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Strike at Toyota parts supplier ends quickly

By Li Fangfang (China Daily)
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Toyota Motor Corp employees work on the production line of the company's car assembly factory in Tianjin. [Thomas Engstrom / Bloomberg News]

BEIJING - A supplier to Toyota Motor Corp in Tianjin was shut down temporarily on Tuesday after workers chose to strike for better wages, but returned to work on Wednesday after wage talks were held.

The strike began at 11 am on Tuesday in the Tianjin Star Light Rubber and Plastic Co Ltd, a joint venture 50 percent owned by Toyota parts unit Toyoda Gosei Co, according to a company spokesman, surnamed Zhu. Tianjin Star employs 827 people and produces body-sealing products.

Zhu said production resumed on Wednesday, despite it being a Chinese national holiday, and had no impact on its parts supply.

"The company and the workers achieved an agreement on an acceptable pay rise," said Zhu. "But we have not yet calculated the exact figures and rates for the salary hike."

He also told China Daily that the other eight plants under Toyoda Gosei in China are aware of the problem and have already spoken with workers this week. "Based on their feedback, there won't be any more similar strikes occurring in Toyoda Gosei."

"In this sensitive period, Toyota will take the initiative to actively communicate with workers in any of our plants to understand their mindset and requirements," said Niu Yu, spokesman for Toyota China.

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Niu too is not worried about further strikes as "the company always regards staff with respect. In Toyota, it's common for managers to talk with every worker at least twice per year".

Toyoda Gosei's Zhu admitted workers were likely

resolve dispute

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influenced by the recent strike at a Honda parts supplier. That strike hit four of its parts factory in the Pearl River Delta region earlier this month.

Zhong Shi, an independent auto analyst based in Beijing, suggested other automakers raise wages if the

added labor cost is not be a heavy burden. "And the other manufacturers, especially located near the strike areas, should be warned.

Xu Changming, a research director at the State Information Center, agreed with Zhong. "Automakers in China are able to raise pay levels appropriately as most of them have a relatively high profit margin here, especially after last year's brisk sales."

Su Hainan, vice-president of the China Association for Labor Studies, said that all manufacturers in China should first evaluate their own salary systems. "If the salary is too low, employers should plan for or promise workers a future pay rise. If the company cannot afford the wage hike, they should actively communicate with the employees."