The Power to Reform



PHOTO: AFP

Last week, the head of China's Agriculture Ministry inspection team warned officials not to accept holiday gifts, including fruit and vegetables, on New Year's Day and the Spring Festival. The order is in line with the Communist Party (CPC) Central Committee's eight-point crackdown on corruption that began 12 months ago.

In December 2012, China's Politburo announced its first detailed guidance for strengthening trustworthiness of officials, whose abuse of power has distanced them from ordinary citizens. Since that day, anti-graft rules have been announced one by one.

Rule No 2 says that meetings and major events should be strictly regulated. Politburo members are not allowed to attend ribbon-cutting or cornerstone-laying ceremonies, or celebrations and seminars, without first getting approval from the CPC Central Committee. In addition, official meetings should be short, specific and to the point - no empty socialising and schmoozing. Sealing the crackdown on political extravagance is a ban on shark-fin and bird's-nest soups at official receptions

China Daily reports that a top Agriculture official was punished after he spent 30,000 yuan (US$4,900) on a new set of office furniture in August, while a colleague bought 30,000 yuan worth of moon cakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival. (http://asianewsnet.net/Chinas-gift-ban-applies-to-festivals-54991.html)

We should take note. China's efforts to eradicate corruption are worth paying attention to if we are serious about lifting our Transparency International Index ranking. Beijing has shown that where there's a will, there's a way - a top-down approach.

But despite the talk of "reform" raging in Thailand, it will likely be years before we get such action here. Instead, while politicians and academics brainstorm on what is to be reformed and