

## Thông tin về Thiên nhiên và Bảo tồn

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# Polluting MSG plant blamed for killing river

**ĐỒNG NAI**— Officials have denounced the Vedan Việt Nam Monosodium Glutamate plant for dumping waste into the Thị Vải River.

They said the practice had contributed to alarming levels of contamination in the river and that the perpetrators deserved to be strictly punished.

Police had to lie in ambush for three months to gather proof of the alleged violation before the perpetrators were caught red handed.

They claim the company, which is a fully Taiwanese-invested concern, had secretly installed a waste-water pumping system through underground pipes into the river.

The police said Vedan Việt Nam was pumping up to 5,000 cubic metres of effluent containing post-fermentation molasses waste and solid substances into the river daily from its factories.

"The company installed pipes about 9m under the river surface to discharge the untreated waste," said one of the environmental police.

The river is now considered environmentally dead along the 12 kilometres it runs through the Gò Dầu Industrial Park in Phước Thái Commune.

According to director of Đồng Nai Natural Resources and Environment Department Lê Viết Hưng, the plant

secretly pumped untreated water into the river.

"It is an unacceptable act," Hưng said, claiming that the company could be charged with environmental destruction.

The company was caught red handed pumping untreated water into the river on September 8.

Earlier, the Environmental Protection Department had warned the plant that the disposal of waste water must be done strictly according to law, but it is alleged the appeal fell on deaf ears.

Department inspectors have already fined the plant a total of more than VNĐ20 million for three breaches.

Fishermen living near the Thị Vải River sued Vedan for wiping out their livelihood in 1995.

The plant had to pay compensation of VNĐ15 billion, but it was disguised as support for the development of fisheries.

### Hidden pipes

Deputy director of the Environmental Police Department, Colonel Lương Minh Thảo, said Vedan's environmental violations were grave.

He said the company's action of discharging toxic waste water into the river was one of the key reasons for the alarming pollution levels in the river in recent years.

The company was once found discharging about 50,000 cubic metres of waste

water every 24 hours. It had installed pipes under the river to hide the effluent.

The system was not in accordance with a company pledge to protect the environment.

The Natural Resources and Environment insisted that the case be settled strictly and clearly. It said foreign businesses working in Việt Nam must obey the law about environmental protection.

Lawyer Trương Xuân Tâm from the Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu Province Bar Association said the Vedan plant was a repeat violator and that environmental police had enough proof to prosecute it according to Clause 183 of the Criminal Law.

Under the clause, those who have already been fined and are considered to be deliberately avoiding the law can be fined between VNĐ10 million and VNĐ100 million, three years under house arrest or imprisonment for between six months and three years.

For crimes considered particularly grave, those involved can be put in prison between for two to seven years - or up to 10 years if necessary.

A company representative, who asked not to be named, refused to accept questions from the Việt Nam News, saying it would only comment when inspectors provided a final report. — VNS