Beat: Miscellaneous

Coal and gas outburst kills 17 miners in southwest China

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USPA News - Seventeen miners were killed Wednesday when a coal and gas outburst occurred at a coal mine in southwest China, local authorities said on Thursday. It comes just days after another deadly mine accident in which eleven people are still missing.

The accident happened just after 2 p.m. local time on Wednesday when a coal and gas outburst happened in a shaft at the Shangchang Coal Mine in Huangheni Township of Fuyuan County, which is located in southwest China`s Yunnan Province. A total of 66 miners were working underground when it happened. A spokesperson for the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety confirmed seventeen people were killed, including sixteen miners who died at the scene while one died while being rushed to a nearby hospital. Sixteen of the survivors were also injured, but their injuries are not believed to be life-threatening. The state-run Xinhua news agency said the Shangchang Coal Mine, which has an annual capacity of 90,000 tonnes and an exploitable reserve of nearly 12 million tonnes, was fully licensed. It was not immediately known what caused Wednesday`s accident, but an investigation is underway. On Saturday, six people escaped and at least three people were killed when flooding occurred at the Furuixiang Coal Mine in Qitaihe City of northeast China`s Heilongjiang Province. As of Thursday morning, eleven people remain missing but rescue workers are hopeful some may still be alive and are drilling a hole to send oxygen and food. Safety conditions at mines in China have significantly improved in recent years but they remain among the world`s most dangerous with 1,973 fatalities in 2011, down 19 percent from the previous year. The Chinese government reported 2,433 fatalities in 2010 and 2,631 in 2009. China in recent years shut down scores of small mines to improve safety and efficiency in the mining industry. The country has also ordered all mines to build emergency shelter systems by June 2013 which are to be equipped with machines to produce oxygen and air conditioning, protective walls and airtight doors to protect workers against toxic gases and other hazardous factors. The first manned test of such a permanent underground chamber was carried out in August 2011 when around 100 people - including managers, engineers, miners, medical staff, and the chamber`s developers - took part in a 48-hour test at a mine owned by the China National Coal Group in the city of Shuozhou in northern China`s Shanxi Province. One of the worst mining accidents in China in recent years happened in November 2009 when 104 workers were killed after several explosions at a coal mine in Heilongjiang province.

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