**SKILLS FOR FREEDOM**

**Newsletter from India**

 **No: 10 February: 2016**

This electronic newsletter from **PEACE TRUST, INDIA** is addressed to NGO's, Social Activists, Media, Opinion makers, Leaders and Bureaucrats for improving their understanding on skilling the youth for gainful employment and addressing social issues like modern slavery, child labour, migrant labour, un-employability of youth. We also send this to people who we believe are involved in improving the migrant worker's conditions. You are welcome to unsubscribe yourself, if you so choose.

**-EDITOR**

Peace Trust is a Non Government Organization working on Child Labour and Bonded Labour issues since 1984. It has also focused on Migrant workers rights issue since 1999.

* Peace Trust’s Skills for Freedom is the only solution to end Modern Slavery in Tamil Nadu. It is a joint effort for enhancing the employment opportunities of rural youth in Dindigul, Karur, Tiruppur Districts.
* Reduce the risk for young workers - Beginning of this month Peace Trust has launched a new Initiative to "Support School Education, Health Protection, Livelihood Development and Skill Training for Gainful Employment among Vulnerable Young Population in Dindigul District".
* SPSC Vocational Education & Employment Facilitation Centre provides access to vocational education and employment facilitation for rural poor youth in Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur District Tamil Nadu and Karaikal District, Puducherry.
* Peace Trust also provides training for Quality Teacher Education and gainful employment to young women from resource poor families in Dindigul and Karur District.

The views expressed are not of the donors but a compilation of field realities for the purpose of sharing and action.

**The Skills for Freedom e-newsletter is published by:**



**Peace Trust**

**Near Police Housing Colony**

**Trichy Road, Dindigul-624005,**

**Tamil Nadu, India**

**Ph:0451-2410021; Fax:0451-2410372**

**Email:**info@peacetrust.in**,**chairman@peacetrust.in

**Website:**[www.peacetrust.in](http://www.peacetrust.in/)

**Edited By: Dr. J. Paul Baskar Ph.D.**

**Assisted By: Ms. Anitha Palanivel, Mrs. Chitra**

**We partner with**

  



**MIGRANT LABOURERS**

**KUDUMBASHREE TO MAP NRKS, MIGRANT LABOURERS**

Kochi: Kudumbashree Mission would open `Migration Centres' in all panchayats on map the outflow of people who have gone outside the state or abroad in search of work and the inflow of migrant labourers.

Kudumbashree workers would collect details such as address, employer's details, country or state to which they have migrated etc which would be kept in the records of the concerned grama panchayat.

Apart from fraudulent activities involving migrant workers, there are instances when they are treated unfairly. On many occasions the authorities face hardships in tracing the family of the deceased or inform the family about several issues. Keeping a record of the person will help the authorities to address such issues," said Shine T Money, gender consultant, Kudumbashree, Ernakulam.

"There are also instances where Keralites who have moved outside the state are subjected to abuse by employers. The `Migration Centre' will collect and examine the information regarding the employers and check whether the employers are trustworthy before they depart from the state," said Shine. Kudumbashree is planning to use `ayalkoottams' (neighbourhood groups) for data collection.

Pilot projects have been initiated in Kunnathunadu and Aavoli grama panchayats in Ernakulam district. Kudumbashree has completed the data collection in one of the wards in Aavoli panchayat . According to officials, more than 100 records pertaining to migrants have been collected from there. "We are requesting every panchayat to make establishment of migration centres mandatory. Until the request is met, the data collected will be kept with Kudumbashree and will be provided to respected authorities if an occasion arises," he said.

The information collected will be cross-checked with identity documents."Sometimes there are issues regarding the authenticity of the ID cards. We will try to address this problem with the help of agencies including NORKA," he said. "In the initial phase, the project will be executed in five panchayats of every district. Initially, the records will be kept in registers, but soon everything will be digitalized," he said.

**AT LEAST 37 MIGRANTS DROWN TRYING TO REACH GREECE**

Images of dead children on a beach on Saturday were another soul-searing reminder that Europe's migrant crisis keeps destroying lives and families by the day.

A boat carrying Syrians attempting the short sea journey from Turkey to Greece struck rocks and capsized at dawn on Saturday, causing at least 37 people to drown, among them several babies and young children. Images of dead children on a beach on Saturday were another soul-searing reminder that Europe’s migrant crisis keeps destroying lives and families by the day.

