



Mining Accident News No.1125

19 to 25 August 2011

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Saturday 20 August 2011

Six trapped in flooded coal mine in north China

Extract from English.news.cn

HOHHOT, -- Six miners have been trapped underground after a coal mine flooding in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Friday, local authorities said Saturday.

The flooding occurred at about 4:30 p.m. Friday at the Lasengzhong Changfu Coal Mine in the Hainan District in the city of Wuhai, the general office of the Wuhai city committee of the Communist Party of China said in a statement.

At the time of the flooding, eight miners were working underground and only two managed to escape, it said. Earlier rescue sources said seven were trapped.

The mining accident was exposed after local police received a tip-off at about 9:20 a.m. Saturday and therefore a cover-up was suspected, it said.



Pumping operation is underway in Lasengzhong Changfu Coal Mine in the Hainan District of Wuhai, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Aug. 20, 2011. The flooding occurred at about 4:30 p.m. Friday at the Lasengzhong Changfu Coal Mine.

Local authorities have sent rescuers, policemen and medical staff to the scene following the tip-off. Currently the rescue operation is still going on.

Police have arrested the mine's legal representative and owner and a further investigation is underway.



Ambulances are seen in Lasengzhong Changfu Coal Mine in the Hainan District of Wuhai, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Aug. 20, 2011.

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services
Issue 25 of 2011

Sunday 21 August 2011

E China Coal Mine Collapse Traps 3 Workers

Extract from Xinhua

Three maintenance workers remain trapped inside a coal mine in east China's Jiangxi Province after a tunnel collapsed Saturday night, local authorities said Sunday.

The accident happened at about 7:20 p.m. at a coal mine in the township of Nanyi in Ruichang City, according to the rescue command headquarters.

The rescue effort was still under way as of 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

The coal mine was operating legally with all required credentials, according to the government of Ruichang.

In northeast India, children are lured into coal mining

Extract from SentinelSource.com, New Hampshire, USA

LADRYMBAI, India — The young miners descend on rickety ladders made of branches into the makeshift coal mines dotting Jaintia Hills in northeast India, scrambling sideways into “rat hole” shafts so small that even kneeling becomes impossible. Lying horizontally, they hack away with picks and their bare hands: Human labor here is far cheaper than machines.

Many wear flip-flops and shorts, their faces and lungs blackened by coal. None has a helmet. Two hours of grinding work fills a cart half the size of a coffin that they drag back, crouching, to the mine mouth, where a clerk credits their work. Most earn a dollar or two an hour.

“A big stone fell on a friend at a nearby mine last year, and he died,” said Sharan Rai, 16, taking a break near the entrance with his friend Late Boro, 14. Both started mining when they were 12. “The owners didn’t pay the family anything. I try and check if the walls look strong before I go in.”

Sharan may be leaving this hazardous work behind. He quit 4th grade years back, and an area civic group has persuaded him to return. Late, from Assam state, who’s never attended school and is illiterate, is more typical.

“Let Sharan go off, play the big man,” he said, fighting back tears. “I’ll cut coal. That’s my life.”

Thousands of children are believed to toil alongside adults in the northeast mines, some as young as 8, their small bodies well suited to the narrow coal seams. Many migrated legally from Nepal or illegally from neighboring Bangladesh, lured by the wages.

Deaths are undocumented but far from rare; medical care is almost nonexistent. Many of the older children spend their pay on alcohol, gambling and prostitution. Some drift away, others keep working for decades.

India has a national mining law, plus a right-to-education bill, and it has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, minus a few key clauses on the speed of implementation. But tribal land rights in northwestern Meghalaya state trump some national laws, and other laws are largely ignored, creating loopholes big enough to drive a coal truck through, activists say. The rules are meant to protect cottage industries, but many mines are owned by state and national lawmakers or their relatives.

“We know a few owners control everything,” said Hasina Kharbhih, founder of Impulse Network, a child rights group based in the Meghalaya town of Shillong. “They get away scot-free.”

Navigating the narrow shafts requires a slithering, snake-like movement, and a foreigner’s technique elicits laughter from miners, even as an explosion in a neighboring mine rocks the walls.

The miners are unalarmed; Sharan says claustrophobia, intense exhaustion and fear of collapsing walls ease after a few weeks. But the visitor re-emerges into the sunlight feeling damp, bruised and lucky to have survived.

Commercial coal mining in India started in 1774 and has boomed in recent years with the economy. Officially, India had 81 accidental coal-mine deaths in 2009. But deaths in Meghalaya aren't recorded or investigated, with most hushed up to avoid mines being shuttered.

