Hundreds hospitalised in mass Vietnam food poisoning

HANOI - Hundreds of workers at a Hong Kong-owned garment factory in Vietnam which makes lingerie for labels like Victoria's Secret and Wacoal have been hospitalised with food-poisoning, state media reported on Tuesday.

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More than two-thirds of the 650 victims, mostly female workers at Regina Miracle International Vietnam Co. Ltd, were rushed on Monday to hospitals and clinics in Hai Phong City, 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Hanoi, *Thanh Nien* newspaper said.

Most of them suffered from dizziness, stomach pain and headaches after eating a lunch of rice, fish, meat, vegetables and yoghurt in the factory canteen.

"By Tuesday noon, 223 workers remained in hospital, but with minor symptoms (of food poisoning)," Pham Thu Xanh, director of Hai Phong's health care department said in an interview with state-run Vietnam Television.

The *Thanh Nien* report said authorities were investigating what had made the workers sick while the food company has been temporarily suspended from operations until the results are known.

Officials in Hai Phong and at the factory's Vietnam and Hong Kong offices could not be reached for comment.

On its website Regina Miracle says it employs between 15,000 to 20,000 workers "manufacturing a variety of lingerie, shoes and sporty apparel of well-known fashion branches such as Victoria's Secret, Wacoal, Under Armour".

Food poisoning outbreaks, especially in factory canteens, have become increasingly common in Vietnam which has seen record foreign investment in recent years and impressive factory growth.

The communist nation recorded a GDP growth rate of 6.68 percent this year according to official figures, the highest rate in five years, with strong exports, foreign investment and buoyant domestic consumption.

Foreign investment surged 17.4 percent compared to last year with a record-high of $14.5 billion.

Source: AFP

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