They recalled the photo of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi lying face down on a Turkish beach last year. His story put an intimate face on the Syrian refugee crisis for people across the world, prompting many to finally grapple with the magnitude of the suffering caused by the war in the Middle East and the treacherous journeys many risk seeking shelter in Europe. By contrast, the heartbreaking images Saturday met a muted response, perhaps a sign that many have grown weary of the unending reports about the suffering of migrants even though the number of people dying at sea is rising.

“January has been the deadliest month so far for drownings between Turkey and Greece,” Peter Bouckaert, the emergencies director at Human Rights Watch, told The Associated Press in an email. “Almost every day, more drown on this dangerous journey.” “It is deeply disturbing that after all those solemn pledges when Aylan Kurdi drowned, these latest drownings were barely mentioned in the media,” added Bouckaert, who played a crucial role in giving wide circulation on Twitter to the images of Kurdi last year. “We have chosen to look away.” Tima Kurdi , the Kurdi’s aunt, said she is heartbroken to know that children continue to die as her nephew did. “No parent would put their children in that kind of situation unless what they were escaping from was worse,” she told the AP, speaking from a hair salon she recently opened in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. “The image of my nephew Alan Kurdi was really powerful. People started to look at the crisis. But now, another boy and another boy and another boy are drowned,” she said. “I wish the world would not forget my nephew and his tragedy. We have to stop the war or this won’t stop.” While Turkish authorities gave the boy’s first name as Aylan, his aunt says the family prefers that it be transliterated as Alan. Saturday’s tragedy occurred when the boat capsized as dozens of people attempted the deceptively short crossing from the Turkish coast to the Greek island of Lesbos barely 5 miles (8 kilometers) away. More than 250 migrants have drowned already this month trying to reach one of Greece’s offshore islands, entry point to the European Union and its uncertain promise of refuge from war and poverty. The Turkish coast guard said three ships, a helicopter and team of divers searched the partially submerged craft and surrounding seas for more bodies as police on shore placed bodies, some 10 children among them, in black bags. Journalists at the scene tried to interview some of the 75 survivors, but police took them away in buses, some bound for a local hospital to be treated for hypothermia and other injuries, others into police custody for questioning. A Turkish government official said by the late afternoon that rescuers had recovered bodies trapped inside the wreckage of the 17-meter (56-foot) boat, which sank shortly after departing from the shore near the Aegean resort of Ayvacik, raising the death toll to 37. Saim Eskioglu, deputy governor for the coastal Canakkale province that includes Ayvacik, said the boat “hit rocks soon after it left the coast.” “There were around 10 children among the dead,” Eskioglu said. “Four of them, unfortunately, were babies about one or two years old. We are deeply saddened.” Eskioglu and Ayvacik’s mayor, Mehmet Unal Sahin, said most of the migrants were Syrians. The Anadolu Agency said the boat also bore natives of Afghanistan and Myanmar. A private Turkish news agency, Dogan, said police arrested a Turkish man suspected of being the smuggler who organized Saturday’s failed sea crossing. The man denied responsibility, telling the Dogan agency that he also had relatives on board. Weather conditions did not appear to be a significant factor in the sinking. Journalists at the scene said weather conditions Saturday on the Turkish coast were relatively mild, with light winds and temperatures around 12 degrees Celsius (54 Fahrenheit). The International Organization for Migration says drowning deaths are running at four times the rate of 2015, when many thousands daily sought to enter the European Union via Turkey by reaching one of more than a dozen offshore Greek islands, chiefly Lesbos. The agency recorded 805 drowning deaths of migrants on Turkey-Greece sea routes throughout 2015, and a further 218 this month alone excluding the ultimate total of Saturday’s tragedy. Joel Millman, a spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, said the death toll was “increasing at an alarming rate.” He said it was all the more surprising, given the reality that fewer people are attempting the crossing during winter. Turkey, which is hosting an estimated 2.5 million refugees from Syria, in November agreed to fight smuggling networks and stem the flow of migrants into Europe. In return, the European Union pledged 3 billion Euros ($3.25 billion) to help improve the refugees’ conditions. The country says it has started rejecting Syrians who arrive without valid visas via third countries. It also has agreed to grant work permits to Syrians as an incentive for them to stay put in Turkey.

