

G&J Industry At The Forefront In Fight Against Covid-19



Medical equipment donated by GJEPC to Surat-based hospitals.

The gems and jewellery industry was quick to respond to the needs of society arising out of the Covid pandemic.

In wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, almost all countries, including ours, are still grappling with the subsequent second and the third waves of the deadly pandemic.

Last year, during the first 45-day lockdown, GJEPC, in an endeavour to manage the situation, contributed Rs.21 crore to PM CARES Fund to support the country's efforts to combat the pandemic and provide relief measures. The Council also contributed a substantial amount to help the industry's daily wage workers impacted by Covid-19.

The GJEPC continued its charitable work in the fight against Covid-19 by offering financial assistance (through the Surat Diamond Association) to the SDA-Diamond Hospital & Medical Research Center (Matrushree Ramuba Tejani & Shantaba Vidiya Hospital for purchasing medical equipment for an isolation ward. The financial aid has enabled the hospital to acquire ventilators, ICU beds, and multi-parameter patient monitors among other equipment.



Caption: A hospital bed donated by GJEPC.

In a letter the hospital informed that it had no dedicated ward or equipment to provide healthcare services to the people affected by Covid-19. GJEPC has donated Rs.75,42,378 (\$101,085) to the Surat Diamond Association (SDA) to fulfil the requirements of the hospital.

Colin Shah, Chairman, GJEPC, remarked, “Not only was it necessary to look after the people associated with the gem and jewellery industry, it was a collective social responsibility to help our fellow citizens. We were together with our countrymen to fight and survive this pandemic.

The funds donated by GJEPC are merely a token of our solidarity with the Government and people of India.”

Vipul Shah, Vice Chairman, GJEPC said, “Our industry consists mainly of MSMEs with skilled and semi-skilled workers. Both collectively and in an individual capacity, the industry has wholeheartedly supported the workers affected by Covid-19. Considering the impact of the crisis, GJEPC also initiated the Covid fund for karigars which was transferred in the form of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) into the bank accounts of daily wage workers of the gem and jewellery industry. The Council meticulously worked to identify the daily wage workers most in need and transferred a sum of Rs.1500 to each worker’s account.”

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In June 2020, the Council handed over a cheque of Rs.71 lakh to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan Shri Ashok Gehlot to aid the fight against Covid-19 within the state. The amount, which has been allocated from the Council's Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, was given to Rajasthan Medicare Relief Society to purchase equipment for Sawai Man Singh Hospital Jaipur, which is one of the important centres taking care of those afflicted by coronavirus.

Donations were also made to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath. The Council contributed Rs.20 lakh to augment the financial resources of the State Government for the welfare of its people. Similarly, GJEPC contributed to other regions like Eastern, Western and Southern regions of the country.

Here Are Some Companies and Jewellery Associations That Solitaire International Spoke With:



Venus Jewel

During the trying times of the pandemic, the Venus Hospital played a pivotal role in providing healthcare services to Covid patients. Total patients treated till date is 4,785 with one of the highest recovery rates. The hospital, opened in 2019, is a 200-bed multi-speciality facility and is equipped with ultra-modern facilities.

Venus Jewel said in a statement: “Our goal was to set a benchmark for ethics, quality and service in the healthcare sector. The entire nation was locked down for many months last year resulting in many helpless people being stranded without employment and food. We dedicated the kitchen of our manufacturing unit to serve the community by providing 50,000+ meals for distribution.”

Moreover, Venus Jewel contributed generously to Government and NGO funds dedicated for Covid Relief with donations of around Rs.40 lakh to: State Chief Minister Fund; Local Municipal Corporation; the Gem and Jewellery National Relief Foundation for assistance to the industry’s affected craftsmen; and the Lodha Foundation for food to the unemployed labour and quarantined patients.

