

4 Foreign 'galamseymen' granted bail

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ACCRA

TWO Russians and two Ukrainians standing trial over their alleged involvement in illegal mining (galamsey) at Tontokrom in the Amansie West District in the Ashanti Region were yesterday granted bail by the Accra Circuit Court.

The four accused persons - Farid Isaev, Vadim Potokin, Serhii Chepurny and Genadly Rubec - were granted bail in the sum of GH¢200,000 each, with one surety. The surety is supposed to be a Ghanaian with a reputable means of employment.

Per the bail conditions, the four alleged galamseymen must deposit their passports at the court registry and also report themselves to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Ghana Police Service every two weeks.

According to the presiding judge, Mr Aboagye Tandoh, the court was inclined to grant the bail based on the

circumstances of the case.

Also, the court, he said, used its discretion granted by a Supreme Court ruling that made all offences bailable to grant the bail.

Hearing continues on July 9, 2017.

The granting of the bail followed an application by the lawyer for the accused persons, Mr Emmanuel Darko, who argued that his clients were sick and needed to be granted bail to seek medical attention.

According to him, the continuous detention of his clients could lead to a further deterioration of their health.

Charges

The accused persons have pleaded not guilty to two counts of conspiracy to commit crime and undertaking small-scale mining without licence, contrary to Section 99 (2) of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703).

According to the prosecutor, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mr Cletus Abadanlowra, Isaev, Potokin and Chepurny were engineers of a mining

company, Geo Professional Service, while Rubec was the site manager of the same company.

The company, he said, operated a small-scale mining concession at Tontokrom, despite the fact that such mining operations were reserved for Ghanaians under the Minerals and Mining Act.

Also, any form of small-scale mining, the prosecutor explained, had been banned by the government until further notice due to the destructive nature of illegal mining.

On May 22, 2017, Mr Abadanlowra said, the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr John Peter Amewu, together with other officials, went on a fact finding mission at Tontokrom.

"The team found Isaev, Potokin, Chepurny and Rubec busily engaged in galamsey without lawful authority. They were using heavy equipment which had degraded a vast land, thereby destroying farms and the source of drinking water for the community," he said.