**MIGRANT CRISIS: REFUGEES MUST RETURN HOME AFTER WAR IS OVER, SAYS ANGELA MERKEL**

A record 1.1 million migrants arrived in Germany last year.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday tried to placate the increasingly vocal critics of her open-door policy for refugees, insisting that asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq would go home once the conflicts there had ended.

Merkel, despite appearing increasingly isolated over her policy, has resisted pressure from some conservatives to cap the influx of refugees, or to close Germany’s borders. A record 1.1 million migrants arrived in Germany last year.

But growing concern about the country’s ability to cope and worries about crime and security after assaults on women are weighing on support for Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

Merkel said that despite efforts to integrate refugees and help them, it was important to stress that they had only been given permission to stay for a limited period of time.

“We need … to say to people that this is a temporary residential status and we expect that once there is peace in Syria again, once IS has been defeated in Iraq, that you go back to your home country with the knowledge that you have gained,” she said at a meeting of CDU members in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

She said 70 percent of refugees that fled to Germany from the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s had returned to their home countries.

Her remarks come after Horst Seehofer, leader of the CSU, threatened to take her government to court if his demand to stem the flow of asylum seekers was not met.

Support for the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) has edged up into double digits. Its leader said in an interview published on Saturday that border guards should shoot at refugees to prevent them from illegally entering the country if need be.

Merkel has tried to convince other European countries to take in quotas of refugees, pushed for reception centres to be built on Europe’s external borders, and led an EU campaign to try to convince Turkey to keep refugees from entering the bloc. But progress has been slow.

Germany wants to limit migration from North Africa by declaring Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia “safe countries”, which would end their citizens’ chance of being granted asylum.

Merkel said she had spoken to Morocco’s king and that Morocco had said it was prepared to take back people from that country.

**REACHING LIMITS BUT WILL KEEP TAKING IN REFUGEES: TURKEY**

The governor for the Turkish border province of Kilis said Saturday that Turkey would provide aid to the displaced within Syria, but would only open the gates in the event of an "extraordinary crisis."

Turkey has reached the end of its “capacity to absorb” refugees but will continue to take them in, Turkey’s deputy premier said Sunday as his country faced mounting pressure to open its border, where tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing a government onslaught have arrived.

Turkish authorities say up to 35,000 Syrians have massed along the border, which remained closed for a third day on Sunday. The governor for the Turkish border province of Kilis said Saturday that Turkey would provide aid to the displaced within Syria, but would only open the gates in the event of an “extraordinary crisis.”

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus told CNN-Turk television that Turkey is now hosting a total of 3 million refugees, including 2.5 million Syrians.

“Yes, Turkey has reached the end of its capacity to absorb (refugees),” Kurtulmus said. “But in the end, these people have nowhere else to go. Either they will die beneath the bombings and Turkey will … watch the massacre like the rest of the world, or we will open our borders.”

Kurtulmus said some 15,000 refugees from Syria were admitted in the past few days, without elaborating. He put the number of refugees being cared for at the other side of the border at 30,000. “At the moment, we are admitting some, and are trying to keep others there (in Syria) by providing them with every kind of humanitarian support,” Kurtulmus added. “We are not in a position to tell them not to come. If we do, we would be abandoning them to their deaths.” The deputy premier did not explain why the Turkish border gate at Oncupinar, opposite the Bab al-Salameh crossing in Syria, was being kept closed or why tens of thousands of refugees were not immediately being let in. On Saturday, the European Union urged Turkey to open its borders at a meeting between EU and Turkish officials in Amsterdam, saying it was providing aid to Ankara for that purpose. EU nations have committed 3 billion euros ($3.3 billion) to Turkey to help refugees, part of incentives aimed at persuading Turkey to do more to stop thousands of migrants from leaving for Greece. Kurtulmus estimated that — “in the worst case scenario” — as many as 1 million more refugees could flee the Syrian city of Aleppo and its regions. The war between Syrian President Bashar Assad’s government and Syrian rebels began in 2011. It has killed over 250,000 people and forced millions to flee the country.

**MIGRANT CRISIS WORSENS**

3162 Camps for the displaced along Syria's border with Turkey are at full capacity, aid workers say, as tens of thousands flee a major government offensive in Aleppo province.

