De Beers Launches Online Rough-Sales Platform

RAPAPORT... De Beers has launched an e-commerce site that lets clients buy rough on demand, creating an opportunity for sales during the weak market.

An initiative of De Beers' auctions unit, the new Buy platform gives registered buyers an extra way of purchasing rough in addition to the company's existing limited-time auctions, the miner said Thursday. Customers will be able to buy rough diamonds immediately and at any time of the day, with the available goods ranging from very high-end to low-end items. Prices will be visible to customers at the point of purchase, the company added.

"We are especially pleased to introduce this additional flexibility for our registered buyers in light of the current COVID-19 situation," noted Alastair Bickerstaff, head of product development and sales at De Beers' auctions division.

The move comes amid a severe slowdown in the rough market as consumer markets and trading centers have partially shut due to the coronavirus pandemic. Indian manufacturers are reducing their rough purchases as many cutting facilities are closed and consumer and trade demand is limited.

Sightholders were expecting low sales at last week's De Beers sight, with most customers unable to attend the event in Botswana because of travel restrictions. Shipping goods is also difficult.

De Beers’ auctions unit sells about 10% of the miner’s production, with the rest available to contract clients through the sightholder system.

Image: A rough diamond under analysis at KGK Diamonds’ Botswana cutting facility. (Ben Perry/Armoury Films/De Beers)