

《广东将采取更强硬措施扫黄》

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A senior Party leader from Guangdong province vowed on Wednesday to take tougher action against prostitution and crimes linked to the sex trade as the southern economic powerhouse continues its three-month crackdown on prostitution.

"We will continue our investigation into the prostitution industry and strengthen our efforts to tackle the problem," said Hu Chunhua, Party chief of Guangdong.

Hu made the remarks at a panel discussion during the annual session of the National People's Congress, which convened in Beijing on Wednesday.

The sweeping crackdown came a day after a China Central Television report on Feb 9 exposed rampant prostitution in massage parlors and hotels in Dongguan, about 100 km from Hong Kong.

As of Feb 28, more than 3,100 entertainment venues across the province have been shut down for their alleged involvement in prostitution.

Among the shuttered venues, 2,147 are located in Dongguan, a city known for its large manufacturing and trade sectors but also for its underground casino resorts, bathhouses, massage parlors and backstreet brothels.

"We had already planned a move to crack down on prostitution this year - like the way we fought against drugs last year. The CCTV reports of Dongguan's rampant sex trade forced us to launch the campaign earlier," Hu said.

Hu said police have made 363 arrests across the province and are investigating 30 officials in Dongguan.

"The government was partly responsible for the development of the sex trade in Dongguan so we introduced an accountability system to punish officials who provided protection to illegal sex activities," Hu said.

Yan Xiaokang, Dongguan's deputy mayor and police chief, has been sacked and several police officers in city townships have been punished, Hu said.

"Offenders, including organizers, operators and those who gained from the sex trade, will be particularly targeted in the crackdown," Hu added.

Yuan Baocheng, mayor of Dongguan, declined to say on Monday how the crackdown would affect the city's economy. At last year's NPC session, Yuan said the city would not rely on the sex trade, gambling and drugs for its economic growth.

"I have to say that some social problems, such as underground prostitution, the drug trade and gambling, have emerged in Dongguan along with other cities in Guangdong, following decades of rapid economic development," he said.

Media reports have estimated that the sex industry has contributed about one-tenth of the city's revenue. Dongguan's economy grew by 9.8 percent year-on-year to 550 billion yuan (\$90.7 billion) in 2013. Media reports have also estimated that at least 300,000 people work in the sex industry in Dongguan. China Daily could not confirm the number.

"But we will never rely on such negative factors to drive economic development," Yuan said.

