

Information about the temporary ban on the work of “Zijin” (Zijin Mining Group) in Bor for the mine “Jama” and the recycling company “Feitiansuye” in Zrenjanin due to environmental threats came from local and national authorities, and activists doubt this inspection activities to solve the problem of pollution in the long run.

Prohibition of mine operation, appeals to the smelter in Bor

“We have banned work on several mining facilities in the Zidin pit mine, which means that they cannot do anything without the approval of the Ministry of Mining and that they must have all the certificates from the Ministry of Environment, as well as have finished projects,” said 13. April Minister of Mining and Energy Zorana Mihajlovic.

Irena Zivkovic, an activist from Bor, in eastern Serbia, and a member of the opposition Freedom and Justice Party, says local activists have no information about the closure of parts of the Jama mine. On the other hand, she points out that the problem in the ecological sense in Bor is not the mine, but the ore smelter. She believes that the news about the temporary closure of the mine is a marketing ploy of the authorities, and not a serious commitment of the institutions to respect the regulations in the field of environmental protection.

In September 2020, the mayor of Bor filed a criminal complaint due to pollution against “Zidjin”, and at the session of the local assembly he pointed out in his address that the citizens of Bor “no longer have room to suffer a large concentration of all substances in the air.” The Prosecutor’s Office in Bor confirmed to RSE at the time that they were acting on the criminal report filed by the mayor of Bor.

“Zidjin” stopped the operation of the copper smelter in September last year due to repairs. The reason for the premature overhaul is, as explained, the increased emission of flue gases in that period, due to a malfunction in the equipment of the plant, which negatively affected the air quality in Bor.

However, the company claimed that the flue gases from the smelter were not the only cause of air pollution in Bor and that excessive flue gas emissions were a problem even before the company took over the Mining and Smelting Basin (RTB) in Bor.

In the same month, a protest was held in Bor due to air pollution, and more such protests were held in previous years. According to the data from the Report on Air Quality in the Republic of Serbia 2019 of the Environmental Protection Agency, the air in Bor is of the third category (excessively polluted) due to the excessive concentration of sulfur dioxide. At the end of 2018, the Chinese mining giant Zidjin became the majority owner of RTB Bor, the only copper producer in Serbia.

Zidjin: 'Pit' is not closed, the company stopped the construction of ventilation shafts for the mine

The company "Serbia Zijin Copper", majority owned by the Chinese giant "Zidjin", answered RFE's questions about this case that the company suspended the construction of new ventilation shafts for the "Jama" mine on the order of the mining inspection and will react in accordance with citizens' petitions. who live near the place where those shafts will be built. The "Jama" mine, according to their answer, is not closed.

According to the allegations from the answer, the works were suspended primarily due to the noise that bothers the locals, since it is about the above-ground works of the mine, while the exploitation of copper ore in the "Jama" mine is unhindered deep underground.

Ventilation shafts, as it is further stated, are placed near populated places

"That is why it is important to talk to people and ask them door-to-door in the campaign what the company can do for them, without endangering them in any way," adds Ximing, adding that only in direct contact with citizens can find out what, apart from noise, bothers them and how to fix it. According to him, the company is ready to invest in that.

"Serbia Zijin Copper" invested about 700 million dollars in a joint project with the Government of the Republic of Serbia from the beginning of 2019 to the end of 2020, of which almost 75 million dollars were invested in ecology and safety at work, the response states.

Prohibition of work after writing media and complaints of citizens in Zrenjanin

Information about the temporary ban on the work of the Chinese production plant also arrived from Zrenjanin, in the north of Serbia. According to the deputy mayor of Zrenjanin, Sasa Santovac, the Chinese recycling factory "Feitiansuye" was ordered to stop production at the plant in the village of Perlez near Zrenjanin on April 13.

The statement further states that the investor was ordered to take measures to harmonize production with local environmental regulations and contractual obligations.

Dušan Kokot, from the Zrenjanin organization Građanski preokret, says that the problem of water and air pollution produced by this factory has been known for a long time.

Kokot says that a week ago he was personally convinced that there was a problem with pollution in Perlez, but that the reaction of the local authorities came only when the media started reporting on this factory. The Chinese factory "Feitiansuye" in Zrenjanin has been

operating since 2018.

“The houses are very close to the factory, I don’t know how those people live there. The air [next to the factory] is acidic and makes you vomit. The waste [from the factory] ends up in a canal that is one of the tributaries of the Begej River. “When the story about it came out in the media, these reactions [local authorities] appeared, which for me are petty advertising that should cover up inaction, irresponsibility and lawlessness,” he says.

The Chinese company “Feitiansuye” is engaged in the production of plastic products and plastic processing in the former plants of the company “Begej-plast” from Perlez.

When signing the contract on the purchase of that company, in 2018, they stated that in the first year, they would invest 500,000 euros, of which 180,000 euros in the factory and about 350,000 in machines, and employ 100 workers.

The company did not answer RSE’s questions regarding the case of the temporary work ban
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