**SKILLS FOR FREEDOM**

**Newsletter from India**

 **No: 13 May: 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.

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**MIGRANTS**

**ITALY BRACED FOR MIGRANT SQUEEZE**

ROME: Italy has asked local authorities to find an additional 15,000 beds for asylum seekers as fears mount that it could be squeezed between a surge in new arrivals from Libya and its neighbors tightening their borders.

Officials stress there is no evidence of a much-predicted major surge in the number of people seeking access to Europe via Libya and Italy as a result of moves to cut off the influx from Turkey via the Greek islands.

But the numbers are running at a higher level than last year, when an unprecedented 170,000 migrants landed at Italy's southern ports.

And there is increasing apprehension about the possibility of many more non-Libyan nationals opting to flee the country, which has been plagued by instability since the 2011 uprising that ousted longtime ruler Moamer Kadhafi.

A total of 25,816 people have arrived on people-smugglers' boats from Libya so far this year, according to the UN refugee agency and the latest information from the Italian coastguard.

This represents around 7,000 more than at the same time last year but officials caution prudence in interpreting the figures.

Favorable weather and sea conditions may have brought forward planned journeys rather than demand for places on boats having increased.

Paolo Serra, the Italian general who acts as military adviser to the UN's Libya envoy Martin Kobler, warned Thursday that immigrants living in Libya would head for Italy in large numbers if the country is not stabilized.

"If we do not intervene there could be 250,000 arrivals (in Italy) by the end of 2016," the officer told Italian broadcaster RAI.

Italy has long relied on migrants quickly passing through its territory to ease the burden of processing the huge numbers it has to deal with (350,000 since the start of 2014).

But the crisis engulfing the whole of Europe has put pressure on the open borders required for this pressure valve to operate.

France briefly closed its coastal border with Italy last year and Austria is now threatening tight controls at the Brenner Pass, which links it to Italy in the Alps. Several regions in Italy have warned their ability to accommodate new arrivals is at breaking point and a revolt last year saw one refuse to take any more and others threaten similar measures, although they backed down in the end.

Italy was hosting 106,000 asylum seekers in March, up from 67,000 a year earlier and 29,000 in March 2014. European Council President Donald Tusk on Wednesday said the EU had to be prepared to step in to help Italy, and potentially Malta, if the exodus from Libya accelerates.

"The numbers of would-be migrants in Libya are alarming," Tusk said. "We must be prepared to help and show solidarity to Malta and Italy, should they request it."

**3 BOOKED FOR DEATH OF MIGRANT WORKER**

Kochi: Three civil engineers of Cochin University of Science and Technology (Cusat) have been booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder by Kalamassery police for the accidental death of a migrant laborer.

The police have booked an assistant executive engineer, an assistant engineer and an overseer of the work site in the list of accused for negligence that led to the accident.

They have been booked under Section 304 A of IPC for causing death by negligence. Kalamassery additional sub-inspector R Ratheesh, investigating officer of the case, said that the faculty should have ensured safety measures in the construction site where the accident took place.

The probe by the police found that the mini-crane, which was used for lifting construction materials to the terrace of the three-storeyed legal studies department building was not properly fitted.

"We had requested the registrar of Cusat to give the name of the engineers from the university's engineering wing that was in charge of the work. As per the list given, three of the faculty - an assistant executive engineer, an assistant engineer and an overseer - were in charge of the work. They were ought to visit the work site every day and ensure safety measures," said Ratheesh.

On Tuesday, the police had arrested Maideen Kunju, the man who had taken contract to carry out the construction work from the university.

Palanivel (51) from Puducherry was killed after the mini-crane fell on him. Site supervisor Ratheesh (32) of Tripunithura was seriously injured.

ASI Ratheesh said that the injured site supervisor is recovering at a private hospital. "We are yet to record the statement of the site supervisor who worked under Maideen Kunj. His statement will be recorded once his condition is improved. We may include him in the list of accused," said the officer.

**CENTRE PLANS RENTAL HOUSING FOR MIGRANTS**

NEW DELHI: Considering that a sizeable chunk of migrant population in cities either don't want to buy or can't purchase a house, the government has prepared a policy to increase formal rental housing stock. These will be in the form of hostels, paying guest accommodations and dormitories under the Social Rental Housing (SRH) scheme.

The scheme aimed at helping poor and labourers besides those, who come to stay in urban areas for short periods, will get direct support from both Centre and state governments besides market driven rental housing. The urban housing ministry is finalizing the proposal of National Rental Housing Policy.

Sources said housing minister M Venkaiah Naidu has asked officials to firm up specific and innovative rental housing models. The proposal also provisions for issuing rental housing vouchers for the needy and identified sections of the urban poor for paying rent either in whole or in part. This would be decided by respective state governments.

**MUMBAI PAPER CLIP: DESPITE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES, MIGRANTS FACE SEVERE HURDLES AS THEY SEEK TO RELOCATE**

The study says that migrants purporting to be highly skilled enjoy a substantial advantage over migrants described as low-skilled, yet this skill premium is concentrated among low-income respondents.

Rapid urbanization is one of the major challenges for the developing world. The influx of internal migrants to cities often leads to resistance from native residents, manifested in labour-market discrimination, political nativism and even violence. A study on “The Majority-Minority Divide in Attitudes Toward Internal Migration: Evidence from Mumbai” conducted by Yale University states that natives judge non-co ethnic migrants endowed with undesirable skill sets more harshly than they would otherwise identical co ethnic migrants.

