

Bulgaria's Environment Ministry will issue a 500 000 leva, or about 255 600 euro, fine to the plant owned by French car parts manufacturer Montupet in the town of Rousse on the Danube River, for breaching the terms of its environmental permit, public broadcaster Bulgarian National Television reported on September 12.

The ministry also plans a review of the permit and is preparing to refer the case to the prosecutor's office after the local environmental protection inspectorate received 45 complaints from Rousse's residents over the weekend about a pungent smell emanating from the plant.

Environmental protection officials were able to visually confirm the emissions during a snap inspection, while also capturing thermal imaging data, BNT reported. The ministry said that its check detected "the release of untreated waste gas".

Deputy Environment Minister Krassimir Zhivkov told reporters that while the ministry supported foreign investment, it should be in line with the country's environmental protection laws. "The breaches are systemic, which is why we will apply the most strict sanctions," he was quoted as saying.

In a statement, the French-Bulgarian chamber of commerce CCIFB said that Bulgaria risked losing a major industrial investor at a time when the country was struggling to attract new investors. CCIFB chairman Stephane Delahaye said that the environmental inspectorate had not informed Montupet of the results of its snap inspection, instead engaging in a war of words through the media.

Delahaye alluded that the inspectorate was using "the people of the city through loud announcements, in order to serve other interests," but did not clarify what those other interests might be.

Montupet's aluminium parts plant in Rousse started work in September 2008, manufacturing cylinder heads and chassis parts for Audi, BMW, Renault and Ford.
source: sofiaglobe.com