

Namibian mineral exports generate N\$23bn

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18 Apr 2018

Namibia's exports of precious minerals generated \$23bn in the 2017/2018 financial year, although beneficiation protagonists would probably want to know how much of this directly benefited Namibians.



Kornelia Shilunga, Namibia's deputy mines minister

A further N\$28m was earned from petroleum exploration and production rental fees, while an additional N\$2.3m was collected from mineral licenses, Deputy Mines Minister, Kornelia Shilunga, told the National Assembly yesterday.

Royalties contributed N\$1.3bn to state coffers.

Namibia's economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining currently accounts for 12.5% GDP, but provides more than 50% of foreign exchange earnings.

Under the fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), the mining sector's contribution to GDP is targeted to reach 15.2% by 2022.

Motivating her ministry's N\$264m budget for the 2018/19 financial year, Shilunga highlighted achievements during the past financial year, including the commencement of production by Chinese-owned Husab mine in Erongo Region.

The company exported its first production shipment during December 2017.

She added that the mine is expected to produce to full capacity by the end of this year.

Additionally, Shilunga said B2Gold mine near Otjiwarongo has produced 5,436kg of gold during the same period, an increase from 4,845 kg in the previous financial year.

Also, she said the copper cathode production at Tschudi mine remained on target as planned, producing 15,466 tons during the same financial year.

Shilunga said the Okanjande graphite project, situated about 70km northwest of Otjiwarongo in the Otjozondjupa Region commenced with production in 2017.

According to her, the anticipation is that the mine will have a lifespan of about 35 years. The company employs 139 people on the mine and 108 others on the plant.

The deputy minister said Namibia's diamond production for the period under review was just over 1.8-million carats.

"Over 240,000 carats of Namdeb run-off mine were offered locally to Namib Desert Diamonds (Pty) Ltd (Namdia) and local sight holders at the value of \$360m as compared to USD292 million the previous financial year," she said.

She said this achievement has yielded an increase in beneficiation activities and enabled Namdia to fulfill its mandate.

Also, she said a significant improvement of rough diamonds converted into polishing has been observed due to improved monitoring, reporting and stakeholders engagement by the ministry, in driving the beneficiation agenda.

To that effect, she said, 54 percent of rough diamonds offered to the local sight holders has been processed locally.

She said the ministry also hosted the Kimberly Process (KP) Certification Scheme Review visit in September 2017, which found and confirmed that Namibia has been compliant to the Kimberly Process' minimum requirements and thus continues to trade its diamonds, which are certified as conflict-free.

In a move to improve the unemployment situation in rural areas, Shilunga said the ministry continues to support a slate processing facility in Noordoewer in the //Karas Region at which 13 workers are employed.

In terms of exploration for oil and gas, Shilunga said during the year under review, the ministry enhanced its database with up to 834 line km of 2D seismic data and about 1,150 square kilometres of 3D data is currently ongoing within the Walvis basin.

Source: *New Era*

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