

15 die in dam collapse at Siberian gold mine



Investigators said they opened a criminal probe into the violation of safety rules after the collapse of a dam in Siberia

Moscow

Fifteen people were killed and another 13 missing after an illegally built dam collapsed at a gold mine in a remote Siberian settlement yesterday, in the latest deadly accident to hit Russia.

The dam on the Seiba River in the Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk burst and flooded several cabins where the victims lived, Russian authorities said. Muddy flood waters hit the cabins near the village of Shchetinkino at around 6 am as the workers were resting. About 300 people, six helicopters and six boats were involved in a search and rescue mission, the emergencies ministry said, but the operation was challenging because of the remote location. Officials said the dam had

apparently been built in breach of safety rules and claimed that the authorities were not aware of its existence.

President Vladimir Putin ordered officials to provide assistance to the victims and identify the reasons of the accident, his spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Footage broadcast on national television showed the remote settlement surrounded by the woods and mountains, the ground covered in light snow.

Investigators said they have opened a criminal probe into the breach of safety rules.

Regional governor Alexander Uss said about 80 workers lived in the affected cabins near Shchetinkino, which lies south of the city of Krasnoyarsk and has a total population estimated at about 180.

Violation of 'every single norm'

An unidentified worker from the mine told Govorit Moskva, a Moscow-based radio station, that people had been caught by surprise.

"People were sleeping, apparently they did not even understand anything," he said.

The worker said there were four such dams in the area and smaller bursts had happened before.

"The four lakes hit the settlement," he said, adding that the dams had been built more than three years ago.

"Each dam supports a small lake -- a flooded exhausted site."

The workers had lived in hastily built cabins, he said, adding: "That says it all."

The dam was built in violation of "every single norm," the head of the local government, Yury Lapshin, said in televised remarks.

Uss also said that rains could have eroded the dam. A number of top regional officials including Uss, prosecutors and inspectors went to the scene of the tragedy.

According to the latest information, 15 people were killed and 13 more were missing, a Moscow-based spokeswoman for the emergencies ministry said.

Fourteen people were hospitalised, three in a grave condition, the regional health ministry said.

A team of doctors including a neurosurgeon were dispatched to the scene from Krasnoyarsk, which is located some 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) east of Moscow.

Russian Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova was overseeing the delivery of aid to the injured.

The dam belonged to the Sibzoloto holding company which has not released any comment on the incident so far.

Cartels more powerful than Mexico

Mexico's president admits freeing Chapo's son after 'badly planned' operation

Culiacan | Mexico

Mexico's president faced a firestorm of criticism Friday as his security forces acknowledged they arrested kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's son, then released him when his cartel responded with an all-out gun battle.

Admitting his troops carried out a "badly planned" operation, Defense Minister Luis Sandoval said they briefly arrested Ovidio Guzman -- one of several sons running the Sinaloa drug cartel since their father was extradited to the US in 2017 -- but released him after being overpowered.

"It was a badly planned strategy," Sandoval told a news conference in Culiacan, the western city of 750,000 people that was turned into an urban war zone Thursday.

"The task force acted too hastily," he added, saying soldiers "improvised" by trying to obtain an arrest warrant mid-way through.

He added the authorities never "formally detained" Guzman, 28, one of at least nine children "El Chapo" fathered with three wives.

The six hours of clashes left one civilian and seven soldiers dead, and three police wounded, officials said after an emergency

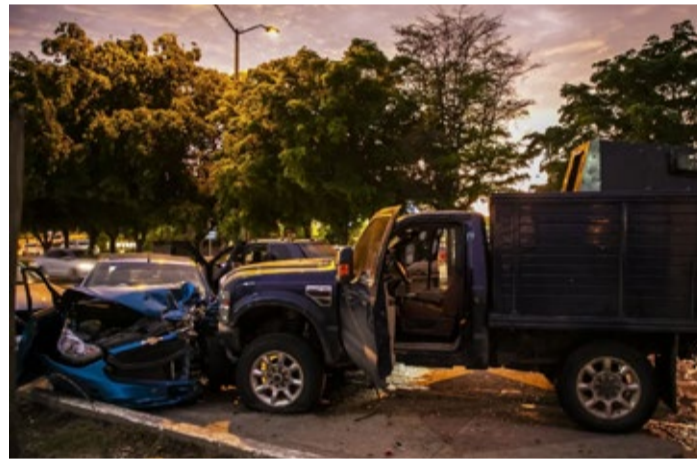


Cartel gunmen are seen on a street during clashes with federal forces following the detention of Ovidio Guzman, son of drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, in Culiacan, in Sinaloa state, Mexico. Inset, Ovidio Guzman

cabinet meeting in Culiacan, the state capital of Sinaloa, the Guzmans's bastion.

