

South Korean court says government must pay salt-farm slaves

By Kim Tong-Hyung
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The South Korean government must pay 80 million won (\$70,700) to three men who were enslaved on salt farms in remote islands off the country's southwest coast for several years, a court has ruled.

The Seoul High Court said the government was responsible for their ordeals because local officials and police failed to properly monitor their living and working conditions. The court said the government should pay 30 million won (\$26,500) each to two of the men and 20 million won (\$17,700) to the third plaintiff.

More than 60 slaves, most of them with intellectual disabilities, were rescued from the islands following an investigation led by mainland police in 2014.

The Associated Press documented some of their stories in a yearlong investigation.

Dozens of farm owners and job brokers were indicted, but no police or officials were punished despite allegations some knew about the slavery.

Eight former slaves sued the govern-



SALT-FARM SETTLEMENT. In this February 19, 2014 file photo, lawmakers and human-right activists look at salt farms as a part of a human-rights inspection on Sinui Island, South Korea. A South Korean court has ruled that the government must pay 80 million won (\$70,000) to three men who were enslaved on salt farms in remote islands off the country's southwest coast for several years. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon, File)

to protect them.

Most of the salt-farm slaves rescued in 2014 had been lured to the islands by job brokers hired by salt-farm owners, who would beat them into long hours of backbreaking labor and confine them at their houses for years while providing little or no pay. The slavery was revealed when two police officers from Seoul came to the island of Sinui disguised as tourists and pulled off a clandestine operation to rescue one of the slaves who had been reported by his family as missing.

One of the Seoul police officers who rescued the man told The Associated Press they went undercover because of concerns about collaborative ties between the island's police and salt-farm owners. That man did not appeal after his compensation was rejected last year, according to lawyers.

ment last year, seeking a combined 240 million won (\$212,000) in damages. But the Seoul Central District Court in September last year awarded compensation to only one of them, saying that the government's responsibility was unclear in the other seven cases. Three of the plaintiffs who were rejected appealed to the high court.

Lawsuits against the government in

human-rights cases are rarely successful in South Korea because the burden of proof in non-criminal cases is entirely on the plaintiffs, who often lack information or resources. The plaintiffs' lawyers had submitted to the high court written testimonies by the islands' administrative and police officials who admitted to knowing that the plaintiffs were working against their will although they did not act

Backlash at Chinese university shows limits to surveillance

By Dake Kang
The Associated Press

BEIJING — A Chinese university's plan to conduct a blanket search of student and staff electronic devices has come under fire, illustrating the limits of the population's tolerance for surveillance and raising the prospect that tactics used on Muslim minorities may be creeping into the rest of the country.

The Guilin University of Electronic Technology is reconsidering a search of cellphones, computers, external hard disks, and USB drives after a copy of the order leaked online and triggered such an intense backlash that it drew rare criticism in state-run newspapers.

Searches of electronics are common in Xinjiang in China's far west, a heavily Muslim region that has been turned into a virtual police state to tamp down unrest. They are unheard of in most other areas, including where the school is located in the southern Guangxi region, a popular tourist destination known for spectacular scenery, not violence or terrorism.

That's why the planned checks worry some.

"Xinjiang has emerged as China's surveillance laboratory," said James Leibold, a scholar of Chinese ethnic politics and national identity at La Trobe University in

Australia. "It is unsurprising that some of the methods first pioneered in China's west are now being rolled out in other regions."

Under President Xi Jinping, the government has in recent years tried to tighten controls over what the public sees and says online and stepped up political oversight of universities. Sometimes, these measures have run into a new generation of Chinese accustomed to greater freedoms, sparking public outcry and occasionally government retreat.

The leaked notice in Guilin warned that hostile domestic groups and foreign powers are "wantonly spreading illicit and illegal videos" through the internet. It said the search for violent, terrorist, reactionary, and obscene content was necessary to resist and combat extremist recordings that it called mentally harmful.

The order triggered a public uproar.

Posts on China's Twitter-like Weibo site with hashtags on schools checking electronic devices were viewed nearly 80 million times. Users voiced privacy concerns, comparing the measure to computer chips inserted in brains and the George Orwell novel *1984*.