In and around the border town of Azaz, families are sleeping in the streets, or up to 20 people to a tent, having left their homes with nothing but the clothes they were wearing.

The United Nations says up to 31,000 people have fled Aleppo city and surrounding areas in recent days, as government forces press an offensive that could encircle the rebel-held part of the city.

“There are no longer enough places for families to sleep,” said Ahmad al-Mohammad, a field worker with Doctors Without Borders (MSF) who enters Aleppo province from Turkey daily.

“Many of them in the first days were sleeping in the streets and outdoors without blankets or covers,” he told AFP.

He said up to 20 people were crowding into tents being distributed by aid groups and which are usually meant for seven only, with homes in towns receiving displaced people also filled to capacity.

“Most of the families left with just the clothes they were in,” he said, adding that the cold and the crowded conditions were causing health problems including diarrhoea.

He said aid groups were also distributing warm clothes and mattresses, with Turkey allowing humanitarian goods across the border, which remains closed to the fleeing Syrians.

“They are trapped,” Mohammad said in a late Monday telephone interview.

 “They've left their homes and everything they have behind, and they can't get into Turkey.” The UN's humanitarian aid agency OCHA said on Monday that eight informal camps on the Syrian side of the border were at “full capacity.” AFP

**BONDED LABOURERS**

**CID RESCUES 15 BONDED LABOURERS**

BE GALURU: The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and an NGO rescued 15 bonded labourers from a sugarcane field in Bagalkot district, north Karnataka, on Monday. The rescued workers included four boys, four girls and an eight-month-old infant.

Investigation revealed the victims are from Madhya Pradesh and a middleman contacted them in mid-2015, saying he could get them dailywage work. First, they were taken to construction sites in Maharashtra.

"After construction was over, the same middleman promised them a monthly salary of Rs 20,000 for the group and brought them to Petlur village in Bagalkot district.Though they toiled in the sugarcane fields from dawn to dusk, they were not paid at all," said Sonia Narang, DIGCID, who led the operation.

All the rescued persons were sent to Madhya Pradesh.CID police arrested landowners Lakshman Gouda Patil and Shankarappa Basappa Yadahalli, both around 50, and residents of Petlur as well as agent Purushottam Rohidas Kokate.

Police are looking for the prime accused, the man who brought the workers from Madhya Pradesh.

Sonia said one of the victims managed to call his father, saying they had been illegally detained. "The father approached Jan Sahas, an NGO in Madhya Pradesh. Jan Sahas and the International Justice Mission approached us with the complaint," CID police said.

CID-DG Kishore Chandra told TOI he formed a team led by Sonia. "One batch visited the village and confirmed the confinement. We rushed rescue teams to the sugracane field on Monday ," she said, adding, "They were given meagre amount of food.When they asked for their wages, the accused would beat them," she said.

Esther Daniel, director, International Justice Mission, said: "Under Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code, human trafficking can attract a minimum sentence of seven years. The Bagalkot rescue shows us what is possible when there is a convergent approach to such crimes."

**106 CHENCHUS FREED FROM BONDED LABOUR**

MAHBUBNAGAR: More than one hundred Chenchu tribals, including children, serving as bonded labour for the past eight years, were rescued here in the district on Thursday. One hundred and six members of the Chenchu tribe were freed from the clutches of their creditors at Amravai village of Kollapur mandal. Forty six of those rescued are minors, officials said.

All these tribals, uneducated and lured to work as fishermen by contractors, come from the Nallamala forests, their traditional home. Their plight was first noticed when the National Adivasi Solidarity Council (NASC) came across this group of indentured labourers while on a study of Chenchu groups in the Nallamala region.

None of the contractors could be found in the village when officials visited Amravai after receiving information about the bonded labour. The Nagarkurnool revenue divisional officer Devender Reddy told TOI that on Thursday, the officials did an enumeration of the tribals and counselled them.

He said the Chenchus were living in abysmal conditions and were not being paid wages for catching fish in the backwaters of the Srisailam reservoir on Krishna river, on whose banks Amravai is located. "They catch fish for the contractors for the entire year as fishing is good in the reservoir's backwaters. The boats they are forced to use are small, country made and not very safe," he said. The Chenchus work from 6 am to 11 am and then again from 3 pm to 6 pm and the fish they harvest, are exported to different parts of the country including Kolkata and Visakhapatnam.