The number of children working in the state's 5,000 coal mines is a matter of dispute, with Impulse estimating tens of thousands and local politicians putting it in the hundreds. Few dispute, however, that the vast majority of India's underage coal miners work in Meghalaya.

Almost everyone knows someone who's died in the "death pits." Three died recently after a shaft collapsed; four, when a hopper fell.

"Responsible" mine owners pay \$200-\$500 for funerals, others pay nothing.

"If you die, it's your fate," said Shyam Rai, 22, who is not related to Sharan and who's worked since he was 17. "I heard coal mines had diamonds, but I sure haven't found any."

The nearest medical dispensary, selling little more than aspirin, acne soap and herbal remedies, is a few miles away in Latyrke. "We don't have much medicine," said Pintu Roy, a clerk at the dispensary. "If it's serious, drive to Shillong," three hours away.

The miners are as careful as their limited resources and skills allow. Sharan checks the mine shaft for the risk of collapse by tapping the walls.

"If it goes 'dung-dung,' it's bad; 'tak-tak,' it's OK," he said. "Sure, you breathe in coal dust, but it doesn't hurt you."

State Mining Minister Bindo Lanong said reports of child labor are exaggerated, that most children are just helping their parents, and that a planned state law should curb excesses.

Mine owner Phillip Pala, whose brother serves in India's parliament, said accidents happen only occasionally. "There's a risk in everything," he said.

Jaintia Hills is India's Wild West. Merchants in shacks sell boots, potato chips, booze and little else. Coal trucks, hand-painted with images of various gods, belch black smoke up the steep roads. "Life is Not Forever," reads a sign on one.

Adult miners can earn \$150 a week, a good wage. But many squander the money.

"We try to convince people not to drink or meet strange women," said Nirom Basumatary, the Biateraim Presbyterian Church's secretary. "But we're not so successful."

Empty whiskey bottles litter the coal piles, line the roadside and languish under the beds at Mid Valley Hotel, Ladrymbai's best.

"We sell 10,000 bottles of beer and booze daily," said Rama Chandra, at one of 31 roadside liquor stores in a town of 8,000. "If I mined, I'd drink lots, too."

Dice and card games operate openly. "A try only costs 25 cents," a dice-game hustler in the main market yelled at transfixed gamblers. "It's easy."

Sharan steers clear. "If you win, they beat you up to get their money back," he said.

Sharan, with a warm smile, a bandanna and a penchant for stylish clothes when he's not mining, lives in a 15-by-20-foot mud-floored hut beside the mine with seven family members. They cook on an open fire and sleep on a fly-infested platform.

"There's a lot of drinking around here," said Devika Rai, 39, Sharan's mother. "Men fight."

Late lives nearby with his sister-in-law. He hasn't seen his parents in years. "I don't really have a dream," he said when asked, effecting an uncaring air. "I just cut coal."

Parental ignorance, poverty and the money draw children to the mines, activists say. Most are boys, but Kala Rai, 13, also not related to Sharan, earned \$25 a month dragging coal-laden carts after her father got sick, before school officials lured her back. "I wasn't good at it," she said. "I'm very happy to be back."

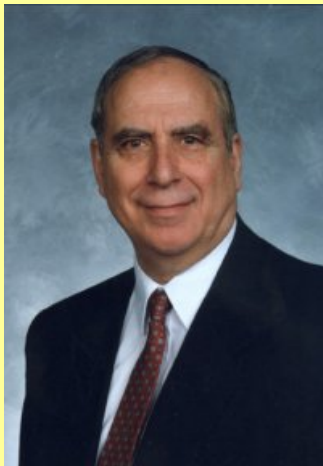
Mine-related above-ground jobs, cutting coal and unloading the hopper, are less dangerous but pay less. Chhai Lyngdoh, 14, earns about \$5 a day to climb a slimy ladder and tip a 5,000-pound coal hopper repeatedly with his slight body.

Meghalaya's government, with only seven labor inspectors and no vehicle, all but ignores child labor and safety problems, keen to goose the economy, critics said. Recently it acknowledged that 222 children worked in 20 villages mining and hauling coal and doing related jobs, but it has done nothing to rescue them.

Sharan, meanwhile, looks forward to school, an opportunity others won't have.

"I want to be a doctor," he said. "Then if someone's sick, I can help them out."

Quote of the week



"It is not the hours we put in on the job, it is what we put into the hours that counts."