Then came critical editorials in state-run publications saying the notice could violate Chinese constitutional protection of the right to communicate freely and have those communications remain confidential.

"If colleges and universities check the phones, computers, and hard disks of teachers and students, they're suspected of infringing on communication freedom and privacy," said an editorial in the *Beijing Youth Daily*. "Those responsible at the school should be held accountable, as they had a great negative impact on the school's image."

Administrators told another state-owned publication, *The Paper*, that the search had not yet been carried out, and that they were considering reducing its scope. University and local education ministry officials referred questions to a media office, which did not answer repeated phone calls.

Weibo, while not a government body, ran into hot water in April when it said it would censor content related to gay issues on its microblog. The company backedpedaled under intense criticism, including from state-run publications.

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Swine fever adds to China's economic headaches

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nology policy and try to shore up cooling growth in the world's second-largest economy.

"Farmers have been losing money in pig-breeding provinces for the past couple of months and their confidence has been shattered," said Feng Yonghui, chief analyst of soozhu.com, a pork industry consultant.

The cost of raising pigs spiked after Beijing retaliated for Trump's tariff hikes on Chinese goods by slapping 25-percent duties on imported U.S. soybeans used as animal feed.

American farmers supplied about one-third of China's imports of 96 million tons of soybeans last year, while its own farms produce about 15 million tons a year.

Soy prices have risen by as much as four and five percent per month since then in some areas.

Importers are buying more soy from Brazil and Argentina, the other major exporters. Authorities have encouraged breeders to look at other protein sources such as canola.

Since the first swine fever case in August, sick animals have been found in areas from Jilin province in the northeast to Yunnan on China's southern border with Vietnam.

Authorities responded by banning shipments of all pigs from any province with one case.

Authorities have found 73 out-

breaks in domestic pigs and one infected wild boar in 47 cities in 20 provinces, according to an Agriculture Ministry official, Feng Zhongwu.

"The task of prevention and control is still very arduous and the work is extremely urgent," Feng said at a news conference.

It wasn't clear how the virus reached China but it was found to be genetically similar to versions in Russia, Poland and Georgia, said another official, Huang Bao. Huang said genetic testing showed the virus in the wild boar in Jilin province was unrelated to that in the domesticated pigs.

A big share of China's population still depends on farming even after the country became one of the biggest manufacturers. The share of the workforce employed in farming has fallen to 18 percent from more than 50 percent two decades ago, according to World Bank data, but farm households still account for 250 million people.

The southwestern province of Sichuan, which accounts for some 10 percent of Chinese pork production, reported its first case last month. That extended the swine fever's reach to all major Chinese pig breeding areas.

With Sichuan included, restrictions on the movement of pigs now extend to some 90 percent of the

Chinese industry's animals, according to Feng of soozhu.com.

"The impact of the government policies is bigger than the epidemic itself," Feng said.

In the northeast, the ban has led to a pork glut in markets, pushing down prices by 20 percent compared with three months ago, according to state media. Meanwhile, retail prices have jumped 30 percent in Chongqing, a city of 9 million people in the southwest.

The outbreak could cause longer-term disruption if farmers respond by raising fewer pigs next year, leading to shortages and higher prices.

Swine fever is "more troublesome" than earlier animal diseases, said Tan of Zero Power.

"Farmers and consumers may panic and cause greater damage to the pork industry," he said.

The government maintains stocks of frozen pork in case of shortages but has yet to say whether any will be released this year.

Yan, the breeder in Shenyang, said she will skip buying piglets to rear this year but will keep sows to produce more.

"Even doing that is difficult because it is hard to keep these baby pigs alive," she said.

AP researcher Yu Bing contributed to this report.

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			6			8	
4	3	2			8		1
				1			9
	1		3		2		4
		3				8	
7			4		1		6
	5			7			
	8		1			9	7
	6			4			

Difficulty level: Medium

#68432

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #28577 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

6	2	1	8	9	5	4	7	3
9	8	7	2	3	4	1	6	5
3	5	4	6	1	7	8	2	9
7	3	2	1	4	9	5	8	6
4	9	5	3	8	6	7	1	2
1	6	8	7	5	2	9	3	4
8	1	9	4	2	3	6	5	7
5	7	3	9	6	8	2	4	1
2	4	6	5	7	1	3	9	8