

Academics speak out against new Kuokuang plant

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Former Academia Sinica president Lee Yuan-tseh (李元熙) yesterday spoke out against a Kuokuang Petrochemical Technology (國光石化) development project, saying the nation would head in the wrong direction if the plant were to be built.

Lee's appeal to cancel the plan was endorsed by 18 Academia Sinica members, as well as 1,173 university professors in Taiwan and the US.

Building the plant contradicted a global consensus on reducing carbon dioxide emissions, he said.

"We always pray for timely wind and rain and favorable weather, but that wish seems almost impossible," Lee said. "In the past 50 years, typhoons have become increasingly powerful, and last week we saw floods in China and Pakistan."

Although the UN's Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change recommended in 2007 that the world strive to reduce the density of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to lower the risk of natural disasters, Lee said the latest research showed there was a 50 percent chance that the Earth's temperature would increase by 2°C.

"Many people are clueless about the consequences of the Earth's temperature increasing by 2°C," he said.

In related news, officials said yesterday that the Taipei High Administrative Court's decision to halt construction of two high-tech zones has set off a wave of complaints from businesses.

The court on Friday ordered that all building activity in two zones — Cising (慈寧), Houli Township (後里), Taichung County, and Erlin (二林), Changhua County — be immediately stopped because the environmental impact studies were incomplete.

Executives and officials criticized the decision, saying it had put a series of projects worth several billion US dollars into limbo.

At stake are a NT\$100 billion (US\$3.1 billion) flat-screen plant planned by Au Optronics Co (友達光電) and a solar cell factory designed by Sunner Solar Corp (日月光), among others.

While the ruling is not final, firms said they were in "shock."

"Taiwan may be the only country in the world where national policy can be easily overturned," AU Optronics chairman Lee Kun-yao (李焜耀) told the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister newspaper). "I'm afraid that not only the industry's, but the country's competitive edge, may be negatively impacted ... Even worse, investors could be scared away."

However, Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) yesterday said businesses located in the third-stage expansion project at Central Taiwan Science Park in Houli would not be affected by Friday's

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ruling.

“AU Optronics and other firms that have set up factories or begun operations do not need to stop operations,” he said.

Wu’s remarks were a departure from three separate injunctions issued by the Taipei High Administrative Court that ordered the suspension of the fourth-stage expansion project in Erlin, the suspension of further development in Houli and the suspension of production, also in Houli.

Wu cast doubt on the judges’ professionalism, saying there was a possibility they “did not fully understand issues related to environmental impact assessments.”

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/08/04](#)