

Town Hall Meeting on galamsey in Kenyasi today

By Timothy Ngenbe & Makafui Adzo Aklorbortu, ACCRA

THE Managing Director of the Graphic Communications Group Limited, Mr Kenneth Ashigbey, has reiterated the need for the government to continue with the fight against illegal mining.

He said the government's involvement in the fight against the menace had so far been good and ought to be sustained to bring life back into the environment.

Speaking to the *Daily Graphic* on the sidelines of the launch of an electronic waste management project by Caritas Ghana in Accra last Tuesday, he urged all stakeholders to keep their eye on the ball to completely weed out illegal miners.

"I want to remind the public that this Friday will be observed as a Red Friday and so they should show solidarity by wearing red shirts to send a strong message that we are united as a country to reclaim our lost lands and give life to our rivers," he stressed.

Kenyasi Red Friday

Mr Ashigbey, who is also the

Convener of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey, has been at the forefront of the fight to clamp down on illegal miners through town hall meetings with key stakeholders and the holding of national fora among other initiatives.

Meanwhile, the coalition will take this month's town hall meeting to the Nana Osei Kofi Abiri Social Centre at Kenyasi No.1 in the Asutifi District in the Brong Ahafo Region to mark the National Red Friday.

Leading members of the media coalition will interact with traditional rulers, local authorities and other key stakeholders on the way forward to sustaining the gains that have been made in the fight against 'galamsey'.

"Following a directive for the cessation of all illegal

mining activities in the country as part of the national campaign against galamsey, the rivers have become clearer and less muddy but we cannot rest until the last drop of water is made clean," Mr Ashigbey stressed.

He commended the government for showing commitment to sustain the fight, especially through the deployment of the Operation Vanguard forces to the sites of the galamsey operations.

"The President has demonstrated political courage to ensure that people do the right thing even if it might cost him his political career as the President, and this is a strong signal that he wants to tackle the menace head on," he said.

Challenges

Mr Ashigbey stated that the challenge so far had to do with the judiciary and law enforcement agencies who, according to him, had not lived up to expectation.

He lamented that those convicted under the Minerals and Mining Act had been given minimal fines that were not deterring enough.

"These people who are found

culpable of the law are fined GHe2,500 and this is rather on the low side compared to the amount of money they possess and the kind of problems their activities are causing to the environment," he stressed.

He called on the Attorney-General's Department and the Chief Justice to put measures in place to ensure that sentences and convictions were deterring enough to make sure offenders did not go back to committing those crimes again.

Red Friday

The Red Friday campaign was declared by the Media Coalition Against Galamsey to demonstrate their anger against galamsey and thereby draw public attention and sensitise them to the government's action to clamp down on galamsey activities throughout the country.

The coalition has appealed to all Ghanaians of goodwill to join the National Red Friday campaign to intensify the heat on the galamsey operators bent on destroying our heritage.

The maiden National Red Friday was held on April 21, 2017, with leading members of the media coalition taking the sensitisation drive to members of the public.

@ a glance



■ The National Red Friday will be held at Kenyasi No.1 in the Asutifi District in the Brong Ahafo Region today.