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China drafts first law on social insurance

China's top legislature made public Sunday a draft law on social insurance, the first of its kind in the country.

It specifies a common right for citizens, urban and rural alike, to pay premiums and enjoy social insurance for medical care, work injuries, unemployment and childbirth.

The draft highlights more efficient fund management. Governments at municipal, provincial and the state-level should encourage and support the public's participation in supervising insurance funds. Any individual or organization has a right to complain or report illegalities.

The law also allows Chinese citizens to pay pension premiums in one place and draw money in another, if they migrate to other cities or provinces. This stipulation is particularly significant as the country has a much more mobile population than in the past.

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The draft also determined that a new rural medical system, in which farmers and governments raise funds together, would be included in the medical insurance plan.

Meanwhile, governments will cover medical insurance expenses for citizens who live on low-income subsidies, have serious disabilities or are older than 60 years, the draft said.

The draft law was discussed on Monday by the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature.

Public opinions will be gathered and submitted to the NPC by February 15, 2009. The draft law will then be reviewed in committee.

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