
GEM NEWS

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION

Reports from a neutral observer are that Afghanistan's gem-yielding districts, in mountainous terrain, have not fallen to the Russians.

Sar-El-Sang, in the province of Badakhshan, is the prime source of lapis lazuli, and the Nurestan pegmatite district produces beryls, tourmalines, and kunzite. Prior to the Russian incursion, about a ton of lapis was exported per year. Although mining has virtually halted, it appears that material continues to leave the country, thanks to the considerable reserves existing at the time of the invasion.

DIAMONDS

Australia. Since 1978, exploration in Western Australia's Kimberley region has been pursued by numerous groups on over 5,700 claims of 120 hectares (296.4 acres) each. Samples from one of 28 kimberlite pipes in Ellendale Province have yielded approximately one carat per 22½ tons of material, with close to 18,000 stones taken thus far from the region. The largest piece of rough was 6.47 carats; the average weight was 10 points. It is thought that these sources will produce a high percentage of gem-quality stones.

More excitement has been generated over primarily industrial-quality finds near Lake Argyle, close to the Northern Territory border. Eight hundred carats of diamonds per 100 tons of associated alluvial gravels have been recovered as far as 20 miles from the pipe itself. The pipe covers 111 acres at the surface, making it one of the world's largest. More than 5,000 carats have been produced, with the largest stone weighing 7.03 carats. The treatment plant has been relocated here from Ellendale. It will have the capacity to process up to 3,000,000 carats per year from the upper alluvial deposits.

India. A countrywide exploration project was announced last April, following the geologic find of potentially workable deposits.

India's diamond-cutting shops number around 20,000 and employ 300,000 cutters and polishers. In

addition, there are more than 1,500 registered exporters. Obtaining sufficient rough has been a problem: India's sole mining operation at Panna supplies only 0.001% of the 18 million carats used annually, and the amount purchased from De Beers is less than satisfactory. Expanding domestic production to 100,000 carats a year is an industry goal. Also in process are plans to purchase rough directly from Ghana, the world's fifth largest diamond producer.

China. Last September, a year-long Sino-German trade agreement, whereby German training and technology are combined with Chinese labor and diamonds, culminated in the opening of Peking's first diamond-cutting factory. The Peking Jewellery branch of China's National Arts and Crafts and Industrial Products Company received the key to the factory from V.K. Narasimhan, of Frankfurt. The same day, the diamond-cutting school, established by the German company for 50 students in January of 1980, was donated to the Chinese authorities.

More diamond-cutting schools and factories are to be established. China reportedly plans to employ 300,000 people in the cutting of diamonds by 1985.

Diamonds are mined in Hunan province both from a huge source discovered in the 1960s and from a pipe recently found in Liaoning. Estimates are that 1.8 to 2.8 million carats are being produced, with some American advisers assisting in the renovation of the mines. The Chinese plan to market their diamond exports through Frankfurt rather than De Beers.

U.S.A. The Wyoming Geological Survey is extending to a second year the completion of its report on diamond deposits in kimberlitic pipes and placer traps in the Laramie and Snowy ranges. Undertaken by the Mining and Mineral Resources Institute of the University of Wyoming for the U.S. Department of the Interior, the study has turned up two new kimberlites as a result of the stream-sediment samples collected last summer.

U.S.S.R.—Record Stone. In December, the discovery of the largest diamond yet found in the Soviet Union was

reported. According to Tass, the Soviet news agency, it is egg-shaped, lemon-yellow, transparent, and weighs 342.5 carats, 110 more than the previous record-holder, the Star of Yakutia. It was also found in the Yakutia region of northeastern Russia.

RUBY

While much of the material from Kenya is brownish and suitable only for cabochons, the gemstone belt from the Taiti Hills to the Tanzania border has been found to contain deposits of fine, Burmese-color rubies of up to one carat. No real mining activity has occurred as yet.

A large ruby field in Australia's Harts Range, northeast of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, has yielded approximately 40,000 carats in cut stones in the past year and a half. Since most of the material is not of high quality, the find does not affect the current shortage of finer stones.

A recently discovered ruby deposit in Mysore state, southern India, has produced stones of fine color but suitable only for spheres and cabochons.

The Hunza Valley of northeastern Pakistan is a 30-square-mile area containing deposits of various gems, but it is particularly rich in ruby. From July 1977 to June 1978, 42.2 million carats of rubies were recovered there. A government corporation mines, cuts, polishes, and markets the stones. While much of the material is considered excessively flawed, some specimens that have appeared in the U.S. indicate that stones of excellent quality may be forthcoming.

SAPPHIRES

Kashmir, India, sapphire production, halted in recent years, may be resumed on the recommendation of the board of directors of state-owned Jammu and Kashmir Minerals Ltd. The plan to lease out the Paddar Sapphire Mines was made by the state in 1977. The leasehold of JKM is due to expire in 1982; a new lease order must be approved by the Indian government. Four firms are bidding for a 20-year lease, offering plans for mine development and establishment of a state gem-cutting and polishing industry.

