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Glencore:"Surprised" By Zambia's Partial Mopani Copper Mine Halt

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LONDON – Mining titan Glencore International PLC (GLEN.LN) said Monday that it was surprised that the Zambian government has suspended part of its Mopani copper mine operations after the government renewed the mine's license only two weeks ago.

"The last visit by the Zambian Environmental Management Agency was in early February and the license was duly renewed on 21 February," said a Glencore spokesman. "We are therefore surprised that we are currently required to suspend this project, which we believe may be due to recent unsubstantiated reports in the local press," he added.

The Zambian Environmental Management Agency order Monday that Glencore suspend heap leaching at the Mopani mine given concerns about acid mist exposure.

The agency said in a statement that the local "Butondo community had complained of noise from the crusher, cracking of houses, vibrations, dust, [and the] effects of acid mist on their health" and has requested that the company pay for medical treatment and reconstruction of homes that have been damaged by the mine.

The Glencore spokesman said that only part of the Mopani mine was shut. That part of the mine accounts for 1.5% of Mopani's total production and employs about 300 people.

The agency proposed that the heap leaching operations remain shut until a series of remedies have been put in place, including the erection of acid mist barriers.

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