

05 ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka has long been world famous for fine quality colourful gemstones. Those of the corundum groups including blue sapphire, yellow sapphire, ruby, and geuda. Most of them are obtained from the alluvial gem gravels, which occur as lenses and bands in the river and stream valleys of the Sabaragamuwa provinces, particularly in Ratnapura district. In-situ primary corundum occurrences date as far back as 1903. Government mineralogist A.K. Coomaraswamy discovered the first in-situ corundum occurrences in Sri Lanka. Within the last 100 years several in-situ corundum occurrences have been discovered in Sri Lanka. In 2005 Tennakoon et al (2005) were able to discover five in-situ corundum deposits in the Wellawaya gem field, Villages called Gampanguwa, Bubulagama, Galbkka, Makaldeniya and Gampaha, where low gem quality well-developed hexagonal translucent bluish and gray corundum crystals were located at the top of a mountains.

Three new primary hessonite garnet deposits have been discovered at Yudhaganawa, Ettalamula near Buttala and Bibilawatta near Bibile. Hessonites from these deposits are considerable large in size and show colour ranging from pale orange to reddish brown to red; most of them are in good gem quality. It is known that the physical properties of the hessonite are similar to pure grossular garnet.

Most significant and very rare radioactive gem minerals such as ekanite and zircons have been located in this region; most of them being obtained from the alluvial gem gravels. but the significant amorphous ekanites were discovered in the Buttala- Okkampitiya gem fields, coexisting with calc- gneiss.