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Shenzhen resumes government reform

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As with the previously failed reform's personnel arrangement problem, the biggest hurdle with the plan this time is deciding how many departments should be set up and how to define their level. As an assumption, policymaking departments and executive departments exist in a contractual relationship, that is, at the same level.

Previous experience shows that reducing the existing policymaking departments in one step is impossible. "Big reform can be achieved from small changes, so we plan to first merge the current 21 policymaking departments to 18 or 15 departments, and then to reduce that number later when possible. This is also a practical way to carry out the 'Proposal'," Ma Jingren analyzed.

Dividing the level is even harder. "Actually, giving the policymaking department more rights will make it easier to make policy. It is also reasonable. But the other two branches are unwilling," Ni Xing explained.

To avoid making the same mistake, the Shenzhen government will more likely classify the three government parts on the same level. Ma Jingren believes the executive department won't refuse to carry out new rules made by the policymaking department if the division of labor is made more clearly. "Policymaking department and executive department can sign a contract that contains that year's task. Supervision department will then inspect them according the contract to judge their performance," said Ma.

Chain reactions

Restructuring the government departments requires other changes to take place as well. The "Proposal" indicates Shenzhen should play the role of pioneer to find an advanced city administration system. By making adjustments to district divisions and reducing administrative departments, a new motto of, "one level of city government, three levels of administrations," will replace the current motto of, "two levels of government, four levels of administrations".

The current "two levels of government, four levels of administrations" includes the city government, district government, sub-district office and residential committee. The latter two are government agencies. According to the plan, the district government will become part of a government agency to fulfill the one level city government.

Although the system sounds like there will be a lot of changes, the biggest change is actually only in the district governor's title. According to Le Zheng, government workers will not lose their jobs and can even keep their political status level.

All these changes will work to make Shenzhen a public service-oriented government by 2013 – seven years earlier than the nation expected, said Liu Yupu, secretary of the Municipal Party Committee of Shenzhen.

Another new policy is extending the range of the "special economic zone" to include all of Shenzhen. It means the policy of two laws in one market, which have existed 20 years in Shenzhen, will be abolished.

Le Zheng indicates although this is an achievable policy, it is a long-term case and can't be put into effect soon.

(China.org.cn by Wu Huanshu, May 27, 2009)

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