



Electric powered mechanical cutting

was extraordinary. Ahzar popped it on to his scale, which showed it weighed 55 carats (a carat is equivalent to 200 milligrams). "That's worth US\$15,000 a carat," beamed Ahzar leaving me to work out that I was holding a very precious gem stone worth \$850,000.

Developed over centuries, with the passion and experience handed down from generation to generation, this modest, hidden enclave of China Fort has become the thriving centre of Sri Lanka's gem cutting and polishing industry, and a secret source of foreign exchange.



Street of gem traders, China Fort



Alexandrite cat's eye worth \$850,000

## GEM EXHIBITION

Sri Lanka's importance in the world wide gem industry is being recognised when the International Coloured Gem Stones Congress by the International Colour Gemstone Association (ICA) is held in Colombo from 16 to 19 May 2015 at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel. The theme is "Sapphires and More" - aptly summing up Sri Lanka's appeal.

The ICA is a non-profit association that has a membership of 500 from 42 countries representing 75 per cent of the purchasing power of the international market for coloured stones. It brings together over 300 representatives of the various segments of the coloured gem trade. It is an occasion for networking and developing new business opportunities under exhibition conditions while showcasing the local gem and jewellery trade.

Traders from China Fort will be there, taking the opportunity of meeting buyers from around the world.