

Six arrested over alleged secrets leaks

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Criminal Investigation Bureau official Lu Sung-hao speaks at a news conference in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

Police arrested six current and former employees of German chemical maker BASF SE for allegedly leaking the company's technology to a Chinese rival, the Criminal Investigation Bureau said yesterday.

The technology, used to produce high-purity ammonia for semiconductor applications, is estimated to have a market value of NT\$3.52 billion (US\$114.2 million), the bureau said, adding that the Chinese company allegedly agreed to pay approximately NT\$200 million for the information.

The bureau early last year received a report that senior employees at a Taiwanese subsidiary of BASF are allegedly involved in intellectual property theft, Seventh Investigation Unit captain Lu Sung-hao (盧勝豪) told a news conference in Taipei.

Bureau investigators found that a Chinese chemicals company was planning a factory in Jiangsu Province's Zhenjiang City, police said.

To compete with BASF, the Chinese company hired a former BASF employee, surnamed Lin (林), who oversaw a factory in Taoyuan's Guanyin District (觀音), paying him more than NT\$410,000 per month since 2017, police said.

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Lin recruited several engineers, who resigned from BASF at different times to join the Chinese firm, and a senior manager surnamed Huang (黃), who remained at BASF to continue providing information, police said.

Huang is said to be the head of BASF's global electronic materials and engineering department, and oversaw the engineering departments at the subsidiary, police said.

Key evidence of the leak was found in October and November, with overseas bank accounts of the six showing that they had received a combined NT\$40 million from the Chinese company, police said.

Police arrested Huang and five engineers who returned to Taiwan on Dec. 31 for alleged breaches of the Trade Secrets Act (商業秘密法), they said.

BASF's key technology has already been leaked to the Chinese company, police said.

BASF said in a statement that it was aware of the investigation and the employees involved had been suspended from work.

"We have taken immediate steps to support the investigation led by local law enforcement officials and protected our information," it said.

"BASF is committed to investing in and protecting intellectual property resulting from research and development, as well as production of know-how both by BASF and our customers. To this end we have established systems and policies which minimize risks," it said.

"In light of this situation, we will further reinforce these information protection systems," it said.

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