Officials who visited the village said that the tribals were lured to work about eight years ago by the contractors who gave them loans ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 60,000 per family. S Pentaiah, one of the tribals, said that nearly 40 families were engaged in the fishing activity. "We have been doing this for the past eight years," he said. The contractors were engaged by a private fishing company, he said.

NASC representatives, who accompanied the officials to Amravai, said that in addition to the loans that were given, the Chenchus were also provided fishing nets and food for their families. Matthew Joji, a coordinator with NASC told TOI that the tribals were being paid a paltry Rs 10 to Rs 80 per kg of fish which was then being sold by the contractors at Rs 200 or more a kg. "The children have no access to education and are also forced to go on the river for fishing," said Vasudev, another NASC member.

At the end of the day, the officials said that for the time being, the Chenchus would remain at Amravai before arrangements are made for their rehabilitation.

**SKILL EDUCATION**

**INTERNATIONAL SKILL SUMMIT TO BEGIN ON FRIDAY**

Thiruvananthapuram: The second edition of international skills summit - Nypunyam 2016 - will feature a skills competition on the lines of WorldSkills Competition held in Brazil in 2014. Titled Skill Fiesta, the event will see the culmination of a three-tier competition to find young talents in vocational and technical expertise.

The three day summit, organized by labour and skills department, will begin on Friday.

More than 2,000 contestants participated in the zonal-levels. A total of 72 finalists will vie for the winner's spot in 12 different trades - welding, plumbing, catering and restaurant service, mobile robotics, fashion technology , fitter, electrical, auto-mobile technology , bakery and confectionery , carpentry , computeraided design and electronics - in the finale.

Eminent personalities including CEO and MD of IL & FS Education and Technology RCM Reddy , CEO of National Skill Development Corporation Jayant Krishna, corporate leaders, foreign dignitaries and ministers from other states will take part in the skill summit.

﻿

**CONVICTS TO GET SKILLS TRAINING**

Ahmedabad: For the first time, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) set up under the Union Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship, has introduced training in 71 courses for con victs in jails across the country.

The programme was inaugurated in Ahmedabad Central jail on January 26 by Additional DGP (Prisons) T S Bisht and Jail Superintendent Sunil Joshi. It will be available only to those convicted of non-serious offences, covicts scheduled for release within 2-3 years and those who are in the age group of 18 to 40 years.

In the first phase, the programme will be introduced for convicts in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot central jails and then will be extended to the remaining 20 jails of sta te. Jail officials said 45 convicts had been enrolled in the first batch for training in computer hardware repair. Their training will start shortly . "Electric wireman, plumbing, computer hardware repairing and computer data entry will be included in the 71 training courses," said a jail official. Additional DGP Bisht said the aim of organizing such training courses is to help convicts earn a living after they are out of jail. "We will give them certificates which will help them get jobs. They can also get monetary assistance to start businesses of their own," said Bisht.

**INDIA’S JOBS CRISIS: HERE’S A PLAN FOR CREATING 50 MILLION QUALITY JOBS IN THE NEXT DECADE**

When a major emerging economy grows significantly you would expect job growth to follow closely.

Sadly this is not the case for India. Between 2005 and 2012, India’s GDP growth was 54% but its net job growth was only 3%. There were only about 15 million net new jobs.

This giant disconnect will worsen in the coming decade. Assuming 7-8% annual growth, 2025 will see GDP double. India will add over 80 million net new job seekers. But at current rates only 30 million net new jobs – mostly informal, and low-wage ones – will be created.

India should therefore prioritise policies that link GDP growth with job growth. Recent initiatives like ‘Startup India’ and ‘Skill India’ are crucial, but insufficient to achieve this vision. I’d like to propose six key strategies to fill the gap of 50 million jobs in the next 10 years, especially quality jobs that pay Rs 15,000 per month or more.

Strategy 1: Appoint a National Jobs Adviser to the Prime Minister in the PMO.

The Adviser would align job growth planning with economic planning; ensure integration of the multiple but siloed jobrelated policies across central ministries, as well as with the states; enable sharing of best practices between states, and provide a liaison between government and the private sector. Most importantly, the Adviser would monitor actual outcomes for quick mid-course policy corrections as needed.

