

Massive online gambling trial opens in Kunming

Twenty suspects in what is believed to be the country's biggest online gambling case went on trial today in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

Prosecutors at Kunming Intermediate People's Court told judges that the case involved about 8.68 billion yuan (USD 1.24 billion) in wagered money and more than 200 million yuan in illegal profits, the report said.

One of the gambling Website's allegedly operated by the defendants attracted 5,198 registered users from August 2006 to March 2007, prosecutors said.

The court also said it's the country's biggest online gambling case because of the number of suspected gamblers and the wide area it affected.

Prosecutors accused the suspects of opening gambling houses and severely interfering with social order.

Two Hong Kong brothers who were identified as Tan Zhiwei and Tan Zhiman allegedly set up a gambling house in Myanmar in 1999 and then started to develop an online betting network. Prosecutors said they established several gambling Websites and placed the computer servers in Guangzhou and Dongguan in Guangdong Province. More than 3,000 people used to work for the gambling network, the report said.

Prosecutors said the 20 senior operators of the gambling group had a clear division of labor. Some worked as gambling house managers responsible for the smooth running of the Websites while others were in charge of the establishment and maintenance of the betting network. Other members opened hundreds of different bank accounts to hide the illicit gains,

the report said, citing prosecutors.

Defendant Kang Zhenglong, a former official with the Ruili branch of China Industrial and Commercial Bank, allegedly opened several hundred bank accounts for the accused gambling group, the report said.