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Debswana undertakes review of Scannex X-ray machines

Debswana Mining Company will do a public review of environmental impact statement for the proposed installation of the controversial Scannex low dose full body x-ray machines at its mining operations.



By CARABILE MOSIKARE

Thu 15 Jan 2015, 12:25 pm (GMT +2)

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In a bid to upgrade security at its mining operations, Debswana said it embarked on a project to install Scannex X-ray machines. "The project is still at the planning phase hence this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study. The project once approved will allow for the installation of Scannex Low Dose Full Body X-ray scanners at Debswana mining operations of Jwaneng, Orapa, Letlhakane and Damtshaa," reads the public notice.

It says the Scannex machines are presently operating at all De Beers Group mining operations in South Africa and Namibia. "Debswana intends to implement the technology in a similar manner as done at operations that already have Scannex machines."

The rationale for the project is that there are indications that diamonds at Debswana mines are being stolen. "While the current security system does not allow for actual calculation of how much is being lost through theft, court cases have confirmed this assertion.

"The value of diamonds even in their size and uncut state predisposes them to theft and associated crime. In addition the difficulty in terms of ownership traceability once stolen in their uncut state; compounds problems in the diamond industry as financial gains from some, end up being used to propagate social ills against humanity.

It is in this light that their security at source/mining operations becomes very critical and calls for appropriate security measures

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to ensure their protection.”

On a personal benefit to the employee, the Scannex technology would present a less intrusive way to search for stolen diamonds as opposed to the current strip and search method that includes taking off clothes, patting and touching of employees, argued Debswana.

“The Scannex will further improve

efficiency in terms of time spent queuing after work - employees will take less time at exit points and thus have more quality time with their families.”

The notice further says “the relocation of the Diamond Trading Company to Botswana calls for tighter security measures as the move has potential to attract sophisticated criminal syndicates which could result not only in loss of revenues but Botswana diamonds finding their way in the black market where revenue generated can be used to peddle criminal activities such as civil wars”.

The mine proposes to install the Scannex machines at all personnel control centres.

These are security checkpoints used to search people exiting the mine areas. Four Scannex machines would be installed at Jwaneng Mine, another four at Orapa Mine and one each at Letlhakane and Damtshaa Mines.

The installation process would in part require the construction of new facilities as well as upgrading of the current search facilities.

The introduction of these machines was not without controversy, with the Botswana Mine Workers Union (BMWU) declaring its opposition.

The BMWU president Jack Tlhagale was quoted in the past saying they objected to the use of the device because it was a health risk to the employees.

“It has been proven that once one is exposed to such radiation it can cause cancer, which as the union we strongly condemn.

We will not even allow Debswana to introduce such a deadly device to be used in the mines as it has being proven to be a health risk internationally.

Both the government and the company should care about the health of employees not the other way round,” said Tlhagale.

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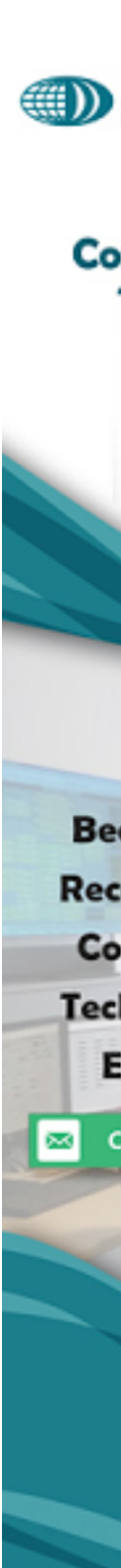
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