

VERY URGENT

10th DECEMBER 2009

Sub : US Department of Labour's publication of goods allegedly produced by using child labour / forced child labour including stones from India and our objections and protest (TVPRA Report and EO 13126)

I, the undersigned R.VEERAMANI is the Chairman of Granite and Natural Stone Panel of CAPEXIL, the Export Promotion Council sponsored by the Government of India, Ministry of Commerce, in my capacity as elected representative for the country's export of natural stones, have just learnt about the abovementioned documents published by the US Department of Labour on September 11, 2009 and respectfully submit the following.

Stones generally have a broad connotation referring many natural stone varieties like granites, marbles, sandstones, slates, lime stones, quartzite, pebbles, cobbles, aggregates, sculptured pieces etc. India is one of the matured stone countries where modern scientific methods and the latest technology are applied. India is one of the top three stone producers of the world. Indian stones are exported in many forms like building slabs, cut-to-size stones for projects, calibrated tiles, memorial stones, monuments, mausoleums, markers etc. Many reputed US companies are importing Indian stones in many forms as products and as dimensional blocks, after being satisfied that the Indian stones are produced in the best scientific method where all the laws and regulations are complied with. They are absolutely satisfied with the social infrastructure and the international standard of social compliance to the UN charter standard including human rights and compliance of the employment by adult persons with experience.

We are happy that the US Government has used the Indian stones in many monuments like Vietnam War Memorial, Holocaust Memorial Museum - Washington D.C., Astronaut Memorial and many more. Now we are absolutely shocked that a baseless allegation is being thrown against the Indian stone industry in general. In fact, we should be given more time for inviting the US Department of Labour to visit and see for themselves and investigate before coming to any unsubstantiated conclusions. There are many appreciation letters from US companies who personally visited many times every year about the commendation of the modern quarrying system in the stone industry and the modern factories and the well trained stone experts employed in production and processing and the whole manufacturing system. Many stone industry companies have done tremendous social contribution by running schools and colleges for the benefit of the children and as such there is absolutely no need for even thinking of employing children for any purpose.

Many importers from other countries like Canada, UK, Italy, Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia etc. are frequently visiting India to inspect the stone quarries and the factories. They are very much satisfied with the quality

and expertise of the workmen employed. The stone industry is importing mining machines and tools from USA from reputed US companies like Caterpillar.

India is one of the ancient stone civilization countries. We have several thousands of stone monuments and memorials, temples, mosques, churches showing the artistic talented work and the expertise of the workmen. Taj Mahal and many other monuments are UNESCO monuments. The Indian stone industry strictly follows the Central Governments' and State Governments' rules and regulations on Minimum Wages Act and Labour Laws including their welfare measures, healthcare, pension and insurance, bonus and retirement benefits. India is a democratic law enforcing country and the Indian stone industry is absolutely complying with the Indian laws and UN charter directions.

On behalf of the Indian stone industry, I would like to lodge a strong protest and objection for including the stones allegedly employing forced child labour. We request the US Department of Labour to give us sufficient time to submit detailed objections, photographs etc to prove what we have stated. In fact, the Indian stone companies participate in many US exhibitions, where they exhibit the photographs of stone quarries and the stone processing factories.

We sincerely hope that sufficient time and opportunity would be given to the Indian Stone Industry to submit its merits and disprove the baseless allegations. We believe that the US Department of Labour (USDOL.) will not rush and make any wrong conclusions prematurely without fully studying the subject in detail.

Thanking you

Yours sincerely

R.VEERAMANI
CHAIRMAN
Email: veeramani@gemgranites.com

