

Labor Deal Ends Strike At Chinese Textile Mill

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SHANGHAI, China (AP)--A protracted strike by nearly 7,000 workers at a textile mill in northern China has ended after the factory's Hong Kong managers agreed to improve employment conditions, a labor monitoring group said Monday.

More than 20 worker organizers have been detained in recent days over the almost seven-week strike at the Huarun Xianyang factory in Shaanxi province, and wanted notices have been issued for three others, Hong Kong-based China Labor Bulletin reported.

Workers, most of them women, launched the strike on Sept. 14 over demands by the formerly state-owned plant's new majority shareholders that they sign short-term labor contracts reducing their wages and eliminating seniority.

Workers also wanted to elect their own union officials, rejecting leaders appointed by the sole official All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the group said.

Management from Hong Kong conglomerate China Resources agreed to eliminate a six-month probationary period and allow longer contracts, but rejected demands for other forms of compensation, it said.

About 200 workers who were manning a sit-in at the factory's gates were rounded up but most released, it said.

Labor protests have grown widespread in China as the government moves to sell-off or close money losing state factories. The government resolves most by agreeing to some demands while arresting protest leaders.