Sidney Madwed
(USA Engineer, Businessman & Poet)

Monday 22 August 2011

China: Agency sets new rules for mine safety

Extract from ChinaDaily.com.cn

BEIJING - China's top workplace safety regulator is introducing national standards for safety technologies used in the country's accident-plagued coal mines.

A set of four standards on polymeric materials used for coal mining safety will take effect on Dec 1, according to the State Administration of Work Safety (SAWS).

The standards are related to the prevention of coal mine accidents, including methane gas blasts, underground floods and shaft collapses, by using high-technology polymeric materials, Jiang Zhimin, the secretary-general of the China National Coal Association, said on Sunday at a conference to introduce the standards.

Polymeric materials, a group of chemical compounds that are in liquid or foam states, are mainly used for four functions that are covered by the standards: water shut-off, filling and sealing of mine structures, ventilation sealing and consolidation of coal and rock.

The four functions are related to the prevention of mine floods, shaft collapses and fire accidents.

Introduced in China from Western countries in the 1970s, these chemicals have found widespread use in domestic coal mines in the past five years.

As of the end of 2010, there were more than 30 producers of these polymeric materials in China, employing nearly 3,000 workers and professionals, said Zhang Nong, a mine expert from the China University of Mining and Technology.

Sales of the materials totaled about 1.2 billion yuan (\$188 million) nationwide in 2010.

However, the absence of national standards for these chemicals has aroused concern at some mines.

"The number of producers has increased in recent years," said Ni Jianming, a senior engineer with the Huaibei Coal Mining Group Co Ltd. "But the quality of the products is mixed and quality problems have caused some accidents."

Producers of the polymeric materials must ensure that there are no safety flaws in their products, said Huang Yi, spokesman for SAWS.

"The administration will perfect the system of coal mine safety standards," he said.

Wednesday 24 August 2011

Qld: Truck accident at Saraji coal mine

Extract from Australian Mining, Aus

A miner was lucky to escape injury when his water truck crashed into the mine wall at BMA's Saraji coal mine.

The crash occurred on the same day, Monday 15 August, as a partial roof collapse at Peabody's North Goonyella coal mine, which nearly killed one of the Pike River mine disaster survivors, according to the Daily Mercury.

The truck reportedly had trouble with its transmission.



It is believed that this mechanical trouble caused an uncontrolled movement, forcing the water truck into the mine wall.

"One of the tyres was ripped off and it was sitting on its two back wheels, pointing skywards," Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union health and safety officer Chris Gilbert said.

A BMA spokesperson said the driver was not injured, but had been taken to hospital as a precaution.

An investigation is underway

26 trapped in NE China coal mine flood

Extract from ChinaDaily.com.cn

HARBIN - Twenty-six miners remain trapped underground after an illegal coal mine in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province flooded on Tuesday, according to the local government.

The flood occurred while 45 miners were working in a pit belonging to Hengtai Coal Mining Co., Ltd. in the city of Qitaihe, a spokesman with the provincial work safety administration said.

The spokesman said that while 19 miners managed to escape, 26 others remain stranded in the pit.

Rescue efforts are under way, he said.

The flooded pit was part of a smaller mine that was illegally operating, as it was supposed to halt production and be integrated into a larger mine before resuming operations, the spokesman said.

China has tried to close many of its smaller mines in recent years in order to improve safety and efficiency in the mining industry.

Following the accident, Huang Yuzhi, deputy chief of the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety, led a team to the flooded pit to direct the rescue efforts.

The administration has ordered local authorities to verify the number of miners currently trapped in the pit. The administration will conduct a joint investigation with the State Administration of Work Safety to find the cause of the accident and punish any individuals or companies who are found to have violated laws and regulations in relation to the accident

This week in mining accident history (1)

16 August 1834

Burn Pit

County of Bo'ness, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

2 females killed, fall down shaft

Source: www.scottishmining.co.uk

Falkirk - Another Coal Pit Accident - On Saturday last, a very melancholy accident took place at Borrowstowness, attended with loss of life. A girl named Ferguson, who was engaged to be married to a young man, and whose banns were to have been proclaimed next day for the last time - disregarding an old custom among the colliers in that quarter by which they refrain from going to the pit during the-time they are being a bride - was in the act of descending the Burn pit, along with a cousin of the name of Main, about 15 years of age, and had proceeded about halfway or 40 fathoms, when the bucket was met by the loaded one ascending. The two, by some means, came in contact, by which that going down was capsized, and the two unfortunate friends were precipitated to the bottom. They were both killed on the spot. [*Scotsman 20 August 1834*]

This week in mining accident history (2)

