

CHINA FASHION WEEK



Models parade the creations from the "Aipark" collection by Yin Shanshan during China Fashion Week in Beijing.

Models parade the creations from the "Taouloulan" collection by Tao Tao. — AFP photos

CHINA AGENCY DENIES DEAD RUSSIAN MODEL, 14, WAS OVERWORKED



Russian models take a rest outside a Beijing hotel after taking part in a fashion show during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AP

The Chinese agency representing a "beautiful" 14-year-old Russian model who died after taking part in Shanghai Fashion Week yesterday denied allegations that she was overworked and underpaid. The death of Vlada Dzyuba in a Chinese hospital on Friday shines a light on the murky world of western models in China, many of whom are from the former Soviet Union and dream of making a career in the notoriously cut-throat industry.

The teenager, who despite her youth was allowed under Chinese law to model, began feeling dizzy and started being sick on Tuesday last week. She was taken to a Shanghai hospital the next day but died on Friday from multiple organ failure after her condition quickly worsened. English-language newspaper The Siberian Times alleged that Dzyuba, from the city of Perm, died of meningitis compounded by exhaustion following "a gruelling fashion show in Shanghai". But ESEE Model Management vehemently denied that, pointing out that Shanghai Fashion Week ended on October 18 and she fell ill six days later while on another assignment.

Johney Zheng, chairman of ESEE, said Dzyuba—who died without her family at her side because her mother could not travel to China in time—had never complained of being overworked. ESEE reproduced a medical report from Ruijin Hospital in Shanghai that gave the cause of death as septicaemia, a type of bacterial blood poisoning.

"Our whole agency is in a very sad situation, Vlada was such a lovely girl and we worked with her for two years," Zheng, dressed all in black, told a press conference. "We wish that she can have no pain in heaven." Carrie Fang, the chief agent for ESEE who was at Dzyuba's side when she died, fought back tears and said the young Russian had been enjoying the two months she spent in China before her death.

ESEE declined to give precise figures for how much the teenage model earned, but Fang denied reports it was as little as \$8 a day. "We want to tell everybody the truth, what we are thinking and what has happened, especially the Russian people, they lost one of their beautiful daughters," said Zheng, adding most of Dzyuba's assignments lasted between four and eight hours a day and she had regular time off.

Worsening health

Dzyuba, a brunette who weighed 58 kg (128 pounds) when she died, passed away less than two weeks before her 15th birthday. ESEE said it had signed a three-month contract with Dzyuba and her modeling agency in Russia. After Shanghai Fashion Week Dzyuba travelled to Yiwu, a city south of Shanghai, but a model shoot was cancelled because she began feeling unwell and she returned to Shanghai.

But with her health worsening, she was taken to hospital and put in touch by telephone with Russian consular staff, while her family were also told that she was unwell. The next day, according to ESEE, Dzyuba was moved to intensive care where she died the following morning. ESEE, which said it has 20-30 international models in Shanghai, said it had covered the medical expenses. The firm has its headquarters in Shanghai and also offices in the nearby city of Hangzhou, Beijing, the eastern city of Xiamen and Hong Kong. "She was young, she was a very excitable girl, she liked to eat, she liked to eat chips, like a teenager is supposed to do," said Fang, her voice cracking with emotion. — AFP