



# **Press Release of Changhua Branch, Administrative Enforcement Agency, Ministry of Justice**

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## **The Changhua Branch Completes the Last Mile of the Electricplating Plant Pollution Cases Pollution Remediation Costs Amounting to NT\$110,050,215 Fully Recovered**

The Changhua Branch of the Administrative Enforcement Agency, Ministry of Justice (hereinafter the “Changhua Branch”) recently referred the final recovered amount of NT\$15 million (same denomination used hereinafter) to the Environmental Protection Bureau, Changhua County (hereinafter the “referral agency”). This marks the conclusion of a significant environmental case where electroplating plant operators had secretly discharged untreated wastewater, leading to severe heavy metal contamination of agricultural land. The referral agency calculated the substitute enforcement cost to be 110,050,215 and referred the case to Changhua Branch for compulsory enforcement in 2014. The arduous enforcement task has now been successfully completed.

In 2013, three electroplating companies in Changhua County Xiang-XXX, Yi-XXX, and Su-XXX-hui were found to have illegally discharged untreated wastewater through hidden pipes into Dong-Xi-III Irrigation Canal, causing heavy metal pollution to the farmlands. Apart from being prosecuted by the Taiwan Changhua District Prosecutors Office, the referral agency also calculated that the said companies and their responsible persons were jointly liable to pay 87.6 million in substitute enforcement costs, which was referred to the Changhua Branch for enforcement in 2014. However, due to the extensive and long-term pollution caused over 15 years, the exact cleanup cost was difficult to estimate. In 2017, the referral agency added 22,450,215 to the cleanup costs, bringing the total to 110,050,215 and referred this additional amount to Changhua Branch for enforcement.

Upon receiving the case in 2014, the Changhua Branch immediately began seizing deposits, real estate, production equipment, and vehicles. Despite these efforts, the liable amount of Xiang-XXX in substitute enforcement was so large that the enforcement proceeds were insufficient to cover the debt. By 2016, enforcement officers managed to advise the companies to pay NT\$29.2 million in installments, fully covering the initial referred amount by April 6, 2016; however, Xiang-XXX refused to pay the additional 22,450,215 assessed in 2017, leading to continued enforcement actions. These included auctioning the companies' land, buildings, vehicles, and insurance surrender values, raising approximately 8 million, but leaving a shortfall of 15 million. The only remaining asset was a piece of land, a quarter of land under land lot No. 8\*4 of Xiangshan Section, Changhua City, valued at NT\$15.12 million, which had not attracted any buyers. Director-General Ching-Ming Kuo of the Changhua Branch, upon learning of the situation, instructed staff to issue a press release to boost interest. This strategy worked, attracting attention, and staff provided

detailed explanations to interested parties, even conducting site visits. The land was ultimately auctioned for NT\$15.12 million, fully covering the outstanding amount. The diligent efforts of the enforcement officers paid off, and the full NT\$110,050,215 in substitute enforcement costs was recovered.

Director-General Kuo of the Changhua Branch stated that justice and care are fundamental policies of the Administrative Enforcement Agency. Faced with significant environmental pollution cases, Changhua Branch upheld its belief in strong enforcement and unwavering commitment, using innovative approaches and media assistance to increase auction success rates and amounts. This ten-year-long, challenging enforcement case has finally been resolved, fully recovering NT\$110,050,215 and embodying the agency's principle of just enforcement. It also holds the polluting companies accountable for their illegal actions.

Soil is essential for human survival. The heavy metal pollution of agricultural land has been an issue in Changhua over decades, causing great distress to local farmers. Changhua Branch's steadfast enforcement actions serve as a stern declaration of legal compliance, aiming to make legal norms a fundamental part of business operations. The Branch hopes to contribute to protecting clean agricultural land.



The Auctioned Parking Lot



The Auctioned Building





Guided Visit to the Farmland Pending Auction



The Auctioned Farmland