Strategy 2: Create a vast, integrated, national ecosystem for entrepreneurship education, mentoring and support. There is a myth that entrepreneurs are born, not created. I am a first generation entrepreneur, with no role model for entrepreneurship in my immediate or extended family. Entrepreneurship is about state of mind, and about having access to an ecosystem in which startup and growth ideas can be explored, not snuffed out; about education in the basics of startups and small business growth; about access to mentors, innovation funding, angel investors and other sources of capital and support.

Over the last decade, Wadhwani Foundation has established the National Entrepreneurship Network (WF-NEN) to provide entrepreneurship education at 500 colleges and universities, and training 2,000 faculty to teach 1,00,000 students annually. This needs to be made ubiquitous, with an expansion of at least 10 times.

Strategy 3: Make it easy for startups.

To actively contribute to India’s growth trajectory, we need a million startups with growth potential, with many of these outside the tech sector. ‘Startup India’ addresses many but not all the needs of entrepreneurs. Access to a national network of mentors and angel investors; and easy access to government procurement opportunities with simplified rules are essential. Policies that incentivise private investors to provide long-term equity and debt capital to startups are critical.

Strategy 4: Enable growth in existing Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

While startups (especially digital startups) are glamorous, SMEs are the growth backbone of any nation and primary drivers of job growth. In India, 70% of the job growth during 2005-12 came from SMEs with 6 plus employees. Yet India’s policies favour micro-enterprises, defined as businesses with investment of less than Rs 25 lakh, with 1-6 employees typically, which do not drive job growth because they are neither able to invest in capital equipment nor be competitively productive.

India’s archaic classifications of micro, small and medium businesses, based on invested capital, need to be scrapped and policies reimagined to encourage every business to grow to become a medium business, or larger, creating a more dynamic economy and more jobs.

The government has defined 1,100 “modern industrial clusters” but these need to be segmented based on job growth potential and adequate infrastructure investments made accordingly. We need to establish SME ecosystems for high-value manufacturing, for example to support defence and railways. We need to attract long-term investors to invest in SMEs, not just startups.

Strategy 5: Launch a major Startup & Small Business Innovation Initiative (SSBI). Some 40 years ago, the US launched ‘Small Business Innovation & Research’ initiative wherein various government departments allocate funding for innovation by SMEs, selected through an open, competitive process. This has helped create thousands of new companies and millions of new, quality jobs.

We need a similar initiative in India, based of course on India’s priorities and needs. For instance, each of the major ministries could fund 500-1,000 innovation grants annually, of Rs 25 lakh to Rs 1 crore each, to SMEs selected through an open, competitive process managed by one or more major innovation-centric universities like the IITs.

Strategy 6: Create a technology platform that enables startup and SME growth. This would provide the technology and knowledge infrastructure that powers all of the proposed startup and SME initiatives: enable digital/ mobile delivery of interactive curriculum and content to entrepreneurs, innovators; and connect them to mentors, angel investors and other key ecosystem participants. New business ideas, business plans, innovation grants, market data could all be easily accessed and exchanged on this platform; creating data for research and policy analysis.

These are exciting times for India – with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to translate our demographic dividend into economic leadership. But it can only happen if India creates tens of millions of quality job opportunities and skills its youth to take advantage of them.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**AGRICULTURE IN VIDARBHA, MARATHWADA AT HIGH RISK TO CLIMATE CHANGE: REPORT**

State working with Centre for bringing changes in crop patterns, modifying investments.

The districts of Marathwada and Vidarbha witnessing maximum farmer suicides in Maharashtra face higher risk to climate change. A report by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) recommends the state government to initiate policies and measures to adapt to climate changes that would be detrimental to the agro-sector in 14 districts affected by severe drought across Vidarbha and Marathwada.

According to the Central Research Institute for Dryland Farming, “The districts in Marathwada and Vidarbha face very high risk to climate change. Studies warn that if no action is taken, financial implications on account of damages due to climate change would be massive. Mumbai alone can incur financial damages of as much as Rs 2 trillion due to climate change-related damages.”

CRIDA has also mapped the vulnerability atlas of India, a collection of maps showing parts of India vulnerable to natural disasters.

