

From Diamond to Sun: How Goldi Solar Reignited Navsari's Sparkle

Category: Business

written by News Mall | January 24, 2026



Not many may be aware that before Surat rose to prominence as a global diamond hub, Navsari held that prestigious position. For decades, Navsari was renowned for its skilled gem artists whose craftsmanship added brilliance and value to diamonds traded across international markets. However, as time progressed, Navsari gradually lost its dominance. Surat, benefiting from superior infrastructure, better connectivity, and a rapidly expanding industrial ecosystem, began attracting diamond businesses and skilled labour, slowly overtaking Navsari in the diamond trade.



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The downturn became more pronounced following the global financial crisis of 2008. The recession, whose effects stretched well into the following decade, severely impacted the diamond industry worldwide. Geopolitical tensions, fluctuating international demand, and adverse tariff regimes further strained an already fragile ecosystem. As a result, diamond workshops in Navsari began shutting down, traders faced prolonged periods of inactivity, and thousands of gem artists lost their primary source of income. The once-thriving diamond city saw its identity shift decisively to Surat.

With limited employment opportunities remaining in Navsari, many gem artists were compelled to commute daily to Surat in search of work. These journeys often consumed more than three hours a day, draining both time and energy. Despite their

specialized skills, these workers remained part of the unorganized sector, with little job security, irregular income, and minimal access to social benefits. Over time, this arrangement proved unsustainable, pushing many families into financial uncertainty.

The situation deteriorated further in 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic brought economic activity to a grinding halt. The nationwide lockdown disrupted industries across the country, leaving traditional gem artists without work or income. With no safety net to fall back on, despair and uncertainty loomed large over the community. Many families struggled to meet basic expenses, and the future appeared increasingly bleak.

Amid this crisis, a transformative opportunity emerged. Surat-based industrialist Capt. Ishver Dholakiya, Founder and Managing Director of Goldi Solar initiated a solar panel manufacturing facility in Navsari at the long-defunct Mafatlal Mill compound, which had remained closed and unused for several years. This initiative not only revitalized idle industrial land but also aligned with India's growing focus on renewable energy and sustainable development.

Recognizing the potential of the local workforce, over 1,000 former gem artists were enrolled in professional training programs for solar panel manufacturing at the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Kharel, free of cost. The ITI, operating under the Directorate General of Training of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, provides practical, industry-oriented training in both engineering and non-engineering trades. Upon completion of the program, these trained workers were absorbed by Goldi Solar at its Vejalpore plant in Navsari, earning a stable monthly income of Rs. 20,000.

This transition marked a significant shift in the lives of these workers. From being part of the unorganized sector, they moved into structured employment with benefits such as statutory leaves, compensation, safe working conditions, and access to nutritious meals at the factory canteen. Most importantly, they gained the dignity of stable employment close to home, eliminating the need for long and exhausting daily commutes.

Conversations with these workers reflect a powerful story of hope and renewal. They jubilantly talk about improved financial stability, the ability to support their families, and the relief of repaying long-standing debts. They can't thank Capt. Ishver Dholakiya and the entire Goldi Solar Group enough for the metamorphosis that was actuated in their lives. Beyond direct employment, the establishment of the solar plant also generated indirect livelihood opportunities, including catering, logistics, and essential supplies, benefiting the broader local economy.

Today, the optimism visible on the faces of these workers underscores a larger transformation. The sun that now shines over Navsari symbolizes resilience, sustainability, and shared prosperity. By merging renewable energy with inclusive employment, Navsari has found a new path forward, one that brings both environmental responsibility and social upliftment. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Navsari hasn't settled for less and that Goldi Solar under the aegis of Capt. Ishver Dholakiya facilitated the transition from Diamond to Sun with the Sparkle Brightened Manifold.

