

## Joint-Attack by Prosecutors from North and South on Loopholes in Fire Safety Inspection

Banciao District Prosecutors Office (BDPO) joined with Tainan District Prosecutors Office (Tainan-DPO) and Taipei District Prosecutors Office (Taipei-DPO) to investigate the case of fire inspectors suspected of taking bribes. On December 9<sup>th</sup>, the prosecutors from BDPO Ming-Yu Wang, Cheng-Hui Wang and Chung Nieh, together with the prosecutors from Tainan-DPO Meng-Chih Chiang, Chia-Lung Hsu and Hong-Ming Chien as well as the prosecutor from Tapei-DPO Kun-Sheng Chen led investigators from Tainan-DPO, the police, and about one hundred investigators to simultaneously search seventeen relevant offices and residences of Mr. Kuo, a fire inspector from fire prevention division, Mr. Chang, a fire protection engineer, and the owners of ten fire safety equipment companies in Taipei County, Taipei City and Taichung City. In addition, six suspects and twenty two witnesses were summoned. After interrogation by the prosecutors from BDPO and Tainan-DPO overnight, five officials, including Mr. Kuo, were strongly suspected of accepting bribes in exchange for failing to execute their duties, and on the other hand, Mr. Chang was strongly suspected of bribing. Based on their significant suspicion and the probability of witness contamination, Mr. Chang was detained by the court while the five suspected officials were released on bail.

When the prosecutor from Tainan-DPO investigated a criminal case involving Chin-Mei Construction Co., Ltd last June, he accidentally found that fire safety equipment companies used to bribe fire inspectors through fire protection engineers, hoping that the fire safety inspections, such as the drawing examination and the check on the completion of construction, will not be overruled and the building use permit can be obtained faster.

After the continuous investigation lasting about one year and a half, the prosecutor found at least fifteen safety inspection applications were involved with bribery, the amount of which reached from NTD 20,000 up to 70,000 respectively.