

Formosa plants suspended until cause of blaze found

Written by Taipei Times
Saturday, 31 July 2010 01:30 -

Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) yesterday said operations at two Formosa Plastics Group petrochemical plants in Yunlin County's Mailiao Township (麥寮) would remain suspended until the cause of the fire on Sunday has been identified and rectified.

Wu made the remarks after meeting Yunlin County Commissioner Su Chih-feng (蘇智峰), Formosa Group representatives and residents, as part of a trip to the county yesterday — his first visit to the area since a fire broke out at the No. 6 naphtha cracker complex.

Wu said permission to resume operations would only be given once an examination of the factory had been completed and it meets all the requirements to ensure operational safety.

Wu added that the Formosa Group had agreed to the township's request to cover the expenses needed for residents from Mailiao and the nearby Taisi Township (太西) to have health examinations.

Residents will be compensated for agricultural, fish and livestock losses as a result of the pollution generated by the plant, Wu said.

The Labor Inspector Institution and the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health are in the process of writing an initial assessment report on the causes of the fire, Wu said, adding that the Formosa Group should also present ways to improve its safety measures within one week of the initial assessment report's completion.

The fire on Sunday, the second in a month, has resulted in severe air pollution and huge losses for local agricultural and fishery industries in Mailiao. There has also been strong opposition from local residents to a planned expansion of the petrochemical complex that is currently undergoing an environmental impact assessment by the government.

On Thursday, Su led a group of Mailiao residents to Taipei and staged a protest outside the Executive Yuan, demanding the government set up an independent investigation committee to examine the cause of the blaze. Wu did not meet the protesters at the time.

Earlier yesterday, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) called for the Executive Yuan and Yunlin County Government to clarify the responsibilities associated with the fire accident.

"Both the central and the local governments should be responsible for the accident and should work together to solve the problem, rather than cause any confrontations," Ma said during a meeting with representatives from the Chinese National Federation of Industries at the Presidential Office.

He said the government attaches equal importance to economic development and environmental protection, but if the two issues conflict, environmental protection would win out.

Citing the Basic Environmental Act (環境基本法), which states that environmental protection

Formosa plants suspended until cause of blaze found

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 31 July 2010 01:30 -

should be the priority if any economic or technological developments cause damage to the environment, Ma said his administration would handle related issues by adhering to the act.

“The government will have more discussions with the industry and adjust the policy on the development of local industries. We will seek to strike a balance between economic development and environmental protection,” he said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/07/31](#)