

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE Afghan jewellery makes its way to
New York, London Shyam Bhatia in London

Afghan jewellers trained in Jaipur will benefit from having their products showcased from next month in New York and London. Afghan gemstones such as lapis lazuli, emeralds and rubies as well as gold, silver and other materials are included in the jewellery brand called Aayenda, meaning 'future' in the Dari Language, that is being launched at a fashion expo in New York, NY Now, as well as at London Fashion Week this coming September.

Dozens of Afghan jewellers have spent the past six months in Jaipur studying design and manufacturing techniques under the guidance of leading Indian and foreign designers.

Aayenda is described as the crown jewel of the Future Brilliance Afghanistan Jaipur programme that aims to capture higher value and refinement of Afghanistan's gemstone sector through faceting.

Graduates of the Jaipur gems and cutting programme have been invited to participate in their own cooperative, producing internationally competitive jewellery under the Aayenda banner.

The initiative is being driven by former London City banker Sophia Swire, sister of British Minister of State in the UK Foreign Office Hugo Swire, who has been deployed as Senior Adviser on gemstones to Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines and Industry.

She has previously been credited with launching the international fashion for pashmina shawls, as well as the 'Learning for Life' NGO that has established more than 250 schools for girls in rural Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

A statement issued by Future Brilliance says: "Our vision is to create stability in regions afflicted by conflict or inadequate access to economic opportunity by offering world-class training that contributes to a nation's prosperity through the skills -- ambition, professional knowledge and participation of its people.

"Future Brilliance ensures that training programmes respond to local market needs by consulting extensively with local men

and women, and ensuring that their voices are written into our plans and projects.”

The Jaipur touch

- * Dozens of Afghan jewellers have spent the past six months in Jaipur studying design and manufacturing techniques under the guidance of leading designers
- * Graduates of the Jaipur gems and cutting programme have been invited to participate in their own cooperative, producing internationally competitive jewellery