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Govt upset over European NGOs' reports about Indian industry

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NEW DELHI: The government on Tuesday took strong exception to some EU-funded NGOs spreading "false" reports about Indian industry employing children and abusing human rights and warned of domestic pressure for retaliatory action.

Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath conveyed India's resentment to Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Paavo Vayrynen. He will also be taking up the issue with the Netherland's Minister for Economic Affairs M Vander Hoeven here tomorrow.

"I have flagged the issue with minister Vayrynen and will be discussing the same with the Dutch minister. Some NGOs, including those funded by some EU governments, are spreading false reports about the Indian industry. There could be pressure on Government of India as well to take a retaliatory action which we do not want to do," Nath said addressing a joint press conference with the visiting Finnish minister.

Vayrynen said the EU governments could not do much about the NGOs airing their views, especially when they did not depend on subsidies. "We also have problems with NGOs... what can we do," he said, adding that the only way to tame the NGOs was to "spread correct information".

However, both Nath and Vayrynen said that issues like human rights and environment have not been included in the proposed India-EU Free Trade and Investment Agreement. "There are other platforms for subjects such as human rights and environment. This agreement is confined to trade and investment," Nath said.

The two sides have managed to keep these issues out of the proposed FTA despite pressure from some EU members like France, government officials said.

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