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Date	17 Jul 2010	Page No	L-20
MediaTitle	New Sabah Times English (KK)	Article Size	85 cm²
Section	World	Color	Full Color
Journalist	N/A	ADValue	220
Frequency	Daily	PRValue	661
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HIV-positive woman in China says hospital refuses treatment

BEIJING: A migrant worker seriously injured in a wage dispute in China said Friday that a hospital had refused to treat her after doctors found out she was HIV-positive.

Li Na, 37, told AFP she was beaten up Monday when she and fellow workers at a construction site in the Inner Mongolia region asked their company for unpaid wages, and was sent to hospital.

"They didn't treat me, they didn't give me any medicine, and the company said that if I didn't leave the hospital, they would not pay any of the workers," Li said, adding she had left as a result.

"She was spitting blood, but when doctors did some tests and found out she was HIV-positive, they refused to treat her," her brother-in-law Wu Jibiao, who is also a colleague, said in a separate

phone interview.

Wu said that she was still spitting blood, her blood pressure was sky high and she could not walk.

He added that doctors told Li's co-workers that she was HIV-positive—a sensitive issue in China where people with HIV/AIDS still encounter huge discrimination.

"Some people talk to me but won't come near me. The workers all know... I just want to hide, I don't want other people to look at me," Li said over the phone, as she started to cry.

The People's Hospital of Dalate Qi, where Li was sent, was not immediately available for comment, and local police said they were unaware of the case.

Li said she found out she had HIV around eight years ago, after she sold blood in the central province of

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Henan, her home region. Her nine-year-old daughter is also HIV-positive.

"I'm worried I won't find work now, and I can't go home. I just feel there's nowhere for me to live," she said.

Henan was the scene of a huge scandal in the 1990s when people were infected with HIV after repeatedly selling their blood to collection stations that pooled it

in a tub and then injected it back into them after taking the plasma.

The blood-selling scandal, which was initially covered up by local officials, saw entire villages in Henan devastated by AIDS.

China says that at least 740,000 people are living with HIV, but campaigners say the actual figure could be far higher. - AFP