

## Science park hearing sparks clashes

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Clashes erupted yesterday as environmental activists tried to observe a meeting at the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) to review the Central Taiwan Science Park's Phase-3 zone development.

Scores of environmental activists first protested by pounding on the windows of the conference room where the meeting was being held, accusing the agency of trying to settle the dispute in secret. When some of the activists tried to break through a police cordon, they were blocked and several were carried away by police officers.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Tien Chiu-chin (田秋堃) spoke in support of the environmentalists and asked the meeting's chairman, Lee Ching-chang (李慶堂) of National Chang Kung University, to let the protesters observe the session.

"The Environmental Protection Administration should not be a tool used by the Executive Yuan to hide its shame," Tien said. "It [not letting the activists enter] will only make people despise the environmental impact assessment system."

In January, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled against the EPA's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) review of development of the science park's Phase-3 zone in Houli Township (後里), Taichung County. The EPA had approved the plans.

The Taipei High Administrative Court ruled last month that construction work at the park's Phase-4 zone in Erlin Township (二林), Changhua County, had to be stopped until further EIAs were conducted and approved.

The EPA and National Science Council, the agencies that oversee development at the nation's science parks, appealed the cases to the Supreme Administrative Court on Monday. While agreeing to stop work on the infrastructure of the two sites, they said they would not shut down companies that had already begun production or were building their plants at Houli.

Lee initially turned down Tien's request, although he later allowed some of the activists to enter the meeting room and give their opinions. A representative from Houli's Gongguan Village (公館) knelt down and begged the EPA to stop operations at the Central Taiwan Science Park.

The protesters said that any development at Cising Farm (慈心農場) in the Phase-3 zone should stop immediately. The EPA should order AU Optronics (友訊) and Sunner Solar (新日) — two companies in the Phase-3 zone — to stop operations and any construction there. If the companies refuse, the EPA should fine them NT\$1.5 million a day each, the activists said. The developer of the Phase-3 zone should also have to redo the environmental impact assessment, they said.

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Meanwhile, Cabinet officials said allowing AU Optronics and Sunner Solar to continue their operations was “legally defensible.”

Minister Without Portfolio Kao Su-po (高錕寶) told a press conference the government “had not distorted the rulings,” but had made its decision to allow the companies to proceed “in accordance with the text of the Taipei High Administrative Court.”

The court ruled development work in Phase-3 and Phase-4 must be suspended, but “the ruling did not extend to firms operating in the park, neither did it mention if their operations should be suspended,” Kao said.

When asked if the ruling demanded the Central Taiwan Science Park Development Office stop issuing planning permission, Kao said that the ruling prohibited the office from issuing new planning permission, but “did not have retroactive effect on the operational licenses that had already been issued to the two firms.”

Deputy Minister of Justice Wu Chen-huan (吳陳煥) told the press conference that the decision to allow the two firms to continue operations was legally sound.

“If the Supreme Administrative Court disagrees, it can force a halt to the operations of the two firms,” he said. “Officials will not be held responsible [for allowing the firms to continue operations].”

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