

Gilgit-Baltistan: Ban on mining lifted

By Shabbir Mir

Published: February 25, 2011

GILGIT: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Mehdi Shah has ordered lifting of a ban on mining temporarily, requesting associated businessmen to help the government formulate a comprehensive policy to make the industry more productive.

“The decision has been taken in the wake of demand from Gilgit-Baltistan traders associated with this industry,” said a spokesman.

The G-B government had placed a ban on the haphazard mining of precious stones in the region after reports surfaced that inefficient mining techniques were depriving the regional economy of potential revenue. Experts suggest that up to 90 per cent of minerals and gemstones mined in G-B are wasted due to outdated mining methods.

“If a comprehensive policy is prepared, the chances of revenue generation will increase manifold,” said Shah, who had come under severe criticism for placing the ban. “Once the policy is prepared, all associated people of the industry will have to follow it to ensure maximum earnings,” he added.

Requesting anonymity, an official in the local government said that the G-B Assembly was set to make legislation on tourism and minerals, as the G-B Council had already finalised its recommendations for awarding these sectors the status of corporation.

It has been revealed that foreign tourists visiting Gilgit-Baltistan have been taking away gemstones without payment, as the government did not have a policy in place to keep a check.

The official said that the implementation of the decision will not only create job opportunities, but also create an organised system for maximum use of the resources present in the area. It will also bind tourists visiting the region to follow rules, which will benefit revenue collection as tourists would have to pay fees and would not be allowed to take gemstones without payment.

Modern technology will also be introduced to check wastage of resources, as the ministry has earmarked a hefty amount of \$300 million for the purpose.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 25th, 2011.

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, redistributed or derived from.
Unless otherwise stated, all content is copyrighted © 2011 The Express Tribune News Network
Technical feedback? webmaster@tribune.com.pk