Stinging criticism

Heavily armed cartel gunmen surrounded the house where Guzman was being held Thursday afternoon and launched a massive machine-gun assault on various parts of the city, sending terrified residents fleeing for safety and leaving the streets strewn with blazing vehicles.



Bullet-ridden and crashed vehicles in a street of Culiacan



Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman is now serving a life sentence in the notorious ADX federal maximum security prison in Colorado

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador defended the decision to free Guzman.

"I support the decisions that were made. The situation turned very difficult and many citizens' lives were at risk," he told a separate news conference.

"You can't fight fire with fire," added the leftist leader, who said Mexico was acting on a US request for Guzman's extradition, which it received in September 2018.

But the incident turned what was already a difficult week on the security front -- with two other gun battles that killed 28 people -- into a total nightmare for the leftist leader.

"This is a disaster any way you look at it," tweeted security analyst Alejandro Hope.

"What happened yesterday is that the drug cartels are more powerful than the Mexican government. They can bring it to its knees. That's not good," anti-narcotics expert Mike Vigil, former head of international operations for the US Drug Enforcement Administration, said.

In Congress, members of the conservative National Action Party called on Lopez Obrador and his security cabinet to step down.

"Resign!" they chanted on the floor of the lower house.

Security Minister Alfonso Durazo denied officials had negotiated Guzman's release with his cartel.

Murky facts

The government also faced criticism for its murky communications.

Durazo initially said the gun battle erupted when soldiers on a routine patrol happened upon

Guzman.

Lopez Obrador, however, called it a planned operation carried out with an arrest warrant. Sandoval said there was no warrant.

The government, which initially released only hazy details, took around 18 hours to admit publicly that it had captured and released Guzman.



"El Chapo," 62, was sentenced to life in prison last July in New York for trafficking hundreds of tons of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana into the United States over the course of a quarter-century.

His extradition unleashed an initial period of instability in the group, as Ovidio and his brothers waged war with cartel co-founder Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada for control. But the situation has stabilized into a reluctant truce.



The Guzman brothers have tried to fill their father's shoes, but anti-narcotics experts portray them as flashy party boys who have little ability to run the business side of the cartel.



Ivan Archivaldo Guzman

Meghan Markle says motherhood a 'struggle' under spotlight

London

Meghan Markle has admitted becoming a mother while living under an intense media spotlight has been a "struggle".

The Duchess of Sussex gave birth to son Archie in May after marrying Prince Harry last year.

Britain's aggressive press at first welcomed Markle, 38, into the royal fold but coverage has become increasingly hostile, with the tabloids luxuriating in stories about Markle's fractured



Britain's aggressive press at first welcomed Markle, 38, into the royal fold but coverage has become increasingly hostile

American family and rumours of palace rifts.

Speaking to ITV during the couple's recent tour of southern Africa, she said that: "Not many people have asked if I'm OK".

"Look, any woman - especially when they are pregnant - you're really vulnerable and so that was made really challenging, and then when you have a new born - you know?" she said, when asked how she was coping.

"And especially as a woman, it's a lot.

She added: "And also, thank you for asking, because not many people have asked if I'm OK. But it's a very real thing to be going through behind the scenes."

Asked if it would be fair to say it had "really been a struggle", Meghan said: "Yes."

Her comments come after the couple launched legal action this month against British tabloid the Mail on Sunday for invasion of privacy, with Harry recalling the hounding of his later mother Diana.

Harry told ITV the memo-

ries of what happened to his mother was a "wound that festers".

"I think being part of this family, in this role, in this job... every single time I see a camera, every single time I hear a click, every single time I see a flash, it takes me straight back, so in that respect it's the worst reminder of her life, as opposed to the best," he said.

The Duke of Sussex is also suing two British tabloid newspaper publishers over alleged phone hacking.