At least 80 per cent of the total area under agriculture cultivation is rainfed in Maharashtra. “Climate change was never factored in our policy-making or annual state budget. Now, for the first time in 2014-15, unseasonal hailstorm and changing rain patterns extending to longer dry spells have come as an eye opener to policymakers in the state,” said sources in the agriculture and irrigation ministry.

Out of the total 355 talukas in the state, 226 talukas received deficiant rain. While 112 talukas received normal rainfall, only 17 talukas received excess rainfall.

According to officials, a study done by TERI has identified Maharashtra as one of the most vulnerable states in India. Based on biophysical, social and technological indicators, the state has low “adaptive capacity” to climate change, meaning that it has little potential to respond successfully to climate variability and change, including adjustments in resources and technologies.

The state falls in the zone of high to very high climate sensitivity, with a widespread dependence on agriculture.

The region is also interpreted as an area of “double exposure” where globalisation and climate change pose simultaneous challenges to the agriculture sector.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, along with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), has sought funds to undertake adaption and mitigation measures to tackle climate change.

The ministry has approved a proposal submitted by the state government related to challenges in agriculture growth due to climate change.Apart from the “Jalyukt Shivar” water conservation project, the government has emphasised on crop pattern changes and promoting horticulture.

Water management has been accorded the highest priority and the government is pushing for the adoption of new technologies to cope with the shortage in rainfall.

The policy also includes agriculture practices to improve soil fertility. Higher yield and lower input cost is being modelled to help farmers.

**SPSC VEEF INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL - VELANKANNI**

**SPECIAL ORIENTATION AND COACHING ON COMPETITIVE EXAM**

SPSC VEEF Coaching Centre conducted Special Orientation to motivate the students who are from the rural remote villages to take part in the competitive exam for 2 Days from 29-12-2015 to 30-01-2015 and the main focus has given on VAO Exam.

20 Students were participated actively and they came to know the techniques on how to attend the questions, Easy scoring ways and Time Management.

The well experienced Trainers Mr. S. Pandian, Section Officer, Secretariat, Tamil Nadu, Dr.Naganadhan; Government Higher Secondary School, Tanjore, Mr. RajaRajan, Government Higher Secondary School, Nagapattinam and Mr.Sengutuvan, Government Higher Secondary School, Nagore handled the sessions. Main focus was given based on the participant’s expectation where they can score more marks especially on Maths, Science and Tamil.

The training sessions gave lots of motivation and inputs to the participants. They were inspired by the quotes of trainers that “If no today then it won’t be ever. A long journey starts with small steps. All steps are taken by us only. So set a goal and move towards it. Success is yours. ”

The trainers appreciated the interest and active participation of the students thereby motivating them to do well in the exams.

**BUILDING BRIDGES:**

**INTERACTION WITH MALAYSIAN STUDENTS**

On February 4th 2016 a group of 17 students from University of Science, Malaysia visited Dindigul to understand the Peace Trust’s programmes. A meeting was organized in the name of “The intercultural innovation knowledge exchange Malaysia-India 2016” for the students and all the programme heads of Peace Trust has presented their programmes. The meeting started at 10.30 am on 4th February at Peace College of Education, Mr. Devadayan, Vice Principal of Peace College of Education welcomed the participants. Dr. J Paul Baskar, Chairman and Principal Peace College of Education delivered presidential address. In his speech he spoke about Malaysian Tamil people and their culture. He recollected his experiences with the Malaysian writers and social activists. Tamil culture and language can boast of thousands of years of glorious history and legacy. Malaysian Tamil People have been playing major role in protecting the Tamil language and culture and made it continue to remain throbbing and vibrant.

Mr. B. Walter Kennedy, Natural Resource Management Expert has explained about the climate change on Tamil Nadu’s Natural Resource and Peace Trust’s role in addressing the issue. He also shared the Peace Trust’s major programmes implemented in the dry belts of Dindigul district to address the climate change effects, especially soil and water conservation measures adapted under the watershed programmes. He also shared about the Peace Trust’s role in national environment awareness campaign which focused on the climate change awareness among various target groups in the 17 southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Jeyaseelan, Asst Professor, Peace College of Education has spoken about quality teacher education experience. He explained in detail about the new curriculum of two years B. Ed programme which includes Human Rights Education and Environment Education. The new syllabus will improve the quality of the education in the TamilNadu State.

