



THE TRIVANDRUM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Affiliated to
Member

FICCI - Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, New Delhi
ASSOCHAM - Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, New Delhi.

049/TCCI: NGT Hearing/2022

24.08.2022

The Chairman

Joint Committee appointed by National Green Tribunal (NGT)

Sub: Submission at the Public Hearing conducted for determining the Safe Distance Criteria for Quarrying Operations by the Joint Committee appointed by National Green Tribunal in OA Number 304/2019

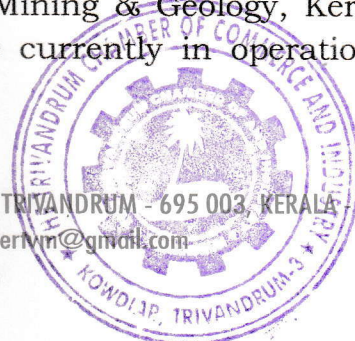
Submission By: Trivandrum Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI)

Quarrying or Stone Mining or Granite (Building Stone) Mining is an essential mining activity across Kerala.

This Industry provides a substantial number of employment in rural areas and is also a source of considerable revenue for the Government, besides a major contributor to the infrastructure development of the State.

Due to the increased legal framework, and revised Rules and Regulations, many mining units that were not able to comply with revised situations were forced to cease their operations. Currently, the surviving operating units, in coordination with the Government, are genuinely focusing on legalized functioning of the industry. All Licenses related to quarrying/mining are renewed only after strict scrutiny and upon ensuring compliance with the Law.

Reliable sources indicate that there were about 3000-plus operating quarries of all types of construction materials including building stones in Kerala about five years back. However, as per the latest data available from the Official website of the Department of Mining & Geology, Kerala, only 563 Granite (Building Stone) quarries are currently in operation in the State.



The footprint of the total quarrying area covered by the above-mentioned 563 quarries is less than 16 sq km ie 3952 acres. This is a mere 0.04 % of the total land area of Kerala comprising of 38,863 sq KM ie 96 lac acres.

As per the Kerala land use data of 2020-21, land put to non-agricultural use is 11.86 %. Hence, total quarrying footprint in Kerala as a percentage of land put to non-agriculture use is just a mere 0.35 %.

Kerala is a densely populated State with 860 persons per sq km as against the National average of 315 persons per sq km as per the 2011 Census, with very minimum mineral resources, and has to focus on optimizing mineral extraction using advanced technology in the limited areas available to support the infrastructure development of the State.

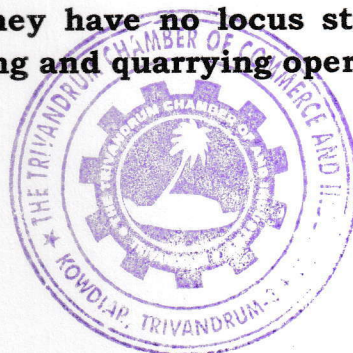
With increasing the safe distance criteria beyond 50 meters from the blast site to public places, a large extent of the valuable mineral deposit will have to be left behind which will remain unproductive and a National loss/waste.

Explosive and Blasting technology in recent years has developed to a scale that even blasting can be done within 10 meters distance without any damage. A blast if done without a proper blast design or scientific approach can create damage even beyond 500 meters distance.

Precautions against projectiles, dust and shot holes charges are all well prescribed under the regulations and permissions are required to be obtained from the DGMS.

By adopting better blast design and monitoring systems by quarries and with improved supervision by qualified mining professionals and blasters employed at the quarries, the 50 meter safe distance criteria would be sufficient to limit the adverse effects of ground vibrations, and fly-rock, etc.

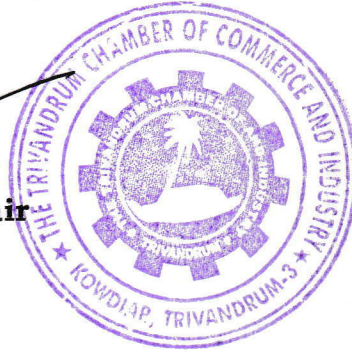
It may also be noted that, majority of the people who have invested in land/ property or built houses/other structures in the adjacent or vicinity of the quarries that were in operations for some time, did so, fully being aware of the mining process. Even then, they did this investment as the properties in these areas were available at prices far below the market rates. Hence, they have no locus standi to prefer complaints and challenge the mining and quarrying operations



In light of the above facts, it is submitted that the remedy lies in the effective enforcement and implementation of existing Laws already passed in Parliament or Assemblies stipulating a safe distance of 50 meters, and not in enhancing the safe distance criteria.

For Trivandrum Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI)


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President




Abraham Thomas (Joji)
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