Venus Jewel’s leadership team are also trustees of various relief organisations, assisting them in the fight against the pandemic, strategically as well as financially. In many instances, partners have also provided help from their personal funds to help the Covid-affected patients and their families.

Kalyan Jewellers

Kalyan Jewellers donated more than Rs.5 crore to Covid-19 relief in the past year through various initiatives. Kalyan Jewellers launched the ‘Goldsmith Relief fund’ for karigars. The fund provided relief material and monetary assistance to the daily wage workers. The company worked closely with various associations such as Jewellery Manufacturers Association, Kerala, Coimbatore Jewellers Association and Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council, Mumbai.

Talking about the initiative, **T.S. Kalyanaraman, Chairman and Managing Director, Kalyan Jewellers**, said, “We witnessed an unprecedented global



pandemic. The Goldsmith Relief Fund was a humble initiative that we put together to try and bring some semblance of financial relief to the artisans working in our industry.”

The company also set up an oxygen facility at the specially designated Covid ward, which was set up by the Health Department of the Kerala Government, in a public-private partnership model. Kalyan Jewellers was a major contributor to this state Government initiative.

Additionally, as part of Kalyan Jewellers Livelihood Program, the company donated food kits to various relief agencies, hospitals and schools during the lockdown in 2020. Overall, the company spent Rs 5.25 crore to support daily wage workers, from across the country with effective distribution of monetary funds and/or rations and also via donations to State Relief Funds.

Bhima Jewellery

Suhas Rao, Managing Director, Bhima Jewellery, Thiruvananthapuram, recalls, “The nationwide lockdown in India was declared on March 24th by the Central Government, but we remained closed from March 22nd itself as the numbers of cases were increasing in Kerala. In this part of the country, April is one of the peak seasons for buying gold and jewellery. Since the lockdown was totally unexpected, like all other businesses, we, too, faced a huge loss. But we felt that it was the time to stand together and this seemed to be the right time for us to do something in return to all of them.

We decided to pay all our 800-strong staff full salary during the lockdown period. Supporting 800 families was our primary aim. We also decided to give lockdown allowances to almost 700 smiths who are directly associated with us and also extended a helping hand to others through Jewellery Manufacturers Association. We donated Rs. 1 crore to Chief Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund and donated free food kits to the backward and coastal areas of the towns where we have our showrooms. Apart from this, we also donated to various other charitable associations.

Vaibhav Global

Raj Singh, Vice President – Operations, **Vaibhav Global**, said, “Last year was taxing for businesses across the globe. But as a company we are happy that even in these unprecedented times, we have been able to contribute in a small way to the needy and to our frontline workers. As every year, we have stood our promise of “Delivering Joy” along with sustained business growth to our stakeholders.

Vaibhav Global distributed 90,000+ ration kits to more than 350 schools under its flagship programme “Your Purchase Feeds”. Daily meals and tuition with study materials were provided to about 30 underprivileged children. Singh informed that the company distributed 2,000 masks to police and frontline workers; donated masks, shields, food packets, safety equipment across various charities. “We thank all our employees and customers for contributing to our growth and keeping faith in the organisation. Moreover, 128 company employees voluntarily contributed Rs.2.03 lakh to PM/CM relief fund to fight against Covid-19.”



Chennai Jewellers Association (CJA)

Vummidi Uday Kumar, President, Chennai Jewellers Association (CJA), and Director, Vummidi Ethiraj and Sons, Exports, stated, “We consider that providing food is the biggest charity. Our company has, in all, provided 250 packets of snacks to hospital staff and corona-affected patients. This, in turn, also

gives caterers an opportunity to earn some money as celebratory functions and weddings have not been happening on a large scale. I have been providing monthly provision to 14 of his staff since the last 8 months.” Through CJA, 200 monthly food grains and provision have been given to artisans and 200, to acharis (priests), who have lost their means of income due to the lockdowns.

