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China: 8000 Workers on Strike at LG Display Nanjing Factory to Protest Racial Discrimination in Year-End Bonuses

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December 27th, 2011 – On December 26, 8,000 Chinese workers went on strike at a Nanjing factory owned by the South Korean corporation LG Display. According to workers quoted on Chinese websites, they did so because of discrimination inherent in the factory's year-end bonus system. Specifically, that Korean workers at the plant received a year-end bonus equivalent to six months' salary while Chinese workers only received a bonus of one month's salary.

The strike is still ongoing, despite threats made by management to close the plant entirely and prosecute the leaders of the strike. Today, the factory owners made an offer to double the year-end bonus for Chinese workers to two months' salary, but it was swiftly rejected by workers who are pushing for absolute equality in the bonus system.

The strike on December 26 started with the workers assembling on the factory complex's athletics field after walking off the job. Initially, only the workers from the number four factory building took part in the demonstration, but they were soon joined by workers from the complex's four other factory buildings. Before long, the protest had completely shut down approximately 80 different assembly lines.

A video posted by the striking workers on the Chinese video site 56.com shows what happened next. Later in the day, factory representatives attempted to negotiate with the striking workers in the factory dining hall. They said that they were hoping to understand the workers' grievances and understand their demands. However, they made an "orderly" return to "normal operation" a precondition for addressing worker complaints, which had already been clearly expressed as a desire for fair compensation for their work as compared to what Korean workers received.

As the workers felt that there was no plan in place to address their demands, they left the dining hall en masse. The worker who uploaded the video wrote that "By the strike's end, they won't just be giving us polite answers to our uncompromised proposals. United we are strong and we will persevere until we are victorious."

On their way out of the dining hall, the workers flipped a number of tables and chairs and toppled the dining hall's Christmas tree. Apart from that, the protestors have been largely peaceful. The exceptions have come during conflicts with the police, who instigated a few confrontations. Despite this, no injuries have been reported in connection to the strike.

According to the workers, the factory has played host to several smaller strikes in the past, owing to the poor treatment workers have suffered over the years. The factory makes severe demands on its workers, often requiring them to work for as many as 12 hours a day. Many workers can't take the strain of these long hours and are forced to resign. Despite workers working for up to 290 hours a month, their monthly salary is never higher than 2700 RMB (approximately \$430). Finally, the food in the dining hall food is bland and not very filling or nutritious.

Workers at LG's factories in Guangdong Province have also reported on Chinese websites that they have been subject to the same unfair treatment as their Nanjing counterparts. Although there have not been demonstrations so far, the Guangdong workers are fully aware of the situation in Nanjing and were speculating on what would happen as a result of it.

The Nanjing factory manufactures LCD TVs, LED TVs and computer monitors for the LG Display Corporation, a subsidiary of the LG Group (KRX: 003550). The LG Group is a conglomerate of electronics, plastics and chemical manufacturers that was founded in 1947 in South Korea. By 2011, it had annual revenues of \$48.24 billion and was South Korea's second largest conglomerate, behind Samsung.

A link to video of the unsuccessful negotiations at the factory dining hall is provided below:

http://www.56.com/u88/v_NjU1NTUzMjU.html

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