18 August 1827

Banknock Colliery

Stirlingshire, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

1 killed, fall down shaft

Source: www.scottishmining.co.uk

Fatal Accident - On Saturday last, a collier of the name of Cowie, belonging to Banknock colliery, met with a fatal accident while descending one of the shafts. From some accident, the person who had charge of the windlass, by which the baskets are lowered into the pit, lost command of it soon after the unfortunate sufferer began to descend, in consequence of which he was precipitated to the

bottom from a vast height, and killed on the spot. The distracted feelings of his brother, who was waiting at the bottom of the pit to receive him, is beyond description. They had but separated a short time; and at the moment he expected to meet him as he left him, in health and strength, he was doomed to see him stretched a lifeless corpse at his feet. [*Caledonian Mercury 25 August 1827*]

Thursday 25 August 2011

India: Mining accident kills five, four injured

Extract from dailybhaskar.com

Jaipur/Alwar: Landslide at a mining site in Bhiwari area of Alwar killed five people while four others were admitted to a local hospital with serious injuries. Their condition is critical.

There were more than a dozen labourers working at the mine when the mine bench developed cracks and huge stones fell down on the workers on Wednesday evening.

"Five people lost their lives in the incident, which prima facie appears to be a landslide," said Alwar superintendent of police Mahesh Goyal. "We have asked the officials at state mining department to investigate the cause of the accident and if any permits were issued for mining here," he added.

However, locals claim that the mine had been functioning illegally and negligence is being cited as the primary cause of the accident.

"The excavation activity was being carried out at the base of the hill. Excessive digging loosened the rocks at the top," he added.

Ukraine Coal Mine Blast Kills 16

Extract from RTT News

Up to 16 miners were killed in a major blast at a coal mine in eastern Ukraine in the early hours of Friday, reports said.

Two miners who suffered burn injuries were admitted to hospital while ten others remained unaccounted for after the explosion that ripped through the colliery at around 1:57 a.m. local time.

The Emergency Ministry said in a statement that around 28 workers were inside the Suhodolskaya-Vostochnaya mine in Lugansk region at the time of the explosion. It added that efforts for rescuing miners thought to have been trapped inside the colliery were being coordinated by the Emergency Minister. An investigation is on to find out the reasons for the blast.

The former Soviet republic has an appalling track record on the safety of its mining industry and the problem is further aggravated by lack of necessary safeguards.

Ghana: Two killed, several trapped by collapsing illegal mine

Extract from Ghana Web

A collapsed illegal mining pit in Prestea has collapsed, killing two illegal miners and trapping several others.

The Urban Area Council Chairman of the area, Mr Isaac Kamerling, who confirmed the incident to Joy FM said rescue work has begun.

One injured person has been sent to the Efia Nkwanta Government Hospital, says Mr Kamerling.

Explaining the circumstances that might have led to the collapse of the mine, the Urban Council Chairman said the area is an old, abandoned mine. The victims however, went back into the pit to scrounge for remnants of gold and the weak walls crumbled on them.

Rescuers are afraid to go into the pit and are using shovels to dig - quite cautiously - for the victims.

The police are helping in the rescue effort.

10 dead in east China mining accidents

Extract from Xinhua

HEFEI - Ten people were confirmed dead and three others injured in two unrelated coal mine accidents on Thursday in east China, local authorities said.

Seven workers died after being crushed and three others were injured by falling cement from a coal mine's ventilation well that was under construction in Huoqiu County in the eastern province of Anhui at about 4:45 am Thursday, the county government said in a statement.

The three injured workers are being treated at a hospital and are in no immediate danger, it said.

The Anhui provincial government has set up a team to investigate the accident.

In another accident, the bodies of three trapped coal miners were found Thursday afternoon, five days after a mine shaft collapsed in the city of Ruichang in Anhui's neighboring province of Jiangxi, the city government said in a statement.

Investigations into the cause of the shaft collapse are still underway.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

BACK ENTRY

An entry that is back from the working face.

-Ed



Trade & Investment

Industry Assistance Seminars - Mastering Fatigue Management

A series of free seminars on Mastering Fatigue Management will be held between September and November 2011 at Broken Hill, Lithgow, Wollongong, Dubbo, Maitland and Cobar. The seminar program consists of a two day educational workshop. Arrangements can then be made to conduct a one day on-site evaluation on fatigue.

Registration forms are available to download below. Please email completed registration forms to: minesafety.seminars@industry.nsw.gov.au

Further information & Registration Form http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/402128/Mastering-fatigue-management-2011.pdf