

Five jailed in PRC vote-buying scheme

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 18 January 2022 07:10 -



Association of Taiwan Investment Enterprises Changsha City Branch chairman Lin Huai enters the Taipei District Court on June 8, 2020.

Photo: CNA

Five Taiwanese businesspeople working in China were yesterday found guilty of taking money from Chinese authorities to buy votes for Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidate Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) in the 2020 presidential election.

The Taipei District Court sentenced Association of Taiwan Investment Enterprises (台灣投資企業協會) Changsha City Branch chairman Lin Huai (林煥) to three years and 10 months in jail, with deprivation of his civil rights for four years.

The other four convicted in the case, who all received 20-month prison terms, were China New Family Association (中國新家庭協會) chairwoman Chiang Ming-sia (姜明霞), Hunan Shaoyang City Association in Taiwan (湖南邵陽市台灣同鄉會) director Chang Kuo-chun (張國勳), Hengyang-based businessman Chuang Huan-chang (莊煥昌) and Chinese Women's Federation (中國婦女聯合會) deputy secretary Shen Bin (申斌), who had conducted business in Hunan.

A Taipei District Prosecutors' Office investigation found that money to fund the vote-buying scheme came from Huang Daonian (黃達年), director of the Economic Bureau at Changsha's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO).

With funding from Huang, Lin and the other defendants organized gatherings and banquets to convince Taiwanese in Hunan to support the KMT and Han's presidential campaign in late 2019, including offering to pay their airfares, the investigation found.

The Changsha City Government and the local TAO allocated 3.5 million yuan (US\$551,268 at the current exchange rate) to support subsidies for Taiwanese to return home to vote, with Lin applying for and receiving about 1.49 million yuan, the investigation found.

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Huang allegedly told his staff to assist Lin and other Taiwanese businesspeople in applying for funds and obtaining registered lists of Taiwanese living in Hunan, prosecutors said.

In their largest election event, the defendants on Dec. 21, 2019, organized a year-end banquet for Taiwanese at Changsha's Huatian Hotel, where they instructed attendees to buy tickets to fly home to vote for Han and other KMT candidates on Jan. 11, 2020, and showed them how to obtain 1,500 yuan to pay for the cost of the airfares, the investigation showed.

Documents showed that 467 Taiwanese who attended the event applied for the money, prosecutors said.

Lin and the defendants gave "bribes" in exchange for votes for specific candidates and breached the Presidential and Vice Presidential Election and Recall Act (總統、副總統選舉及罷免法), the ruling said.

Association of Taiwan Investment Enterprises in Changsha City deputy chairman Tung Chien-hua (譚建華) and Taipei-based Chinese Women's Federation chairwoman Ho Jianghua (何江華) were indicted with the others in May last year, but were found not guilty due to insufficient evidence.

After learning of the sentences, Han's office yesterday said that he was unaware of the events and that his election campaign headquarters did not receive any funds from those involved.

Additional reporting by Jason Pan and CNA

Source: [Taipei Times - 2022/01/18](#)