A sapphire deposit in North Queensland, Australia, has yielded stones of up to 10 carats.

SRI LANKA LAPIDARY

The Greater Colombo Economic Commission of Sri Lanka has signed an agreement with a Monte Carlo gem and jewelry dealer to establish a gem-cutting enterprise in the coastal town of Kalutara, 16 miles south of Colombo. About 400 people will be employed on the five-acre site to work with locally available gem-

stones and imported diamonds, colored stones, gold, and silver, which will be marketed chiefly in Japan, North America, and Europe.

TUCSON GEM AND MINERAL SHOW ACTIVITY

Aquamarine. Aquamarine from mountainous Boise County, Idaho, attracted considerable interest. Aquas have been mined in the area for about two years. Each pocket produces approximately a half-kilo of crystals. The rough has yielded cut stones of up to seven carats of excellent, medium color.

Red Beryl. From a total production over the last year of 1,000 carats of red beryl from the Wah-Wah Mountains of Utah, about 500 carats were on display in Tucson. The majority of the yield has been stones of from 10 points to one-half carat, the largest fine-quality stones weighing about one and one-half carats.

Synthetic Red Beryl. While its emeralds are showing fine color, Regency Created Emeralds Company, in its attempt to produce red beryl through the hydrothermal process using manganese as a coloring agent, has so far produced only pink beryl.

Sugilite—A New Gem Material. "Royal lavulite," referring to the sugilite accidentally discovered in last year's roof collapse of a South African manganese mine, was prominent in Tucson. Of the probable three tons in the deposit, 360 kg are suitable for jewelry, about 18 kg of which show extraordinary color—blue-purple to red-purple to magenta.

Pink Fluorite. Of special interest to mineral collectors were samples of pink fluorite from a December find in Huanzala, Peru. About 500 matrix pieces with octahedral crystals were discovered.

The color does not fade in sunlight, but rather intensifies after several days' exposure. The crystals, unusual for their color as well as for their sharply octahedral shape (most fluorite is cubic), are up to 40 mm in size, some clear enough for faceting. The crystals show a rich pink color in daylight, with green centers; under fluorescence and incandescence, the colors become dim.

Topaz. Topaz was another stone in great abundance at the show. However, the recent closing of two Ouro Preto mines, combined with the approach of the rainy season (when mine activity generally slows or halts), may soon be reflected in a topaz shortage.

EXHIBITS

Carnegie Institute's Museum of Natural History—4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Telephone: (412) 622-3269.

The Hillman Hall of Gems opened in September 1980, and contains a collection of over 2500 gems and minerals.

Denver Museum of Natural History—City Park, Denver, CO 80205. Telephone: (303) 575-3923.

A gem hall is under construction to be opened this fall. It will occupy an alcove off the museum's new mineral hall and will present all new donations and exhibits from the museum's collection. There will be about ten displays of gems from around the world, including a 10,599-carat Brazilian topaz that was part of an artistic project created by Salvador Dali. A special collection of Colorado gemstones will include approximately 30 specimens.

Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art—220 Cottage Hill, Wilder Park, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Telephone: (312) 833-1616.

The Lizzadro is a public museum displaying gems, minerals, and art objects made of gem materials; there is a large collection of carved jades and numerous mineral specimens. Earth science lectures are presented each Saturday afternoon at 2:00. On Sundays, there are gem-cutting demonstrations via closed circuit television.

Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History—900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. Telephone: 744-3328.

"Sweat of the Sun, Tears of the Moon" is the largest exhibit of Colombian gold artifacts and rough and cut emeralds ever to be exhibited outside of the Republic of Columbia. Opens July 4 and continues through September 6, 1981.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Adele Steacy Memorial Scholarship is offered annually and is open to a resident of Brockville, Ontario, needing aid to study gemology. The scholarship provides up to \$2,500 for the recipient, who will seek employment in the Canadian jewelry industry upon the completion of his studies, to attend GIA or its equivalent in Canada. Should no application be made by a Brockville resident, other residents of Ontario will be considered. Applications may be submitted to the Assistant Registrar (Student Awards), Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6, prior to July 1.

At a meeting held February 12 in Tucson, Arizona, formation of a new organization, the **American Gem Trade Association, Inc.**, was announced. The object of AGTA is to promote the interests of colored stone dealers while establishing a code of ethics for the industry. Information can be obtained from Treasurer David Nassini, of American-Ariana Trading Company, 2 West 46th St., New York, NY 10036.

Gems & Gemology welcomes news of exhibits and events of a gemological nature. Please contact Stephanie Dillon, Gemological Institute of America, 1660 Stewart St., Santa Monica, 90404. Telephone: (213) 829-2991.