

China holds 57 people in investigation of deadly gas explosions

China's State Council said on Thursday that 57 people have been held following investigations into two fatal colliery explosions that killed 65 people last year.

A State Council investigation team concluded that the tragedies in Chongqing and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region were both workplace safety accidents caused by issues including lax regulation.

On Oct. 31 last year, an explosion at Jinshangou Coal Mine in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality killed 33 people and resulted in direct economic losses of 36.8 million yuan (about 5.6 million U.S. dollars).

Jinshangou Coal Mine operated illegally beyond its boundary, used banned equipment and ignored regulatory orders, according to the investigation report.

The other explosion, at Baoma Mining Company in Inner Mongolia on Dec. 3, 2016 killed 32 people and caused 44 million yuan in losses. It was also caused by illegal operations.

The 57 people have been held responsible for the accidents. The report blamed authorities in the two regions for failure to carry out their responsibilities and the State Council has ordered the local governments concerned to rectify problems found during the investigation.

Mu Huaping, vice mayor of Chongqing and Wang Bo, vice chairman of the regional government of Inner Mongolia, were both found to have failed to perform their duties adequately.

Despite regular calls by the central government for more focus on work safety, frequent tragedies still occur. A lack of safety awareness, poor regulation and lax safety regimes are among the factors leading to the accidents.

Official data showed the number of workplace safety accidents fell 24.7 percent year on year during the January-July period, while related fatalities were down 16.8 percent.