions on the power of leading officials would prevent corruption, Xie said.

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