



Strikers clash with police in Shanghai - AFP

Friday, December 2, 2011

SHANGHAI — More than 1,000 workers at a plant in China's commercial hub Shanghai went on strike for at least two days, some clashing with police, to protest staff being laid off, a rights group said Friday.

Several workers were injured in conflict with police at the factory, owned by a Singapore electronics firm that supplies companies including Apple and computer maker Hewlett Packard, US-based China Labor Watch said in a statement.

The protest -- the latest in a spate of unrest in China as an increasingly demanding workforce faces off with employers struggling with high costs and falling exports -- broke out Wednesday after the company laid off about 1,000 people.

Staff claimed they lost their jobs without notice and were given inadequate compensation, China Labor Watch said. The workers were laid off because the company planned to move production elsewhere.

The strike appeared to be continuing Friday, with more than 50 workers wearing blue uniform jackets standing inside the factory as police in two vehicles looked on.

The factory's owner, Singapore-based Hi-P International, told AFP the impact of the strike was "very minimal" and said it was "working with the relevant authorities".

Shanghai police could not be reached for comment Friday. A police statement Thursday put the number of strikers at over 100 and said they blocked the gate of the factory -- which makes home appliances -- and disrupted production.

The factory's lease will end next year and workers were unhappy over the severance pay offered, it said.

Hi-P International manufactures for the telecommunications, consumer electronics and computing industries, according to its website.

The unrest comes as China's exports and manufacturing activity weaken, hit by falling demand due to economic woes in Europe and the United States -- both crucial markets for the export-driven economy.

Last month, more than 7,000 workers went on strike at a factory in the southern province of Guangdong making New Balance, Adidas and Nike shoes, clashing with police in a protest over layoffs and wage cuts.

Also last month, hundreds of female workers walked off the job at a bra factory in the southern city of Shenzhen, the manufacturing metropolis that borders Hong Kong, to demand overtime payments.

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