

## Ting Hsin verdicts condemned

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A man named Wang Hsi-ho holds a placard outside the Tainan Railway Station yesterday to urge the public to boycott Ting Hsin International Group's food products.

**Photo: Tsai Wen-chu, Taipei Times**

The pan-green and pan-blue camps shared a rare moment of solidarity yesterday, with politicians from both sides attacking the not guilty verdicts handed down on Friday by the Changhua District Court to Ting Hsin International Group (頂新國際) executives accused of being criminally culpable over 2013's tainted cooking oil scandal.

The court found the six defendants, among them former Ting Hsin executive Wei Ying-chun (魏英春), not guilty of breaching the Act Governing Food Safety and Sanitation (食品安全衛生法).

KMT presidential candidate Eric Chu's (吳敦義) campaign office spokesperson Wang Hong-wei (王宏偉) said that Ting Hsin has not only harmed the health of Taiwanese, but also damaged the reputation of the nation's food and the office "feels deeply sorry about the ruling and urges prosecutors to appeal it to their fullest capabilities."

Wang said the ruling shows that the act is flawed in terms of its clauses concerning punishment and how evidence is adduced.

"It is totally unacceptable that the defendants could be acquitted by saying that base oil — regardless of the unhealthy elements present — could be refined and made into edible oil," she said.

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The office would urge the KMT caucus to work on amending the law and making it more comprehensive, she said.

Five KMT lawmakers seconded the office's call and said at a news conference that the ruling has "failed the expectations of society and the public."

KMT caucus whip Lai Shyh-bao (賴士葆) said the judges responsible for the ruling do not even reach the level of "dinosaur judges," but are "outer-space judges" who are completely out of touch with ordinary people's lives.

Prosecutors had also not been "attentive enough," as from the outset of the probe they should have investigated the source of the tainted oil — a Vietnam-based oil manufacturer, Lai said.

Lai called on the Ministry of Health and Welfare to collect and provide more information for prosecutors, so they could effectively appeal the ruling.

"Besides proposing further amendments to the Act Governing Food Safety and Sanitation, we would also push judicial reform that would allow public participation in judicial procedures," he said.

The judiciary is independent, but more than 90 percent of the public find the result unacceptable, KMT Legislator Lin Te-fu (林德福) said.

The judges should understand that a large proportion of National Health Insurance spending is related to unhealthy food, he added.

Separately yesterday, Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) also said the government should provide relevant information to prosecutors so they can

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appeal the court's ruling.

“Society is greatly disappointed by the verdict — with people upset and irritated — because this not only shows that the government is incapable of maintaining the safety of the food the public eats, it is equally incapable of penalizing businesses involved in wrongdoing,” Tsai said. “Therefore, we hope that relevant institutions provide the necessary information to prosecutors, so that the prosecutors and the court can have a sufficient understanding of the case to hand down a verdict that meets expectations and the needs of the public for food safety.”

Food safety is one of the top concerns for Taiwanese, therefore the issue is a social, rather than a political issue, Tsai said.

“This is why we put so much emphasis on food safety in our policy platform,” Tsai said.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) told reporters that “the ruling is the biggest push so far in the presidential campaign” for the public to vote in the Jan. 16 elections.

When further pressed by reporters on whether he meant “a push for pro-pan-green camp voters,” Ko said: “What do you think?”

Additional reporting by Loa lok-sin

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