

Five illegal miners meet Waterloo in Zamfara

From Lillian Chukwu, Abuja

FIVE illegal miners have been reported dead at a site in Bagega Village in Anka Local Council of Zamfara State after a pit in which they were carrying out their nefarious activities caved in on them.

Frequent unlawful mining has caused lead poisoning in the area, which has led to the death of many children, infertility in men, termination of pregnancy in women and psychological imbalance for adult.

Briefing the Minister of State for Health, Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate, who was on a fact-finding visit at the weekend to ascertain the level of re-insurgence of lead poisoning in Anka and Bukkuyum local councils of Zamfara, the Emir of Zamfara-Anka, Attahiru Ahmed, assured of renewed efforts by the community to check the mining menace.

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The Commissioner for Health, Zamfara State, Muhammad Janyau, decried the existence of about 12,000 local mining sites in the state with some yet-to-be-identified pits. He expressed regret that irrespective of imminent danger of such sites, the illegal miners are often aided by family members, includ-

ing women and children.

He said: "One of the greatest problems is that after we excavated the lead poison soil and put into sacks, carried them outside for disposal, the villagers still went and emptied the sacks and took them home for preservation of food items.

"What we are doing now is to

tear all the sacks that contained the contaminated soil so that it will not be useful again".

Pate urged the state government to intensify surveillance on the people affected with the poison as evidence of infection sometimes manifest after a long period.

He cited collaborative efforts between development partners as World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Ministries of Solid Minerals, Water Resources, Environment, Housing and Urban Development and Health as critical in handling the issues.

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