Carrefour questioned for its use of dispatch workers: supermarkets use dispatch workers as an employment model. (China Youth Daily, Sept. 3) Supermarket giant Carrefour seems to be caught in a financial predicament. Xinhua News Agency reported that Georges Plassat, the CEO of Carrefour Group, announced on August 30th that the company will trim 500-600 administrative positions in France on a voluntary basis in order to streamline the organization and reduce expenses. The also said it is not planning large scale layoff. Since Carrefour entered the Chinese market in 1995, it has opened 210 stores, covering 64 cities in China. Carrefour has over 58,000 employees, 99% of whom are Chinese. Carrefour China had a turnover of 45.2 billion RMB in 2011. Why does a company like Carrefour, which has developed so effortlessly in China, have so many labor disputes? Experts call the employment model used by Carrefour “covert employment.” The ILO pointed out in its report that the aim of covert employment is to evade labor law, social security obligations, and taxes. And China is not the first place in which Carrefour has utilized this model; it had been under investigation in France for the same practices.

Colleges in Huai’an, Jiangsu forced students to intern at Foxconn. (Sina Finance, Sept. 4) Users of Sina Weibo posted on September 4 that colleges forced students to intern at Foxconn’s Huai’an factory. The investigation by Sina Finance showed that several colleges in Huai’an, Jiangsu required junior and senior students to intern at Foxconn factories. Students revealed that such internships are compulsory. A course called social practicum has two credits, and if the students do not take the internship for this class, they cannot graduate. Many students raised their objections to this system.

Sanitation workers’ call for labor rights protection was answered. (People’s Daily, Sept. 5) A sanitation worker employed by He Jia Wu Ye in Chengdu claimed that they oftentimes worked from 5am to 11pm under direct sunlight during summertime in temperatures that approached 40ºC. However, in two years of work, the workers have never received a high temperature allowance. Moreover, their salaries have never met the local minimum wage standard. On August 27, the Labor Law Enforcement Team required He Jia Wu Ye to make adjustments. High temperature allowances are now required to be paid to the workers when the outdoor temperature exceeds 35ºC (as reported by the weather forecast). Authorities said that the Labor Law Enforcement Team would pay close attention to this matter and regulate the employment practices of He Jia. They also expressed that workers should protect themselves by immediately reporting any rights violations to the appropriate department.

Oil company employees fight for benefits for over a half month. (RFA, Sept. 6) - An oil company in Shan’xi province has over a thousand employees, 90% of whom are unofficial workers. Their salaries are much lower than that of official workers. The unofficial workers had been constantly requesting that the company provide equal salaries, but the company never responded. The workers began a sit-in on August 20th to protest against unequal salaries and limited-term employment contract, during which they blocked traffic twice. The company decided to hold tight in reaction to the sit-ins, and as a result, the workers are planning a large scale strike.

China Railway Group Six beat up migrant workers demanding payment of overdue wages: the unfair game between employer and employees. (Tianya Forum, Sept. 5) - China Railway Group Six’s physical beating of migrant workers demanding payment of overdue wages again raises the issue of migrant workers struggling for their wages. There is no shortage of these incidents, but there is a severe lack of rights, lack of ability for workers to organize themselves, and a lack of ability to fight for their rights on an equal playing field. Recently, an alleged migrant worker posted on Tianya Forum that China Railway Group Six beat up workers and uploaded a number of pictures showing the violent scene. China Railway Sixth Group stated that they would respond to this matter immediately, and the situation is still in the process of unraveling.

Kingsoft brags about employee overtime? Lawyer: compulsory overtime illegal. (People’s Daily, Sept. 5) - A post on Weibo said yesterday that a 25-year-old employ of Kingsoft Games was found dead in the office. Shortly before the post, Kingsoft’s subsidiary Kingsoft Internet uploaded a picture of an employee laying his head on the desk and sleeping, saying that the employees have been working overtime for an entire weekend for the release of a new product. Internet users criticized the company culture for sacrificing the health of its employees and using them as machines. Kingsoft Internet later deleted said post.

Education Department of Nan Xun Dian County defaulted on 20 million project payment; migrant workers demand payment of overdue wages for two years and get arrested. (Kunming Daily, Sept. 4) - The new campus of No.1 Middle School of Xun Dian County has been built for over two years. However, more than 10 companies never received the project payment of millions of renminbi. Over 50 workers, after their unsuccessful attempt to recover overdue wages (only 10,000 of 50,000 RMB has been paid), came to the Education Department of Xun Dian County; the payment defaulted because the County Government and County Education Department had not correctly settled the project payment. On August 29, some workers blocked the gate of County Education Department. The police arrested 14 workers for “disturbing public order”, 8 of whom were put in detention.