Mr. Ruba Balan Coordinator Skill for Freedom has explained about youth employability. Skill for freedom project and Industrial schools activity related to youth employment.

Mr. Srinivasan Project Manager gave a presentation on the measures taken to improve the conditions of Young Workers in cotton mills. He showed the power point presentation related to the project.

Ms. Nivashini – student of the University of Science, Malaysia presented the PPT about Malaysian education system and school curriculum. Mr. Kevin Jason has shared the culture and food of Malaysian. Mr.Vinod has explained about the universities and its qualities.

Then Mr.Kathiravan Information Coordinator of Pasumai Community Radio has interviewed all Malaysian students. Mr. Ramendhiran has expressed his gratitude to Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman. Both Malaysian delegates and Peace Trust representatives exchanged Shawls and Momentum.

Mrs. Josephine Mercy, Principal, Peace Industrial School proposed a vote of thanks.

In afternoon session all Malaysian students were engaged with Pasumai FM Radio members and participated in the *Ungalai Thedi* Pasumai FM Programme. All Malaysian delegates enjoyed the programmes and participated in an enthusiastic way and they also enjoyed the famous Dindigul Thalapakatti Briyani.

**NEW VICE CHANCELLOR OF TAMILNADU TEACHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY**

****Dr. S. Thangasamy a well known educationist hails from Theni District and living in Chinnalapatty village near Dindigul for four decade has been chosen as a Vice Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Teacher Education University, Chennai which coordinates with 650 plus Colleges of Teacher Education in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. He had been a long term well wisher of Peace Trust and supported its several child rights and educational activities. He guided Dr.J.Paul Baskar for his M.Phil research through Madurai Kamaraj University in nineties and later guided him in setting up educational institution.

Dr. S. Thangasamy (12-05-1954) an accomplished educationist, commonly known in his pen name as “Kokila Thangasamy” hails from an Agricultural family “Kokilapuram” village of Cumbam Valley, Theni District and he is the first Ph.D awardee in Education from his Community.

Dr. S. Thangasamy is a prolific and creative writer, a good orator, an inspiring teacher and an efficient team leader committing his whole life to promotion of teaching, learning, research and extension activities from primary education level to higher education level. Dr. S. Thangasamy is the Professor and Former Director at the Centre for Educational Research established in Madurai Kamaraj University in 2008 with a view to undertaking issue-based educational researches enabling the Govt. of Tamil Nadu to formulate educational policies from primary level to higher education level.

Dr. Thangasamy is creative and innovative writer committed to bringing out innovations in Teacher Education with a focus on the areas such as professional development of teachers, effective teaching & learning process, motivating teachers, educational psychology, educational research, and English language teaching. He has authored nearly 40 books and edited 5 monographs on education.

“Preparing Locally Competent and Globally Competitive Teachers” is his great vision and he considers this task as a new imperative for the Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai. How to prepare our children to live successfully in this world has become a challenging question for education. Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai will meet this future-oriented challenge during his tenure. Peace Trust wishes him a long and fruitful tenure as Vice Chancellor.

**OPPORTUNITIES IN UAE & GCC**

On 10th February Peace Trust had an opportunity to attend the International Business Forum held at Hotel Taj Gateway, Madurai along with other prominent entrepreneur, educationist, skills training providers of South TamilNadu. Dr.J.Paul Baskar Chairman Peace Trust attended the gathering.

The meeting hosted by Federation of Indian Export Organization(FIEO) Ministry of Commerce, Govt of India. Mr.Unnikrishnan, Joint Deputy Director General of FIEO, Mr.Anoop Warrior, Mr.Joseph were explaining the opportunities in UAE and GCC countries through SAIF Zone at Sharjah.

His Excellency Raed A.Bukhatir, Deputy Commercial Director, Govt of Sharjah invited South TamilNadu manufactures, Educational service providers on Skills & Teacher Education to open up Business in Sharjah Free Zone, Qualified Teachers, Skilled Workers, Doctors, Engineers are needed in UAE & GCC.

My long term friend and M.Phil classmate Mr.Jawaharlal, Former Principal of a popular Educational Institution Bright Riders School at Al Gharbio in AbuDhabi was with me and shared his ideas on and off the dias.