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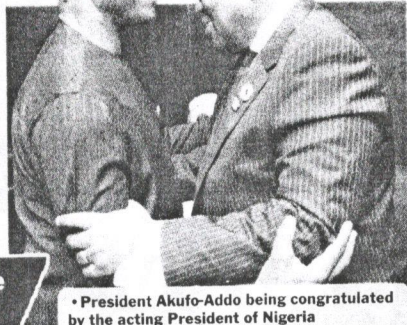
Tuesday, July 4, 2017

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# 14 Illegal miners 'swallowed'

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• At Nsuta

• Some of the galamsey operators trying to find their way into the pit to rescue those trapped underground



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# News

## 14 Illegal miners 'swallowed'

By Akwasi Ampratwum-  
Mensah, TAKORADI

**F**OURTEEN illegal small-scale (galamsey) miners at Nsuta, near Prestea in the Prestea/Huni-Valley District in the Western Region, are feared dead after they were trapped in a mining pit which caved in last Sunday evening.

More than five of their colleagues, however, escaped the tragedy.

They are Mamfi Kofi Mensah, 47; Richard Koomson, 33; Ernest Akambi; Nafew Iddrisu, 21; Limann Soglo, 29.

The identities of nine of those feared dead have been given by the police as Kwabena Amidu, 25; Yaw Gyan Richard, 26; Ibrahim Majeed, 20; Alidu Salifu 25; Kojo Kanda, 27.

The names of others have been given only as Osumanu, 26; Zakaria, 25; Abu, 24, and Hakeem, 25.

According to the District Police Commander, Superintendent Mr Atsu Dzineku, the police received the report about 10:35 p.m. and indicated that a rescue team was working to save the possible survivors of the tragedy.

The pit, believed to be about 80 metres deep, is said to have collapsed after a heavy downpour when the illegal miners were returning to take their supper.

### Survivors' story

According to a source close to the survivors, they were mining 80

metres deep in the pit but they decided to come out to find food to eat.

In the process of coming out, they heard some noise and realised that two pits had caved in, trapping those who were deep in the pit.

Fortunately for them, the source said, because some of the illegal miners were close to the surface of the pit, they managed to escape the tragedy.

The collapse of the mining pit is one of the major disasters that have occurred since the Media Coalition Against Galamsey joined the fight against illegal mining this year.

Last Friday, the coalition and the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) organised a town hall meeting at Manso Nkwanta in the Ashanti Region and marked Red Friday to again draw attention to the menace of illegal mining.

The coalition and its partners decided to fight illegal mining not only because of its effect on the environment and water bodies but also the risk that the galamsey operators are exposed to.

These include health hazards associated with their exposure to mercury and the danger of loss of lives associated with collapsed illegal pits.

### Interrogation

Briefing the *Daily Graphic*, Mr

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**Fourteen illegal small-scale (galamsey) miners at Nsuta, near Prestea in the Prestea/Huni-Valley District in the Western Region, are feared dead after they were allegedly trapped in a mining pit last Sunday evening.**

Dzineku said the police had interrogated the five survivors and information gathered from them suggested that the survivors could be more than five.

He said some of the illegal miners had constituted themselves into a rescue team, looking for more survivors.

He said the police had already visited the scene of the accident to supervise the rescue mission and conduct further investigations into the matter.

He said the mood among the people at Nsuta did not appear that they had lost their loved ones, adding: "It is as if nothing has happened but we have stopped them from working."

About 90 per cent of the people of Nsuta depend on illegal mining for their livelihood.

Following the order by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for people to stop illegal mining, some of the illegal miners are said to have been sneaking out in the night to engage in galamsey.