

## **Afghan Marble delegation visit to Jordan Marble Industry**

Overview of Jordan Marble Industry:

With the help of USAID and the Jordan-US Business Partnership JUSBP, Jordan has become a success story in the stone industry. They faced many of the same challenges that Afghanistan is facing in today's industry. Jordan was forced to import marble and granite from other countries, processing them locally, and selling them on the regional markets. Only in the past few years have they shifted to utilizing their local stones. They did this by making investments in training, modern quarrying and processing equipment. They had a positive trend over the last ten years with a 250% increase in production in the last 3 years.

Recently two of JOSTONE members Mr. Fayez al Saheb and Al Khamis al Saheb from Al Saheb Marble Co along with with Matt Chitharanjan, the association's business advisor attended the marble conference in Kabul in March 2009.

After Mr. Fayez al Saheb and Al Khamis al Saheb attended the March conference, he offered to help support a marble delegation from Afghanistan to conduct a study tour of the Jordan marble industry and to meet members of JOSTONE.

ASMED agreed to co-ordinate an effort to support an Afghan marble delegation to travel to Jordan and interact with JOSTONE and the private marble companies. The purpose of this trip was to gain information on quarrying, modern processing, establishing market linkages, and to inform the Jordanians about the vast amount of stone resources that Afghanistan has to offer.

A year after the recommendation to go to Jordan was finally submitted, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, ASMED sent a group of the following AMGPA members and ASMED staff to visit the Jordan Stone Industry:

1. Mohammad Naeem, Manager of Oqabe Asia Marble Mining Co, Herat
2. Nasar Ahmad, Ahmadi Marble Processing Co, Herat
3. Haji Hussain Neekqadam, Neekqadam Marble Quarrying and Processing Co, Kabul
4. Mohammad Salim, Manager of Bakhter Marble Mining Co, Kabul
5. Sayed Abid Akbary – Marble team ASMED
6. Paul Lamoureux – Marble team ASMED

During the first day of trip, the delegation visited the JOSTONE office in Amman and discussed overall JOSTONE activities and member services with representatives of JOSTONE.



After visiting the JOSTONE office, the delegation had a trip to the United Brothers Marble Quarry in Amman and observed their quarrying operations and their use of modern equipment. During this visit, the delegation was also able to observe the operation of a Fantini chainsaw, a recent technology advance used in the extraction of marble and is perhaps the latest and most advanced quarrying machinery. It reduces production time approximately 4 times over traditional diamond wire saws and has both wet and dry operating systems. While the Fantini chainsaw cannot be used in all applications, there may be many opportunities to use this process in Afghanistan's quarries.



That evening consisted of a dinner meeting hosted by Mr. Alraed, the owner of Al Madar Marble Processing Plants. The delegation explained the situation in Afghanistan and also exchanged some business related ideas, cultural heritage, and how to promote the marble sector in a manner beneficial for both countries.

The next day consisted of more quarry and processing plant visits.

One thing that the Afghanistan delegation realized is the Jordanians are able to take low quality resources and process them into high quality finished products. This is done by utilizing high tech quarrying and processing equipment and extremely capable management.

During this trip the delegation also visited TravCo a large travertine quarrying and processing facilities that was established approximately eight years ago near the Jordan valley, a company that Paul Lamoureux assisted when they were just establishing themselves.



One of the visits included going to the Marble industrial park consisting of over a hundred marble processing and carving facilities. This industrial park was supplied by local quarries and was representative of how a few good quarries can support and create jobs for an entire industry.



After a long week of visiting quarries and processing plant, we prepared for our next day's presentation to the members of JOSTONE. During the presentation we explained the resources and opportunities in Afghanistan. This consisted of slide presentation, samples displays, speeches and interaction amongst AMGPA and JOSTONE members. In addition, we also promoted the March 2010 marble conference in Herat and invited a number of interested participants to attend. We will follow up with those interested as we get closer to the event.



In conclusion, we want to emphasize that this study tour was a very valuable tool for transferring of technical information and the exploration of possible joint ventures between the Afghanistan Marble Industry and the Jordan Marble Sector. I would consider this a very successful trip for both industries and strongly recommend that similar study tours be scheduled to other countries..