



## News

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### China arrests 27 in tainted milk scandal: state media



Police in northern China have arrested 27 people in their probe into tainted milk that has sickened 53,000 children and soiled China's reputation abroad, state media reported Tuesday.

The 27 are among 36 detained since authorities in Hebei province began investigating Sanlu Group, the company at the centre of the scandal, earlier this month.

The investigation followed the discovery that the industrial chemical melamine, which is normally used to make plastics, had been added to Sanlu powdered milk.

The Xinhua news agency had reported 22 detentions by Monday, and said those arrested were involved in a network that made and sold melamine and added it to milk.

Four children so far have died after drinking milk tainted with melamine, which can make watered-down milk appear richer in protein.

According to police investigations in Hebei, where Sanlu is headquartered, melamine was produced at underground plants and sold to breeding farms and milk purchasing stations, the China Daily reported Tuesday.

The report said Chinese officials, learning that the purchasing stations were among the key links in how the contaminated milk spread, have begun a national campaign to overhaul the system.

A total of 31 provinces have set up special task forces to supervise the purchasing centres and implement more standardised practices, according to the newspaper.

Milk purchasing centres only began operating in recent years, and the government has not yet set up a specific department to supervise them, it said, explaining how the illegal practices could occur.

The newspaper cited the agriculture ministry as saying melamine was most probably mixed with milk at the stations.

"We will resolutely put an end to the practice of adding melamine to fresh milk," Agriculture Minister Sun Zhengcai said in an interview with the People's Daily, which was posted on the paper's website.

"We will carefully monitor the production, sale and processing of fresh milk," Sun was quoted as saying.

Chinese officials have struggled in recent days to contain the fallout from the scandal as a growing range of China-made products have been pulled off shelves across the world.

British sweet maker Cadbury said Monday it had found traces of melamine in chocolates made at its Beijing factory, and ordered a recall of those products in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia.

The 11 brands recalled include Cadbury Eclairs and bulk packets of Dairy Milk chocolate, the company said earlier.

Indonesia's food supervisory agency said over the weekend that it discovered some 16 Chinese-made dairy products contained melamine, adding that all those products -- including well-known brands such as Snickers and M&M's chocolates -- would be immediately destroyed.

Mars said it was "extremely surprised" by that decision, insisting other tests had cleared its products of contamination.

More than a dozen Asian and African countries, plus the 27-member European Union, have taken steps to ban or limit consumption of products containing Chinese dairy.

The crisis is among the most serious in a litany of product-safety scandals emerging from China's chaotic and corrupt manufacturing industries in recent years, emerging as the nation has grown into a global trading power.

Besides the toll in mainland China, five children in Hong Kong, one in Macau, and four people in Taiwan have reportedly developed kidney stones after consuming tainted Chinese products.

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