

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
ALLEGED ILLEGAL MINING OF SUGILITE IN CHEMBE DISTRICT
BY THE
THE MINISTER OF MINES AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT (MR KABUSWE), MP

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the House and the nation at large on the alleged illegal mining of sugilite in Chembe District of Luapula Province.

Madam Speaker, the ministerial statement is being delivered arising from your directive following Hon. Munir Zulu, Member of Parliament for Lumezi and Hon. Ronald Chitotela, Member of Parliament for Pambashe respectively who rose on a matter of Urgent Public Importance directed at the Minister of Mines and Minerals Development.

Madam Speaker, allow me in the first place to inform the House that sugilite is typically a gem type of manganese which occurs, and is associated with manganese deposits. It has a very attractive purple-violet colour due to the presence of manganese, and is popularly used in jewelry. I therefore, wish to confirm to the House that the ministry is aware of the illegal mining of sugilite in Chembe District of Luapula Province.

Madam Speaker, in October, 2020, following an application for a large-scale exploration license by Bayan Construction Limited for iron ore and manganese in Chembe District of Luapula Province, the ministry through the Mining Cadastre Department granted an exploration license number 27282-hq-lel over an area of 20,747.82 hectares of land. The license was granted for a period of four years effective the 20th October, 2020 up to 19th October, 2024. During the period of exploration for iron ore and manganese, the company has obtained a decision letter for the environmental project brief from the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) and submitted an environmental impact statement for the proposed development of a large-scale manganese mine in line with conditions stipulated under the license.

Madam Speaker, following revelations of the presence of illegal mining of sugilite within the license area for Bayan Construction Limited which I alluded to earlier, the ministry through the Geological Survey Department conducted a verification inspection from 10th to 15th February, 2022, to ascertain the occurrence of sugilite. The findings revealed that during the exploration by Bayan Construction Limited, there were illegal mining activities of manganese by the surrounding communities which exposed sugilite mineralization. To prevent the illegal exploitation of the mineral, the ministry and Bayan Construction Limited through the Luapula Provincial Administration facilitated the deployment of Zambia Police Service to provide security at the mine.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that following the spate of illegal mining activities within the exploration license area for Bayan Construction Limited, the company commenced court action against the illegal mining activities. The company has since been granted restraining order to prevent illegal mining activities within its license area.

Madam Speaker, allow me to reiterate that the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development has confirmed the presence of sugilite within the license area of Bayan Construction Limited.

Madam Speaker, various reforms are being undertaken to ensure that the mining sector is revitalized through the ongoing implementation of the new national mineral resources development policy which was launched last year to fast-track increased productivity for the mining sector in respect of minerals such as copper and other strategic minerals such as nickel, cobalt, lithium and manganese. Further, my ministry is undertaking institutional reforms which will result in the creation of the minerals regulatory commission to properly regulate the exploitation of mineral resources.

Madam Speaker, the ministry is also in the process of refining the legal frameworks such as the Mines and Minerals Development Act No. 11 of 2015 that govern the mining sector to ensure that the environment is conducive for both foreign and local investments. Local investments have been prioritised as they are critical in the sector to enhance the participation of Zambians in the mineral value chain.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, I wish to assure this august House and the people of Zambia at large that the Government under the Leadership of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, and commander in Chief of The Armed Forces, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, is committed to ensure that minerals are developed and managed for the benefit of the people of Zambia.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.
