

Minister (Textiles) while explaining the measures being undertaken by the Government for eradication of child labour from the carpet industry, stated that IGEP's support to " Rugmark " and the recent statement of the German Minister for Labour in Germany had created a cause of concern to our carpet exporters.

8. The credibility of the "Rugmark " was in question and according to their own version, " Rugmark" was no guarantee against the use of child labour. The support of the German Government to such a labelling system was regrettable. Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC), he said , could on the other hand, provide a much better and reliable system of certification. Secretary (Textiles) observed that the " Rugmark " was a partisan approach which has not received the full support of the carpet industry. There was the question of credibility in the " Rugmark ", in as much as it did not have any proper inspection mechanism to certify non-use of child labour in the making of carpets.

Rugmark - Today's Reality :

The heightened awareness against child labour resulting out of Rugmark initiative and campaign, particularly in the principal carpet belt had forced a sizeable section of the carpet manufacturers to stealthily shift their weaving operations to Southern and North western districts of Bihar. Manufacturers from traditional carpet towns of Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Allahabad and Gorakhpur, are sending the work away , to Garha, Palamau and West Champaran. Succumbing to social and economic pressures from within and outside the country as a sequel to Rugmark's campaign , the UP Government had been tightening the screws on the carpet industries to avoid employment of children.

Now hordes of carpet manufacturers are going deeper into the impoverished villages of Garhawa, Palamau and West Champaran districts where child labour is cheap and abundant. The manufacturers send older boys to liase with the villagers for setting up looms in their homes. Each loom coast of Rs.4000 which is paid by the manufacturer . The raw materials are provided by the contractors to the loom owners who remain in constant touch with the child weavers. Most of the children working in the looms in Garhwa belong to Dalit, tribal or Muslim communities. Fewer children from these districts migrate to the carpet belt for jobs. The trend clearly stands reversed.