

1 ex-official sentenced, 1 pleads guilty in corruption cases

Wang Baoan, former head of the National Bureau of Statistics, pleaded guilty on Thursday to accepting 154 million yuan (US\$22.3 million) in the Zhangjiakou Intermediate People's Court, Hebei Province.

A verdict will be issued at a later date.

In a separate case on the same day, in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, Mao Xiaobing, a former high-ranking official from Qinghai Province, was sentenced to life in prison for taking bribes and embezzling public funds.

The Lanzhou Intermediate People's Court found that Mao, a former member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Qinghai Provincial Committee, had accepted more than 104 million yuan in bribes and embezzled 400 million yuan in public funds.

In the Hebei case, prosecutors said Wang, the former NBS head, abused power to gain benefits for others on project approvals, business contracts and job promotions, then accepted bribes, which were either paid in cash or property, of 154 million yuan, either to himself or through family members, between 1994 and 2016.

Over the course of 22 years, Wang served as the Party chief of the General Office of the State Administration of Taxation, vice-minister of finance and head of the NBS, among other roles.

In January 2016, the country's top anti-graft watchdog, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, opened an investigation of Wang for "serious violations." It said he seriously violated Party political discipline and made speeches that went against the CPC Central Committee position on important matters.

The watchdog said he obstructed the investigation and disobeyed the eight-point code to cut bureaucracy, while living a corrupt life that included stays at high-end hotels and visits to expensive entertainment venues.

He was expelled from the Party and removed his post in August.

In the other case on Thursday, the court in Gansu Province deprived Mao Xiaobing, the former Qinghai official, of his political rights and ordered his personal property confiscated. Illicit gains will be turned over to the State treasury.

The verdict said that between 1995 and 2013, Mao took advantage of various official positions to seek benefits in project contracts, stock acquisitions, purchasing and sales of products and real estate developments on behalf of others.

In exchange, he extorted or accepted money or gifts from companies and individuals.

The court also found that in 2006, Mao had taken advantage of his post and embezzled public funds.

It said that in deciding the sentence, it took into consideration the fact that Mao had extorted bribes, which deserves harsher punishment. But it also noted that he had confessed, shown remorse, cooperated in returning illegal gains and provided information about other people's violations during the investigation, facts that may warrant leniency.

Mao said he will not appeal.

[China increases funding for hospitals](#)



A nurse at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital cares for an inpatient.
[Photo/China Daily]

China has been increasing financial support for the healthcare sector to guarantee all citizens affordable and proper medical services, according to senior finance and health officials.

The central government has earmarked more than 1.4 trillion yuan (\$205 billion) this year for healthcare, Song Qichao, deputy director of the Ministry of Finance's Social Security Department, said at a joint news conference on Thursday with the National Health and Family Planning

Commission.

That accounts for 7.2 percent of government expenditures, he said, up from about 5 percent in 2008.

“We see healthcare as an important sector that affects people’s livelihoods, and we will continue to increase financial support,” Song said.

The latest round of changes is a continuation of nationwide healthcare reforms that started in 2009 to eliminate irregularities, particularly in drug distribution and pricing, and to ensure public access to proper and affordable medical services.

The government investment has helped the country achieve universal healthcare by extending health insurance policies to the rural population and urban unemployed, who previously had no coverage at all.

The two new programs are largely subsidized by the government, and people can participate on a voluntary basis, with users paying a reasonable premium.

For instance, the government is allocating 450 yuan for each participant this year, up 30 yuan from 2016, according to Liang Wannian, head of the commission’s Medical Reform Department.

The premium paid by the participant varies by region but is less than the government’s contribution, he added.

Liang said the government had increased its allocation for each participant for eight consecutive years.

At the same time, he said, the government would strictly curb improper increases of medical costs.

The average annual increase in medical costs at public hospitals, he said, has to be kept under 10 percent. To meet that goal, the commission has been pushing reforms of public hospitals. That includes ending a longtime policy of marking up drug prices, which led to over-prescriptions and unnecessary treatments, and wasted the money of patients and insurance programs.

Last month, Beijing led the way by scraping drug price markups at all public hospitals, and all hospitals nationwide will follow suit by the end of September, ang said. Government funds will support the hospitals, he added.

[China’s coal-rich province to close 18 collieries in 2017](#)

North China’s Shanxi Province will close down 18 collieries and cut 17

million tonnes of coal production capacity this year, local authorities said.

The mines across 11 counties, include nine that produce at least 900,000 tonnes annually, according to the province's leading group for cutting steel and coal overcapacity.

Last year, Shanxi reduced 23 million tonnes of coal capacity and shut down 25 coal mines.

With a quarter of China's proven coal reserves, Shanxi aims to limit the number of its mines to 900 by 2020, with an average production capacity of 1.8 million tonnes annually.

Shanxi set its economic growth target at 5.5 percent this year.

[China to enhance CPC leadership in cultural organizations](#)

Central authorities have called for enhancement of cultural organizations by the Communist Party of China (CPC) leadership, according to a guideline released Thursday.

The guideline, issued by the general offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, pointed out that overall development of cultural organizations lacks vitality, with some organizations weak in CPC leadership or internal management, and some unclear about their responsibilities.

CPC leadership in cultural organizations should be strengthened and improved, and innovations should be made in management and operation systems to raise efficiency, the guideline stated.

The management system should be under the leadership of the CPC and supervised by the government. Different levels of the system should take different responsibilities and coordinate with each other, the guideline stated.

The system should have a clear structure, efficient services and proper management in order to better serve cultural institutions and workers.

"CPC leadership should be enhanced in political, ideological and organization aspects," the guideline reads.

As a bridge that connects the Party and the government with the market and society, cultural organizations are responsible for delivering messages from the Party and the government and implementing their decisions.

According to the guideline, cultural organizations are welcome to participate

in making regulations, industrial standards and criteria, in talent evaluation, and in providing consulting services.

Cultural organizations should promote entrepreneurship among the people and the transformation of the cultural industry. They should hold more activities such as training, seminars and expositions.

The guideline also said that self-discipline and credibility should be promoted among cultural organizations. Institutions of press, publication and media can set up morality committees, while Internet cultural organizations are encouraged to do their part in cyberspace control and management.

The CPC leadership should cover and be fully displayed in all cultural organizations.

Improvement should be made in fiscal, auditing and asset management systems as well as websites sponsored by cultural organizations and other online media channels, according to the guideline.

Cultural organizations are banned from cooperation with overseas organizations or individuals that endanger national security and interests. Activities held by overseas organizations in China must be managed according to law.

Leaders and cadres of the Party are not allowed to hold posts in cultural organizations before retirement or establish cultural organizations without approval, the guideline stated.

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