

Department of Mines:

Saturday, 06 September 2008

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Background

Eritrea has a long mining history that stretches back to Biblical times. Gold production in Eritrea was recorded in the times of the Pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty.

In the seventeenth century during the Portuguese occupation to this region Gold production was well recorded. Evidence of the work of ancient miners is found in several places in the country, indicating that mining operations were active in Eritrea long before colonial times. Modern mining, however, began at the beginning of the 20th century following the Italian colonization of the country.

In the early seventies century this resulted in the development of the short-lived modern mine at Debarwa, before the independence struggle forced its closure.

The mining operations were generally un systematic and poorly documented. The technology and exploration methods employed at that time, as well as the understanding of styles of mineral have now been greatly improved.

Newer technology and exploration methods leading to the identification of previously unexpected styles of mineralization, and it is also possible that known deposits previously regarded as un viable may prove to be economically viable with today's extractive processes.

It is now recognized that Eritrea has the potential to host significant, economically viable, VMS deposits. These are typified by the Bisha discovery located in the western part of the country, as well as the already known deposits at Debarwa , Adi Nefas and Embaderho. The traditionally recognized gold mineralization was predominantly hosted in quartz veins and disseminations with in shear zones. Recently a new discovery has emerged at Zara deposit in the north west of the country, to add to the well-known historic sites such as Augaro and Harab Suit.

The Department of Mines

The Ministry of Energy and Mines is the authorized Licensing Agency and is responsible for the administration, regulation and coordination of all types of mining operations in Eritrea. The Department of Mines within the Ministry encompasses, amongst other functions, the Geological Survey, the Mines Administration Division and the Mineral Resources Division, and is also itself actively engaged in exploration and mapping activities.

Even though there are several maps produced on different scales from various

sources, there have been only two geological maps, at a scale of 1:250,000, compiled until recently, when the Eritrean Geological Survey prepared a 1:1,000,000 scale map.

The Eritrean mining sector has shown rapid development over the past few years since the Ministry of Energy and Mines started issuing licenses in 1997. Since then, several exploration companies have been involved in assessing and exploring the mineral potential of the country. In the successive years additional licenses have been issued on the first-come-first-served principle. The Department of Mines has also been developing a national minerals database.

The Ministry has a responsibility to provide preliminary information to exploration companies interested in conducting detailed investigations in Eritrea, and to contribute towards enriching the geological database of the country. As part of its routine works, the Department of Mines encompasses, the Geological Survey, the Mines Administration and Mineral Resources Division, and is actively engaged in diverse activities ranging from exploration/mapping to providing information, supervising and monitoring. Through its research wing i.e. Geological survey, it has been actively involved in research and data collecting for various purposes which include conducting detailed and reconnaissance survey for hydrological, engineering, mining and other related activities. On the other hand the Mines Administration keeps records of all mining operations and monitoring their activities in accordance with the Eritrean Law. Likewise, the Mineral Resources Development Division has to deal with all sorts of information to be provided to investors and public alike in accordance with their needs.

Some of the activities conducted in 2009 include

Following applications by several exploration companies and licenses were granted. Seven companies namely ERI-Lib Sh. Co, London Africa, Andiamo Exploration Ltd, South Boulders, Beijing Donia Resources Ltd, Sub-sahara Resources (Eritrea) Ltd, and Zhonzang sh. co have already signed agreement and some of them actually started their exploration works. More companies are expected to sign in the near future.

The Eritrean Geological Survey in collaboration with the Geological survey of Iceland conducted a detailed geophysical survey consisting of Magnetotelluric (MT) and Transient Electromagnetic (TEM) over the Alid geothermal prospect. The results of this survey indicates a good geothermal potential in the area.

- The first draft of Regional Geological Map of Eritrea, on 1:1,000,000 scale is finalized and is ready for distribution. In addition other geological maps on 1:250,000 scale were also produced on specific areas.

Our Vision:-

“We will mine out all that we do not grow”

Mission of the mine department :-

-Ensure the development of mineral resources to the best interest of the people and state of Eritrea .

-Devote for a clean environment

-Ensure public safety and security

Goals and Objectives:-

- Amend and develop mining laws and regulations

- Establish sector guidelines and standards

-Assess the geology and mineral resource potential

-Enhance sensitization and promotional capacity

-Evaluate and approve project proposals

-Strengthen license data management and revenue collection capacity

-Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanism

-Strengthen research and training capacity

-Establish and manage national geology and mineral resources data base

-Strengthen administration and financial activities

Values:-

Dedication

Harmony and cooperation

Simplicity

Efficiency

Confidentiality

Tolerance