

Hong Kong: Talks to end dock strike complicated by rival union camps

Contractors meet one camp, then hold separate negotiations after lunch

Sunday 14 April 2013, by [LEE Ada](#), [SIU Phila](#) (Date first published: 10 April 2013).

The first day of talks to end the dockers' strike ran into complications when the unions involved tabled different demands, and contractors failed to reach consensus with any of them.

The Confederation of Trade Unions, organiser of the strike that has lasted 14 days already, met the two contractors - Everbest Port Services and the Global Stevedoring Service Company - and the strike-hit port operator, Hongkong International Terminals, for just over three hours in the morning.

"It was a rational talk," said strike organiser Stanley Ho Wai-hong. "It was just that three hours was too short for us to tell them all our demands. I don't understand why [the Labour Department] needed to invite the other unions for a meeting in the afternoon."

He said the meeting was "forced to end" after the contractors said they needed to break for lunch, since they had to meet the Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Labour Unions later.

The meeting was so short that the confederation did not have time to press its demand for a 17 to 24 per cent pay rise. Demands that were brought up included overtime pay of 1.5 times the normal wage rate after an eight-hour shift, and provision for benefits like lunch and toilet breaks.

The confederation represents the 500 dockers on strike at the Kwai Tsing Container Terminals.

The two federations, who did not organise the strike, met the contractors for three hours in the afternoon, but no agreement was reached. They both want a 12 per cent pay rise and overtime pay of 1.5 times the normal rate after the eight-hour shift.

The FTU is also demanding an annual pay review mechanism. Its representatives did not explain clearly why it was now asking for a 12 per cent wage raise while it had previously been calling for 10 per cent.

So Pak-tsan of the FTU said the union represented up to 400 dockers. But striking dockers say none of them are FTU members.

Everbest representative Dick Wong said the meetings were constructive and he hoped the dispute could be resolved step by step. The CTU will meet the contractors again today but the two federations could not be reached for comment last night.

Dr Chung Kim-wah, of Polytechnic University's department of applied social science, said the matter was now complicated because even if the FTU reached a consensus with the contractors for a 12 per cent raise, the striking dockers may not accept.

"If the government really wants to resolve the matter, it would be enough to talk to the strikers, who

are represented by the CTU," he said.

Striker Chan Lit-ki said he could not accept a deal involving the FTU. Another striker, Kwok Pak-kai, said he did not trust the FTU. "It's like the FTU, the government and contractor had come up with a plan already, and they are now forcing us to take it."

Labour minister Matthew Cheung Kin-chung said setting up separate meetings was not ideal but was still pragmatic.

Wong Chi-tak of Everbest Port Services, one of the contractors involved in the dockers' strike, at Wednesday's meeting at the Labour Department's offices in Kwai Hing. Photo: Felix Wong

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P.S.

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<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1211508/striking-dockers-meet-contractors>