Labor NGO “Little Grass Workers Home” in Shenzhen condemns violence in an open letter and obtains public support after its office was stormed. (Xinmin Labor, Sept. 2) - Since June of this year, Shenzhen’s Little Grass Workers Home had been under
pressure and was eventually forced to move out of Bao’an District. First, there were frequent inspections from different town and district authorities. Then the landlord firmly decided to repossess the premises. Shiyan Police and Fire Departments also selectively issued tickets and forced Little Grass to cease operations. The landlord confessed after Little Grass’ efforts to communicate with him that he was also under external pressure. The office was stormed by over 10 unidentified men who claimed themselves to be from the property management company. They removed furniture, books, documents, and other contents from the office and caused serious damages. They then welded the door before they left.

- **Samsung accused again of abusing Chinese workers.** (BBC China, Sept. 6) - Labor rights group “China Labor Watch” published another report on the 5th of September claiming that eight factories of Samsung in China are illegally violating the rights of and abusing workers, including illegal overtime, child labor, prohibiting workers from sitting during work, lack of labor safety gear, and not signing employment contracts with workers. A Samsung spokesperson said, “We regularly review worker overtime. However, there are times when workers need to work overtime at some plants, because of production needs.” However, the company denied allegations that it used child labor, saying it has a “zero tolerance” toward child labor.

- **Taxi drivers strike in Taizhou, Zhejiang to protest against high dues owed to the taxi company.** (NetEase, Sept. 4) - On September 3, over 300 taxis parked in the plaza in front of a theater in Yuhuan County, Taizhou, Zhejiang Province. The strike was meant to protest against high dues owed to the taxi company and the out-of-control unlicensed taxies. Drivers put up slogans saying “We need to eat, we need to live.” One of the taxi drivers who participated in the strike said the primary reasons for their strike include high rents for cars, increasing numbers of unlicensed taxies, and the inability of drivers to protect their rights. The county Yuhuan County government promised to put forward a solution before September 7 and encouraged the drives to resume business as soon as possible.

- **Several sanitation workers block the street in Guiyang.** (Weibo, Sept. 5) - Internet users witnessed several sanitation workers blocking the street. The Urban Administration of Guiyang verified that social security disputes were the cause of the incident. On the same day, the heads of the City Sanitation Service, District Sanitation Service, and Social Security Bureau arrived at the scene to clarify the misunderstanding. The social security superintendent of the district provided explanations and answers.

- **Taxi drivers in Tongxiang carry out a strike against low taxi rates.** (Nanhu Evening News, Sept. 6) The taxi drives on strike said that the purpose of the strike was to raise taxi rates. “Now the unlicensed taxi drivers are better off because they can ask for whatever rate they want. But we can’t do that!” Mr. Fei said, “We carried out this strike in order to raise the taxi rate. Of cause we hate those unlicensed taxies. But to be fair, the government made efforts before to reduce the number of unlicensed taxies.” Tongxiang Transportation Department is actively dealing with this matter.

- **Haidian: salaries turned into radishes and eggplants; cleaners’ get threatened after media exposure.** (China News, Sept 6) The public bathroom cleaners in Yu Yuan Tan Park eventually received their three-month-overdue wages – 3,000 RMB per person. On August 30, Beijing Evening News reported in an article called “Radishes and Eggplants as salaries” that around 20 public bathroom cleaners in Yu Yuan Tan Park signed a contract that should have resulted in a monthly salary of 1,300, but they actually only received 1,000 RMB. The difference was paid using radishes and eggplants. Even so, wages were only given until this May. The report had serious repercussions for the workers’ company and the Human Resource and Social Security Bureau of Haidian District’s Labor Law Enforcement Department commenced an investigation over this matter. The employer, Beijing Hai Long Xing Landscaping Company, quickly made up for the difference, yet stuck to the salary of 1,000 RMB per month. The cleaners were satisfied with the 3,000 RMB given to them. However, the head of the company claimed that they would “find out who the whistleblower is.” The cleaners were anxious about this.

- **Cleaners of Beijing South Railway Station moved up the strike to protest against retaliation.** (Weiquanwang, Sept 8) At 6:30 in the morning on September 7, the morning-shift cleaners of Beijing South Railway Station carried out a strike to protest retaliation against them in an earlier strike. The strike lasted until 12:30pm, at which point the cleaners finally received a promise of a raise in their salaries. An assistant manager of the cleaning company warned the employees during a meeting that because some cleaners had connections with foreign websites and leaked news of the strike to international websites, the police have begun investigating into the leak. No communication with journalists was permitted.

- **Foxconn On Student Workers: Don’t Worry, They’re ‘Free To Leave’ Anytime.** (AP, Sept. 12) - Foxconn has responded to an accusation that vocational students are forced to work in its Chinese factories by saying Wednesday that students’ agreement with their schools allows them to leave the factory at anytime. China Labor Watch said this week that Foxconn employed students aged 16 to 18 in its factories. It cited employees as saying some wanted to leave but were compelled by their schools to stay. In regards to the conditions of Foxconn's general workforce, China Labor Watch said that, despite a recent pay hike, employees might take home less because fees for food, housing, and social insurance might change. However, the exact amount of the fees is unclear at present.