

Mining tragedy: Minister orders closure of site, dispatches investigators



The **Plateau State** Government yesterday confirmed a tragic mining incident in Kampani Zurak community of Wase Local Government Area, where dozens of miners were killed after a suspected carbon monoxide leak inside a mining tunnel.

Survivors and community sources said no fewer than 38 miners died in the early hours of yesterday.

More than 20 others sustained varying degrees of injuries and were rushed to hospitals in Wase town for treatment.

But government officials put the number of persons trapped in the tunnel at about 33, highlighting discrepancies in figures emerging from the scene.

A miner in the community, Safiyanu Haruna, said the incident occurred shortly after dawn when the miners returned to the site after observing their morning prayers.

According to him, the victims suddenly succumbed to carbon monoxide gas believed to have accumulated in the tunnel.

Haruna said: "They were all alive around 5:30am when they left for prayers. It was when they returned to the site that the gas trapped them."

He added that there was no immediate rescue because those scheduled to arrive at the site in the morning had not yet come.

Read Also: [Romulus Mining secures \\$150m expansion backing at Mining Indaba](#)

Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake, ordered the closure of areas covered by Mining Licence 11810, which is operated by Solid Unit Nigeria Limited, owned by Abdullahi Dan-China in Zuraq.

In a condolence call to Governor Caleb Mutfwang, Alake sympathised with him over the loss of the innocent citizens who died while trying to earn a living.

He urged the governor to convey his deep sorrow and solidarity with the people of Wase over the irreparable loss.

The minister dispatched a team of officials and investigators led by Permanent Secretary, Yusuf Yabo, to probe the remote and immediate causes of the incident and recommend sanctions.

The team also includes experts in mining, environmental compliance and artisanal cooperatives.

The minister is coordinating the team and the support services to ensure effective management of the situation.

Related News

- Wase death: Alake closes mining site, dispatches forensic investigators
- Mining: Alake vows justice for Police officer killed in Niger
- FG to revoke mining licenses, crack down on impostors - Cadastre DG

Special Assistant on Media to the minister, Segun Tomori, said in a statement that the actions were taken as preliminary reports indicated that the company ceded the pit where the incident took place to the community to mine following agitations by villagers for empowerment.

The statement said the area was an abandoned Lead site with the stored mineral prone to emissions of sulphuric oxide.

Unaware of the poisonous nature of the emissions, the villagers reportedly engaged in extraction while inhaling the gaseous substance.

ML 11810 lies between longitudes 10.34.45, and 10.35.50 and latitudes 9.13.45, 9.14.40.

The minister promised to make further disclosures as investigations continue.

Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, also directed the immediate and total shutdown of all mining activities in the affected area pending the outcome of investigations.

The minister, who has reached out to the Plateau State governor, approved the deployment of a high-powered team of experts from the Federal Ministry of Environment to Wase from Abuja to assess the situation.

State shocked by accident

In a statement, the state government said it received the report “with deep shock and profound sadness”.

Commissioner for Information and Communication, Joyce Lohya Ramnap, said many lives were feared lost, while injured persons were receiving medical care.

The statement read: “On behalf of the Government and the good people of Plateau State, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones in this unfortunate incident. We share in your grief at this painful moment.”

The government said it was working closely with security agencies, emergency responders and health authorities to secure the site, assist the injured and prevent further loss of life.

Residents of Kampani Zurak and neighbouring communities were urged to remain calm and law-abiding, while the public was cautioned against spreading unverified information that could heighten panic.

The Plateau State Government assured residents that no stone would be left unturned in addressing the tragedy and safeguarding lives across mining communities in the state.