Coimbatore Jewellers Association

B. Sabarinath, President of The Coimbatore Jewellers Association (CJA), informed that together with the Coimbatore Jewellery Manufacturers Association (CJMA), the members raised Rs. 50 lakh last year to help the Covid-hit people. “Initially, during the first 45-day lockdown, we distributed about 600 packets of lunch and dinner daily to policemen and frontline workers for over a month as they were stranded without food,” Sabarinath said, adding, “We have so far given away 55,000 packets of food grains and pulses to karigars and family members.” For the migrant Bengali karigars, we coordinated with the Central Government and gave away 9,000 to 10,000 food packets – this exercise was conducted twice. We had hired a marriage hall where the jewellery fraternity personally handed over the food packets.” He also informed that Kalyan Jewellers directly transferred Rs.2,000 per head to around 8,000 to 9,000 Coimbatore workers’ accounts.



The situation is getting out of hand currently, but Sabarinath informed that almost all of the industry people in their region above age 45 have got themselves vaccinated, and he is hopeful that once the vaccinations open up for the population above 18 years, “we will definitely be in a better situation, and things will gradually normalise.” Along with the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation the Coimbatore Jewellery Manufacturers Association and The Coimbatore Jewellers Association intensified their efforts to

coax all karigars to get vaccinated on the 26th and the 27th of April. They received registrations from over 500 people at the time of going to press. The CJA together with CJMA and the Gold Bullion Association donated 500 vials of Enoxaparin injection to ESI hospital. The trade bodies have also provided 2,000 PPE kits and 3,000 face shields to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital.

Surat Jewellery Manufacturers' Association (SJMA)

The Surat Jewellery Manufacturers' Association (SJMA) had distributed around 500 grocery kits to its members' employees. It also distributed around 3,000 masks and sanitiser bottles to migrant workers at Surat Railway Station. SJMA also organised a Blood Donation Camp with the cooperation of member companies and Lok Samarpan Raktadan Kendra. It managed to collect around 475+ bottles of blood from 450+ donors.



Surat Diamond Association (SDA)

During the pandemic, **Surat Diamond Association (SDA)** distributed 8,300 food kits (comprising 5kg wheat flour, 3kg rice, 1kg pulse, 1litre edible oil and a soap) valued at a total of Rs.37 lakh. SDA made it possible by multiple representations to the Government of Gujarat to operate state transport buses for artisans at economical rates; Shri Kumar Kanani, Hon'ble Health Minister, Gujarat flagged buses from Surat. SDA also distributed immunity booster health drinks to artisans and their families for a week. It also distributed tea and food packets to on-duty corona warriors and police officials during the lockdown.

Jewellers Association Jaipur (JAS)



Jewellers Association Jaipur held a five-day free vaccination camp for its members and spouses.

Ram Sharan Gupta, President, Jewellers Association Jaipur (JAS), said, “Jaipur Jewellers Association has so far spent Rs. 51 lakh, of which Rs. 21 lakh was donated to the Chief Minister’s Covid Relief Fund. The rest of the money has been utilised for several initiatives. We provided more than 3,000 ration packets (sufficient for 15 days for a family of four); provided PPE kits for doctors at the SMS Hospital; one of the

Association’s buildings named Janupyogi Bhawan was also made available to doctors when they were on 24-hour Covid duty. Recently, we organised a 5-day free vaccination camp for our members and their spouses. More than 600 people were vaccinated. The follow-up vaccination camp will be organised as per the Government guidelines. The second wave of Covid is virulent and devastating and we will try to do whatever we can to help.”

Sitapura Gems & Jewellers Association Gaurav Jain Mandot, President, Sitapura Gems & Jewellers Association, informed that the Sitapura gems and jewellery industry donated Rs.28 lakh to the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund. “We did a quick survey recently and found that not even 10% of our workers were vaccinated. In order to protect and secure them, we held a Vaccination Camp for a day as the state imposed a curfew. We will continue with the free vaccination for workers once the curfew is lifted.”

