

China's top legislature adopts revision to statistics law

China's top legislature adopted Saturday a revision to the Law on Statistics, which is intended to prevent the falsification of official data.

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The revised law, to take effect on January 1, 2010, aims to impose severe penalties on officials who "intervene in government statistical work and manipulate or fabricate data."

The law was enacted in 1983.

Under the revised law, government officials and institutional leaders are banned from altering data that statistical workers collected.

Statistical workers must retain original records and improve management of data checking, signing, transferring and archiving to ensure the authenticity and credibility of statistics, under the law.

Statistical workers are also required to exercise discipline and "keep data unchanged against any interference."

Further, "officials who make willful changes or falsify statistics, ask statistical agencies to fake data or take revenge on staff who refuse to commit such acts will be punished."

It adds that those fabricating data to gain honors, material rewards or promotions will receive legal punishment if convicted.

The top legislature found serious data fabrication when inspecting the implementation of the statistics law in recent years.

An NPC law inspection report said officials of a town in southwestern Chongqing Municipality, simply asked statistical workers to add a "0" to the production value of a local enterprise, which became "30 million yuan" (\$4.4 million) from the previous "3 million yuan", in order to achieve its annual economic development goal.

Former National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Director Li Deshui revealed in March 2005 that the cumulative gross domestic product data submitted by local governments was 3.9 percentage points higher than the NBS data. The difference was nearly 2.66 trillion yuan.

NBS Director Ma Jiantang disclosed last year that acts such as faking statistics and making willful changes in data accounted for about 60 percent of all violations.

Observers believe blind admiration of economic growth, which used to be a metric of official performance, was a major reason some officials turned to faking statistics.

The ninth session of the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress, the top legislature, closed its latest six-day, bi-monthly session Saturday.

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