



INDIA AT ITS BEST

IIJS HAS TRULY EVOLVED INTO AN EXHIBITION WITH INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER. THIS YEAR IT DISPLAYED THE BEST TALENTS AND ARTISTRY FROM THE INDIAN INDUSTRY. SAVIA RAJAGOPAL SHEDS SOME LIGHT ON IIJS'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDIAN GEM AND JEWELLERY INDUSTRY



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he Indian International Jewellery Show (IJS) 2005, commenced on 14th July 2005 and was held at NSE Grounds Complex, Goregaon. The Indian gem and jewellery industry has grown phenomenally over the last decade. With over 1,500 stalls spread over 46,000 sq. metres, the exhibition is ranked as second in Asia and amongst the top five B2B fairs in the world. The fair was a true reflection of India's standing at the global stage. International exhibitors accounted for 117 of the total 686 exhibitors. IJS showcased all kinds of jewellery, a machinery section and an allied section which showcased jewellery trade publications-giving the exhibition a well-rounded appearance and appealing to all segments of the jewellery and gem industry.

Launched in 1985 by the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), IJS has truly evolved over the years. GJEPC has largely encouraged this industry from its nascent stages and today exports of gems and jewellery from India have risen from a mere US \$28 million in 1966-67 to US \$15.67 billion in 2004-05. From 500 odd exhibitors last year to over 700 exhibitors this year, there has also been a rise in the number of stalls displayed from 1,200 in 2004, to 1,500 in 2005. When the IJS Show was launched in 1985, there were just 25 participants. After relaunching IJS as a trade only show in 2001, the Council has hit bull's eye. This year's IJS lived up to its promise of being bigger and better than ever before. Stalls were sectioned product wise such as mass-produced jewellery, couture jewellery, plain gold and loose diamonds, etc.

With a vision to make India the global hub in the world jewellery and



gem markets, IJS had several new additions in a bid to give the exhibition a truly international feel. Some of these initiatives included the Spectrum Seminar Series that had a combination of seminars and workshops that sought to increase the knowledge base of the industry as well as enhancing the skill sets of industry professionals; the India Traditional Pavillion which aimed at reviving traditional Indian arts such as Theva, Rewa, Bikaner work, Filigree and Minakari. The Designers Gallery showcased jewellery designed by young talented jewellery designers. The ABN AMBRO Solitaire Design Awards show also found its place. In addition, the IJS Fashion show Telesthesia brought together some of the biggest names in fashion like Manish Malhotra, Neeta Lulla, Vikram Phadnis, Anna Singh, Ashley Rebello, Ameeta Kapur and Vidhu Manroa, etc., who designed clothes in accordance with the jewellery displayed. All in all, IJS 2005 was an amalgamation of the best and brightest talents from across all spectrums in India.

The gem and jewellery industry contributes approximately 19 per cent towards the country's overall forex earnings. India's jewellery exports have risen by almost 75 per cent from US \$2.05 billion in 2003 to US \$3.67 billion in 2004. IJS 2005 was inaugurated by Praful Patel, Civil Aviation Minister, who drew smiles when he said, "This industry has grown inspite of the government." He acknowledged the economic growth this industry has witnessed and was grateful to them for showcasing India on a world setting. Appreciating the role of this industry, Patel, in his opening address drew parallels to the aviation industry stating the huge potential for investment and growth in this sector. He stated, "India's USP is its heritage and tradi-





tion." He visualised an integration of Indian policies with the global market so as to maximise the potential India could gain in terms of market share. Expressing his thoughts on how this industry has surpassed targets in recent years, Bakul Mehta, Chairman, GJEPC, in his opening address stated, "In the last fiscal, the total exports of the Indian gem and jewellery sector were at US \$15667.13 million, an impressive growth of 29.27 per cent compared to the previous year. The Indian jewellery sector, which is the sunrise sector of the Indian gem and jewellery industry, has in particular recorded a whopping 42.23 per cent growth in the last fiscal."

The coloured stones segment in India has also grown tremendously and the biggest change possibly could be the up-gradation of technology of traditional exporters from Jaipur. Their advancement in technique and set-up has resulted in better quality products. Exports of coloured stones have grown by 8.10 per cent to US \$192.94 million in 2004-05. Although this industry has grown tremendously over the years, there's still much work to be done. Citing challenges that the industry faces, Mehta stated, "We need strategies to sell to countries like Russia and other Eastern European nations." He also mentioned that on the administrative front, there were lapses between departments in the government with regard to the formulation, interpretation and implementation of policies. He added that a reduction in import duty on cut and polished diamonds and gemstones to nil, from the current five per cent duty would help in giving India an advantage when it comes to edging out Dubai and China, which are strong competitors. Another major challenge for this industry lies in sourcing rough diamonds and rough coloured gemstones. At present, the gem and jew-



ellery sector exports are entirely import dependent. Mehta drew attention to this issue saying, "Approximately 85 per cent of the imports for the sector are made through the Mumbai Airport. With the introduction of 0.1 per cent stamp duty on import of cargo by air, by the state of Maharashtra, the growth of the sector and the viability of business trading in Mumbai is highly affected." He requested complete relief from this levy which is also imposed on goods imported for re-export, cut and polished diamonds sent for certification, grading and re-imported, domestically produced goods returning from exhibitions. He also mentioned the levy of octroi for goods brought into Mumbai, which acts as a deterrent to trade here. Mehta rued the fact that Mumbai did not have a large convention center, with facilities and infrastructure to host large exhibitions. But he still ruled out hosting this fair in other cities. To make India the hub of the world gem and jewellery market, it requires a joint effort from all fronts — the industry itself, the government and other instrumental bodies such as the GJEPC. Exhibitions such as IJS seek to enhance networking and increasing business, and also display the best that the Indian gem and jewellery industry has to offer. With more international exhibitors and visitors watching this show keenly, there's an added incentive to improve the exhibition in other areas. As to where IJS sees itself three years from now, Sanjay Kothari, Promotion, Marketing and Business Development Convener, GJEPC, says, "If the infrastructure is in place, we want to increase the current 1,500 stalls to 2,000 stalls. After Hong Kong, IJS is the largest show in Asia and the fifth in the world. We want to take this show to greater heights, provided there is government support, and liberalisation policies in place, we should be able to make it truly international."