

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON GEMMOLOGY AND PRE-SEMINAR WORKSHOP-CUM- TRAINING PROGRAMME ON GEMS AND GEMSTONES

Introduction

The above events were organized by the Bhopal Chapter of South Asian Association of Economic Geologists (SAAEG), in cooperation with Govt. Motilal Vigyan Mahavidyalaya at Bhopal during 24-28 February, 2006. The programmes were cosponsored by the Dept. of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, the Bhopal Regional Chapter of Indian Science Congress Association and the Mahakoshal Institute of Gem Testing and Research Centre (MIGTRC), Jabalpur. Prof. K.L. Rai, Secretary General (SAAEG) provided his services as Chief Coordinator, while Dr. R S Raghuwanshi, Asstt. Professor and Dr. A.N. Singh Director, MIGTRC acted as Convenor and Co-Convenor respectively of both the interactive programmes.

Discussions and Recommendations

The discussions held at the seminar took note of the unpalatable fact that the upstream sector of prospecting and mining of gemstones — particularly of diamonds, in which India had led the world for over 2000 years until the end of 18th century, continues to languish in primitive condition ever since. Meanwhile, several other countries and international cartels have progressively gained primacy and monopoly through technological advancements in this vital sector of global trade. Resultantly, India continues to remain dependent on such foreign sources, not only for meeting the supplies of raw diamonds and other gemstones at exorbitant costs, but also for the technical expertise to explore and exploit nation's own promising primary and secondary sources of diamond and other gemstones.

It was recommended that:

1. the central and state governments to acknowledge sooner than later that the above-referred dependence for long is not in the best national interest and there is certainly an urgent need for government-sponsored promotion of intensive R&D activities in the research

centres, IITs and universities for indigenous human resource development of a high order capable of search for, and sustainable mining of, diamond and other gemstones in the country and even in other developing countries abroad;

2. suggests that a long-term policy giving effect to the above-referred goal should be formulated at national level as early as possible and the mineral policies of the respective governments should incorporate the requisite provisions to ensure its implementation without further delay;
3. suggests that the Central and state governments should bring out state-of-art publications covering the status of present knowledge regarding the resource-base of as many primary and secondary (in paleo-channels, river gravels, river-deltas, reservoirs, continental slopes, etc) sources of diamond and other gemstones, as possible. Such dissemination of information will be helpful and encouraging not only to the researchers but also to the mining entrepreneurs;
- 4 suggests that in order to generate public awareness and inculcate interest of younger generation in gemmology, museums of precious stones and other minerals with requisite facilities for identification and testing of gems and gemstones should be set up, to begin with, at state and mineral-rich district levels in the country and
- 5 suggests that the government policies and legislative measures should be liberalized with effective incentives in order to attract legal mining/ winning and marketing of diamond and other gemstones even in the remotest corners of the country, with strict control on illegal exploration and mining / beneficiation operations.

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WATER MAKING MACHINES

A news item in "*The Hindu*" of 6th May 2006 reports on an Indo-U.S. joint private venture of making *water making machines* of different-capacities. These machines condense the water vapour in the atmosphere to potable water at a

reasonable cost. Currently a 1000-litre capacity machine is being evaluated by the Indian Army in Rajasthan. The cost of water so generated is claimed to be only half the cost of bottled water in the market! — *M.S. Rao*