

China feels pressure on food, drug safety

by UPI

BEIJING - China's death sentence on a former top drug official for bribery may point to the severity of the pressure the nation faces to make its food and drugs safer.

The harsh punishment on the former food and drug administration head was for allegedly taking about \$830,000 over seven years, but The Los Angeles Times noted Thursday it comes as China finds itself in the midst of several scandals affecting its food and drug products both at home and abroad.

The report said the scandals, which have affected China's reputation as a major exporter, include tainted pet food, toothpaste allegedly containing a chemical used in antifreeze and reports of Chinese medical ingredients being linked to deaths in Panama.

China has sent out a number of factory inspectors across the country and promised to make its oversight tougher, the Times said.

"The Chinese FDA faces huge numbers of approval applications, which creates a big opportunity for the head of the agency to take bribes," a business professor told the newspaper.

When the convicted drug official headed the agency, at least 13 babies died of malnutrition after being fed fake milk powder. Also, the Times said an antibiotic approved during his agency leadership killed at least 10 patients in 2006.

The report said China also needs to do more to protect whistleblowers or even in listening to them.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

China feels pressure on food, drug safety by UPI