



Abnormally rich officials to be investigated

The Ministry of Finance will look at any of its officials who have suddenly become rich after a series of reports on social media.

The stream of news suggested that certain officials working in the taxation and customs sections have rapidly become much better off.

They feel that there is something incorrect going on because these people did not have much wealth or property before they started working there.

Deputy Minister of Finance Mr Sila Viengkeo said recently in response to a National Assembly hotline complaint that the social media reports mentioned that some officials at the Lao-Thai International Friendship Bridge and at the Thamalaeng border checkpoint in Vientiane are abnormally rich.

They are officials earning a normal salary from the government but they now have many vehicles and own parcels of land.

It is being suggested that their current assets have accumulated as a result of them using their positions to make money in the wrong way.

The ministry will thoroughly investigate the situation as the sentiment in most of the public comments on social media is that they must have gained this wealth through corruption.

This has been a common complaint on facebook for a long time so the ministry is looking carefully into it.

Mr Sila added that there have always been inspections of the officials and, if any wrong doing was discovered, appropriate steps were taken according to the law.

The main complaints published in the social media dealt with government officials showing greater wealth without their positions having changed. This is good information for the Tax Department of the Ministry of Finance as it can be used as the basis for making the investigation.

The ministry will strictly follow the letter of the law to identify any wrongdoers.

Earlier this year it was reported that 90 officials in Huaphan province had been involved in fraudulent activities between 2005 and 2010, resulting in losses of billions of kip. These officials were brought to justice and penalised in various ways.

Some were given jail terms and others were dismissed from their posts.

The province intensified measures against corruption and their actions paid off.

In another case, Vientiane province recently penalised 57 corrupt officials who were involved in the inappropriate use of state property and land deals.

By Khonesavanh Latsaphao
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