

ANNEXURE - IV**STATEMENT OF CASE****One and half decades in the manufacture of 'Alleppey Coir' (1858-2006) -
A Statement of Case**

1. The coir yarn have been produced from time immemorial through out the coastal belt of Kerala. It is reported that ancient travelers like Megasthenes have taken many valuable gifts including coir rope produced in Malabar coast to King Soloman.
2. Manufacture of value added products out of 2 ply coir yarn produced through out the coastal belt of Kerala was commenced at Alleppey in the year 1859 by one Irish born American known as Mr. James Darragh. He established a factory under the name and style "Darragh Smail and Co." where the coir mats and mattings were first produced in the history of coir industry in India. Initially, the Company started producing coir door mats like fibre mats, creel mats etc. and later on slowly introduced other type of coir products like coir mattings, mourzouk carpets etc.
3. Following Darragh Smail and Co., many other Europeans also ventured into coir manufacturing units in the Alleppey town. There were big names like Aspinwall & Co., William Goodacre & Sons, Pears Leslie & Co., Volkar Brothers etc having coir division established in the small port town of Alleppey. All these manufacturing units were producing nearly the entire quantity of coir products required for supplying to their principals in U.K. or other European countries. They used to procure coir yarn from local dealers who will bring yarn from different coir producing centres of Kerala to the terminal market at Alleppey and manufacture wide range of coir products engaging thousands of workers. Each unit was having their own standards for producing coir products.
4. Coir Board as part of standardisation of coir products brought out quality specification for different types of coir and coir products during the Sixties and subsequently got it approved by the Bureau of Indian Standards which were also notified for the information of the public.
5. There were unrest among the workers engaged by the European factories on the labour wages. There were disparity in wages between the firms for producing the same quality of coir products and the workers started demanding unification of wages with a slogan that "same wage for same work". They organised themselves into a trade union under the name and style "Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union" which was the first trade union in the coir industry and perhaps in the whole country after the trade union movement started in the textile mills in Bombay.
6. The workers through the trade union started demanding unification of wages and other welfare measures. The labour unrest and the independence movement in India prompted the Europeans to leave their coir activities in India and migrate to their home lands. After India became independent in the year 1947, the process was hastened and the entire Europeans left

India by handing over the ownership of the factories to their Indian counter parts. The Indian counter parts took over the management of the factories from the Europeans and sensing the difficulties in running the units having thousands of workers, they retrenched the workers by paying their legitimate benefits by way of looms and equipments. The retrenched workers took looms and equipments to the suburbs of Alleppey town and established household, cottage, tiny units adjoining to their households. Thus the coir industry which was in the centralised form in the pre-independence era became a totally disintegrated industry and as of now there are nearly 10,000 small scale coir manufacturers engaged in the production of coir products supplying to nearly 250 exporters for the purpose of export.

7. These small scale manufacturers have the skill to produce different varieties of coir products on heavy structured handlooms installed in their units. They colour the coir yarn in their own households by adopting the traditional technology and weave the coir products as per the orders placed by the exporters. The manufacturers have the traditional knowledge on weaving coir products as well as other processing like Sorting, Dyeing, Bleaching etc. Only 2 taluks in Alleppey district viz. Ambalapuzha and Cherthala are having these small scale coir units. Thus the Alleppey coir cluster is confined to Ambalapuzha and Cherthala taluks of Alleppey district.

8. The Coir Board is a statutory body established by the Govt. of India under the Coir Industry Act 1953 for the over all development of coir industry in India. The major functions of the Coir Board includes Research and Development, Export and Domestic Market Promotion etc. The functions of the Coir Board also include ensuring remunerative returns to the small scale producers and workers engaged in the coir industry. Coir Board has been evolving plan schemes for the welfare of the workers of coir industry. Recently, the Board has introduced a scheme for Inplant Inspection of Coir and Coir products under which the quality supervisors engaged by the Coir Board will be visiting the small scale coir manufacturing units on a routine and inspect the products being produced by the manufacturers. They will also bring to the notice of the manufacturers the defects noticed by them during the inspection process and will suggest remedial measures for rectifying the defects.

9. Coir industry in the Alleppey cluster is having a lot of players like exporters, small scale manufacturers, coir co-operative societies, public sector undertakings, trade unions, NGOs etc. The Coir Board acts as a facilitator for providing technical support and guidance to the industry. The Board has also constituted a Coir Relation Committee comprising of the representatives of the exporters/small scale manufacturers/trade unions etc. for resolving issues arising in the industry and maintaining a harmonious relation between the players of the sector.