

Germany fines Bosch over 'dieselgate' role

● The 90 million-euro sum is made up of a penalty of two million, while the remaining 88 million covers the estimated economic benefit Bosch gained from the crimes.

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

German prosecutors said Thursday they had fined car parts supplier Bosch 90 million euros (\$100 million) over its role supplying components in the "dieselgate" emissions cheating scandal.

In a statement, Stuttgart investigators said they had "levied a fine against Bosch for negligently infringing its quality control obligations."

The investigators added that the German company, the world's biggest auto parts maker, had agreed not to contest the fine.

The 90 million-euro sum is made up of a penalty of two million, while the remaining 88 million covers the estimated economic benefit Bosch gained from the crimes.

Beginning in 2008, Bosch "delivered around 17 million motor control and mixture control devices to various domestic and foreign manufacturers, some of whose software contained illegal strategies," the prosecutors found.

"Cars fitted with the devices emitted more nitrogen oxides than allowed under regulations."

Volkswagen admitted in 2015 to fitting 11 million cars worldwide with such technology.

The fallout has so far cost

the German car behemoth more than 30 billion euros.

Further legal proceedings are outstanding against both VW and former executives as individuals.

In its own statement, Bosch said it "will continue to expand its compliance organisation continuously in order to minimise the risk of violations of applicable law".

The firm promises "product development that is focused on the protection of human health and the environment".

It added that it had also retrained one-in-four of its workforce, or 100,000 work-



Beginning in 2008, Bosch "delivered around 17 million motor control and mixture control devices to various domestic and foreign manufacturers, some of whose software contained illegal strategies"

PROSECUTORS FOUND

ers, most of them in research and development, in a new code of conduct.

For Bosch, the fine closes legal proceedings against the company over dieselgate.

While prosecutors are still probing whether employees were involved in criminal actions, authorities believe "the initiative for the integration and form of the illegal strategies both came from employees at the car manufacturers" rather than suppliers like Bosch.

Grandma Ca

The 99-year-old standing up to Vietnam's coal rush



99-year-old Pham Thi Ca resting in her makeshift shelter in Van Phong Bay. Toothless and nearly blind, grandmother Pham Thi Ca refuses to leave her plot of land even after bulldozers demolished her house -- an extraordinary holdout against communist Vietnam's deepening addiction to coal.

Vietnam

Toothless and nearly blind, grandmother Pham Thi Ca refuses to leave her plot of land even after bulldozers demolished her house -- an extraordinary holdout against communist Vietnam's deepening addiction to coal.

The 99-year-old was offered money to move as authorities hoovered up land for a planned \$2.6 billion Japanese-funded coal plant in the remote Van Phong Bay she has called home since birth.

But when she said no, around 100 authorities showed up, forcibly removed her from the house and bulldozed it as she and her grandson looked on.

They were helpless to prevent the destruction of the property two years ago, but Ca, frail and wizened, has rebuffed all attempts to evict her from the land since.

"The authorities carried me away, but I refuse to move," explains Ca, who now lives in a makeshift shelter of corrugated tin, wooden beams and coconut fronds next to the pile of rubble that was once her home.

"My house is here, my land is here, so I will be buried here," she says, sitting on a small cot where she spends much of her time.

It's a story playing out across Vietnam, where a strong-fisted government is powering ahead

with coal projects to meet the soaring energy demands of a turbo-charged economy.

Coal accounts for about a third of Vietnam's current energy production and is slated to rise to about 50pc by 2030.

That means building more coal plants in places like Van Phong Bay despite a chorus of opposition from locals who complain of land grabs, loss of livelihood and environmental damage.

'I can't do anything'

Some 300 people have already been relocated from Ca's community in south-central Khanh Hoa province.

They were offered cash compensation and rooms in state housing -- but the residences were far from their farms and fishing grounds.

The \$43,000 inducement to leave their 9,000 square-meter plot was not enough to upend Ca's family.

"We cannot work there, there is no land for cultivation," says Ca's son Ho Huu Hanh, referring to the proposed relocation area.

He insists that they were never told about the planned coal plant and accuses authorities of bending the law to strongarm residents to leave.

The family lost their farmland anyway. Now Hanh works as a day-labourer or catches snails and small fish to get by, earning

about \$170 a month.

"I can't do anything, I feel so sorry for myself," he adds, crying.

Others in the area are worried about what the coal plant will do to fish and coral reefs in the bay where water temperatures could rise due to the plant's runoff.

Like many of the 20 or so coal plants already operating in Vietnam, the bulk of the funding for the yet-to-be-built Van Phong plant is external.

The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) last month approved a \$1.2 billion loan for the project, which is sponsored by the Sumitomo Corporation of Japan and is set to come online in 2023.

Covered in ash

Developing economies like Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia are particularly attractive for investors from Japan, South Korea and China as the developed world turns away from coal in search of clean energy.

Foreign investment has skewed Vietnam's energy strategy, locking it "into expensive and dirty power for decades," warns Julien Vincent, executive director at Market Forces, a non-governmental energy investment watchdog.

But for power-hungry Vietnam coal is for now cheaper, more reliable and more familiar

than renewables, which currently provide less than one percent of the country's power generation.

"Wind and solar are environmentally friendly but very unstable... we cannot just use renewable energy to supplement our big energy needs," says Bui Van Thinh, the director of Phu Lac wind farm in Binh Thuan province.

Still, many are pushing for renewables to be favoured over the 30 or so coal plants slated to come online by 2030.

"After 2020 we don't need to build new coal power plants," argues Nguyen Thi Hang, the head of the clean air and water program at Vietnamese NGO GreenID.

"Energy efficiency and renewable energy should be prioritised, gas can be considered as a midterm bridge."

Just down the road from the coastal perch of Thinh's 24-MW wind farm sits one of Vietnam's largest coal plants, the sprawling 6,200-MW capacity Vinh Tan complex.

The enormous site in a once-sleepy fishing village has for locals come at a price.

"It used to be nice, clean and pure here," recalls resident Nguyen Tai Tien.

"Now there is smoke... and every morning and afternoon we have to sweep our house and the roads because of all the ash," he adds.



"ScUber" launches submarine trips to Great Barrier Reef

● A piloted battery-powered "scUber", costing Aus\$1,500 (\$1,030) per person, will take 20 dives between May 27 and June 18 with each trip lasting an hour.

Sydney, Australia

As soon as a few Australians will be able to briefly book an Uber submarine to the Great Barrier Reef, the ride-sharing giant said yesterday.

From next week -- in what Uber is pitching as a world first -- people in Queensland state will be able to order a ride through the Uber app on a two-person submarine and tour the World



Uber submarine diving on the Great Barrier Reef at Heron Island in Queensland. A piloted battery-powered "scUber", costing Aus\$1,500



The Great Barrier Reef is home to more than 1,500 fish species and coral varieties, but has been seriously damaged by pollution and climate change.

(\$1,030) per person, will take 20 dives between May 27 and June 18 with each trip lasting an hour.

Down to 20 meters

The sub will take two passengers down to 20 meters below sea level and along designated dive paths around the reef, in partnership with environmental advocacy group Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef.

Susan Anderson, general manager for Uber Australia and New Zealand, said the company was committed to encouraging ride-sharing to make "conscious behaviour changes" to travel in more efficient and sustainable ways.

A scUber booking includes a helicopter trip to the submarine's dive location.