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**A model holds a diamond weighing nearly 500 carats. Mining group Gem Diamonds says it has found a white gem of similar size.** Picture: REUTERS

## Lesotho diamond makes history

LONDON — Mining group Gem Diamonds yesterday said experts in Antwerp had put its latest record gem from Lesotho at 478 carats.

The diamond was discovered in the Letseng Mine on September 8, the company said. It has been analysed by experts in Antwerp and found to weigh 478 carats, with few inclusions and to be of outstanding colour and clarity.

“It has the potential to yield one of the largest flawless D colour round polished diamonds in history,” the company said.

Letseng is one of the most productive mines in history — four of the world’s 20 largest rough diamonds have been found at the mine, including the three largest found this

century.

Before it is cut into gems it is hard to value the diamond, but a spokesman for Gem Diamonds said a similar weight stone with lesser-quality colour and clarity had recently sold for \$12m.

“Preliminary examination of this remarkable diamond indicates that it will yield a record breaking polished stone of the very best colour and clarity,” Clifford Elphick, the CE of Gem Diamonds, said.

Letseng is 70% owned by Gem Diamonds and 30% owned by the government of Lesotho.

Natural Resources Minister Monyane Moleleki praised the productivity of the mine, one of the highest in the world at more than 3 000m. *Reuters*

media information

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