

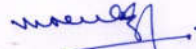
Date: 16. 01. 2017

Enclosed is the news clipping of 'The Hindu' an English daily dated 16th January, 2017, the news item is captioned "**4 killed as illegal mine collapses**". Sixty persons, it is apprehended are dead and fifty illegal coal mines are allegedly in operation in the adjacent area of Kalikapur. Police appears to be unaware of the incident.

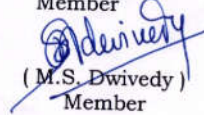
Considering the gravity of the situation, the Investigating Wing of the Commission should at once start investigation and report back within two weeks i.e. by 02.02.2017.



(Justice Girish Chandra Gupta)
Chairperson



(Napanarajit Mukherjee)
Member



(M.S. Dwivedy)
Member

Encl: News Item Dt. 16. 01. 17

Ld. Registrar to keep NHRC posted about cognizance taken on the subject by WBHRC.

4 killed as illegal mine collapses

Rescue operations are yet to commence though almost 50 persons are reported missing.

SOUMYA DAS

KALIKAPUR (BANKURA): At least four persons have died and several others are missing after an illegal coal mine collapsed in the Mejhia block of Bankura district on Thursday night.

According to local people nearly three acres of the illegal coal mine in Kalikapur village, adjacent to Jharkhand, had collapsed.

Rescue work is yet to start, villagers at the desolate mining site told *The Hindu* as the mine is an illegal one. Both the authorities and the mafia have denied the incident.

Even as district police officials claimed that "no such incident occurred", villagers said that on Thursday,

"nearly 60 workers" were inside the mine when it collapsed.

"Four bodies were recovered from the spot, but that does not indicate the extent of tragedy. We think nearly 50 people were trapped and have died in the incident," a resident of Kalikapur alleged.

Local TMC MLA Swapan Bouri, however, confirmed that he has been "informed" about the incident and the death of the workers.

There was an eerie calm at Kalikapur with villagers hesitant to talk to outsiders. On Sunday afternoon when *The Hindu* visited the place most of the locals refused speak about the accident and those who spoke refused to share their names fearing reper-



Family members of a miner who died in the tragedy.
— PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cussion from the coal mafia. They also said it was not possible to visit the mine as the mafia were not allowing journalists or villagers near the Bashulithan mine.

He also said that the coal mafias pay "an occasional

amount" to the villagers "to keep mum" about the mining, which is mostly illegal.

"Despite being well aware that the mine has collapsed, villagers did not try to rescue the workers trapped inside the mine. The bodies were recovered by the family members of some of the workers from Birbhum," a local resident said. They also said that the villagers get paid by the coal mafia to stay away from the illegal mines.

"If anyone refuses to do the coal mafia's bidding they are threatened with murder," said a resident of the neighbouring village of Ardho-gram, a kilometre away from Kalikapur.

According to local rights activists, there are nearly "50 illegal coal mines" in

Kalikapur and adjoining areas. "These mines are run by the mafia-police-Trinamool Congress (TMC) nexus. A similar incident took place about a year back where three to four people died. But no action was taken," an activist told *The Hindu*. However, he spoke under conditions of anonymity fearing repercussions from the ruling party.

Contradictory statements were made about the incident by the local TMC leadership and district police. While TMC MLA from the local Saltora Assembly seat Swapan Bouri said he was aware of the incident, Superintendent of Police of Bankura Sukhendu Hira said that they "found nothing at the spot."