
Update on Tonghua Steel deadly protest

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Xinhua cited a spokesman from Tonghua Iron and Steel Co in Jilin province that was the scene of a deadly protest on Friday has denied reports that 30,000 workers were involved.

Mr Zhang Zhidong, spokesman for the Tonghua Iron and Steel Co, said it would be impossible for the protest, which culminated in the beating death of an executive, to have involved 30,000 people, as was reported by media.

He said that "We only have 13,000 on the payroll."

A work group organized by the provincial government to investigate the incident said the executive who was killed, Mr Chen Guojun, had been sent to the plant by the Beijing-based Jianlong Heavy Machinery Group to conduct a merger discussion in an effort to take a controlling share in the Tonghua Iron and Steel Group.

Mr Wang Xidong, deputy head of the Jilin provincial State-owned asset commission, said the proposed change in ownership would only have affected managerial personnel, rather than the rumored cuts to the workforce that stirred the protest.

According to police, around 1,000 protesters gathered in the company's office building on Thursday morning protesting the potential takeover. The protest turned violent when the workers tried to stop the production line, at which point Mr Chen was injured.

The injured manager is understood to have fled to a worker's dormitory, where he was allegedly discovered by a small group of protesters and beaten, while others threw bricks at arbitrators and police in an apparent bid to prevent a rescue.

Jianlong has been Tonghua's second-largest share holder since 2005. The planned takeover has now been shelved.

(Sourced from Xinhua)

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