

## Child rape trial begins in China

by UPI

BEIJING -- Seven people, including Chinese local government officials and one legislator, went on trial Wednesday on charges of child rape.

The suspects are accused of raping teenage girls who were primary and secondary school students in Xishui County in China's southwest Guizhou province, the state-run Xinhua news agency said.

"It's a case with a very bad impact on society and we'll strictly abide by laws to handle it," court president Yu Deping said.

One official said schoolgirls were taken from a primary school and three junior highs in the county and forced into prostitution. Under China's criminal law, people convicted of rape can receive a three to 10-year prison sentence, but child rape convictions carry a life sentence, and possibly a death sentence if the suspect knows the victim is under age 14.

The accused include county migration officer Li Shoumin, land and resources official Chen Mengran, social security official Huang Yongliang, legal affairs official Chen Cun, legislator Mu Mingzhong, teacher Feng Zhiyang and cabbie Feng Yong.

Li was removed from his post before the trial, and Mu was suspended as a legislator, Li Ling, secretary of the Xishui County Communist Party Committee, told Xinhua.

"The other government officials will face other severe punishments after the trial is over," Li said.

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