

At least 18 people were buried under tonnes of earth when the overburden slid down the side of the open-cast coal mine in India.



Death toll rises to 18 at Indian coal mine collapse

04.01.2017 The number of miners killed in a coal mine collapse in the Jharkhand state of India has risen to 18, with many miners still missing.

The tragedy occurred on the evening of 29 December when the overburden dump at Lalmatia mine slid 35 metres, trapping workers and excavation equipment, including around 26 Volvo trucks, under an estimated 9.5 million cubic meters of earth.

The mine is part of the Rajmahal open cast mining project operated by public-owned company Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL), which is a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd, one of the largest state-owned mining corporations in the world.

The National Disaster Response Force reached the accident site after about 17 hours and is still engaged in rescue operations. Most of the trapped workers are contract workers, employed by an outsourced company, Mahalaxmi Private Limited.

According to reports, just a few days before the tragedy took place, workers refused to work due to lack of safety measures. However, the company ignored all warning signs of minor mudslides in the weeks and days before the incident and forced workers to continue. The company does not have a list of workers who were engaged at the time of the incident and so far there has been no final confirmation of the number of workers who have died or been injured.

S Q Zama, Secretary General of IndustriALL Global Union affiliate, the Indian National Mineworkers' Federation (INMF), said:

Absolute negligence by the mine management and outsourced agency has caused this avoidable accident. It is unacceptable that the employers ignored all warnings by workers and violated all safety regulations. The government should punish all those who are responsible for this accident. India should immediately ratify and implement provisions of ILO Convention 176 on safety and health in mines to prevent such accidents in future.

ECL has announced ex-gratia compensation of Rs500,000 (US\$7,300) to the families of the dead, in addition to the statutory compensation under Workmen Compensation Act. However, unions strongly criticized the low compensation being offered by ECL and the INMF is calling on the coal ministry to provide additional compensation of Rs2,000,000 (US\$29,300) to the kin of each deceased worker. Unions have also demanded employment of the dependents of deceased workers, including contract workers.

Coal India has set up a high powered committee to probe into the incident, which is expected to submit its report within one month. The INMF has also appealed the committee to hold discussions with trade union representatives on events leading to the accident.

According to official information, from 2013 to June 2016, 166 workers lost their lives in 159 incidents at Coal India. In the same period, 574 workers suffered serious injuries in approximately 558 serious accidents.

[Mining](#)

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