The study says that migrants purporting to be highly skilled enjoy a substantial advantage over migrants described as low-skilled, yet this skill premium is concentrated among low-income respondents. It also says that considerations of material self-interest and co-ethnicity interact in shaping attitudes over internal migration, but only among natives belonging to the minority ethnic community. The study says this asymmetry lies in the concept of safety in numbers. “Minorities facing socio-economic deprivation and impediments to representation in the political arena view in-migration by co-ethnics as a means of boosting their demographic and electoral weight in the city,” the reports say. Despite constitutional guarantees of the free movement of labour, in practice migrants face severe hurdles as they seek to relocate. In this sense, Mumbai is representative of a large set of cases in the global south — from Sao Paulo; appears that majority-group citizens in Mumbai perceive migrants in a similar fashion. The study says that for low-income respondents, low-skilled migration evokes especially strong and negative reactions, conceivably because of the dual, reinforcing perceptions of heightened job competition and increased pressure on public finances. Meanwhile, high-income respondents appear unresponsive to migrant skill level. “We infer that high-income respondents give a black mark to poorer migrants owing to the perceived fiscal burden of mass low-skill migration; but, for these respondents, high-skilled migrants evoke equal antipathy due to the labor market-threat they pose,” the report says.

**84 MIGRANTS STILL MISSING AFTER BOAT SINKS OFF LIBYA**

"According to testimonies gathered by IOM in Lampedusa 84 people went missing," said IOM spokesman Flavio Di Giacomo on his Twitter feed.

Eighty-four migrants are still missing after an inflatable craft sank off the coast of Libya, according to survivors cited by the International Organization for Migrantion (IOM) on Saturday. Twenty-six people were rescued from the boat which sank Friday, and were questioned overnight. “According to testimonies gathered by IOM in Lampedusa 84 people went missing,” said IOM spokesman Flavio Di Giacomo on his Twitter feed.

**PANAMA BEGINS MORE FLIGHTS OF CUBAN MIGRANTS TO MEXICO**

Panama has agreed to transfer 3,800 Cubans hoping to reach the United States to a town in northern Mexico. The Cubans have been stranded in Panama for months, hoping to reach the US under a decades-old law which gives them privileged entry and a fast-track to residency.

Officials in Panama said daily flights to Ciudad Juarez would begin on Monday. Panama had organised some flights in March but had insisted the operation would not be repeated. The migrants have been told they have to pay for the flights themselves.

Panamanian newspaper reports said long queues had formed at banks and money transfer shops near government migrant shelters in Chiriqui province as Cubans waited to withdraw cash sent by relatives in the United States to buy their tickets.

Last year Costa Rica and Nicaragua, which lie to the north of Panama, closed their borders to Cubans trying to head north overland.

The move created a new bottleneck in Panama for the migrants who fly to South American countries, and then walk or take buses through Central America north towards the US.

A Cuban remains in a shelter in Paso canoes, 590 km west of San Jose, on the border with Panama on April 14, 2016.

Between January and March, Costa Rica provided flights for thousands of Cubans to El Salvador and Mexico to clear a backlog of migrants who had become stuck by Nicaragua's border closure.

Panama followed suit by organizing flights in March to Ciudad Juarez for 1,300 Cubans. Officials at the time insisted the operation would not be repeated.

But since then thousands more have arrived in Panama. The exodus was prompted by President Obama's announcement in December 2014 that the US and Cuba would move towards restoring diplomatic ties.

It sparked a wave of rumors in Cuba that US immigration policy regarding Cubans would change soon - leading many migrants to risk the journey through Central America.

For decades, Cuban migrants have enjoyed special privileges. The so-called "wet foot, dry foot" policy allows Cubans preferential treatment when they reach US soil.

**ONE HELD, HUNT ON TO NAB FOUR OTHERS WHO ‘TORTURED’ ASSAM MIGRANT WORKER IN KOTTAYAM**

Chingavanam SHO M S Shibu said the post-mortem report showed that Kailash had sustained 56 bruises due to the mob attack.

One person has been arrested and the search is on to nab four others in connection with the death of a migrant worker from Assam in Kottayam last Wednesday. Kailash Jyoti Borah (29) died at Chingavanam after a mob allegedly mistook him for a thief, tied him up and left him on the road in sweltering heat for over two hours. Chingavanam SHO M S Shibu said the post-mortem report showed that Kailash had sustained 56 bruises due to the mob attack. “We have arrested one person named Varghese, who was remanded in judicial custody. Search is on for four others who had tortured him. Only after arresting them, we will be able to ascertain how many persons had attacked the migrant worker,’’ he said. The SHO also said the post-mortem report showed that Kailash had turned restless as he was hungry and thirsty. He apparently consumed little food during the last two days of his journey from Assam to Kerala. “His stomach had only 10 per cent fluids,” he said. Kailash had reached Kottayam from Assam Wednesday morning on his first trip to Kerala in search of a job. After reaching Kottayam railway station, Kailash and three others had boarded a bus to a village where they were promised jobs. However, he got separated from his friends. Hours later, he was seen walking along a railway track at Malakunnam near Chingavanam in Kottayam district. Police said Kailash had tried to barge into almost four to five houses in the area, but was chased away. People, who mistook him for a thief, chased Kailash till he collapsed in front of a temple. He was then tortured and left under the scorching sun. Many villagers who encountered Kailash said they could not understand what he said. “He might have sought water,” said a local woman. According to an eyewitness, more than 50 people watched, yet no one helped Kailash as he struggled to free himself in his final moments.

**BONDED LABOUR**

**DELHI GOVT TEAM FREES 45 BONDED LABOURERS FROM CONSTRUCTION SITE**

The labourers, all from the Madiga community, were taken back to Andhra Pradesh, where they will be admitted to rehabilitation facilities, said officials.

Forty-five bonded labourers were rescued from a DDA flats construction site in Narela Friday. After receiving information from the Bandhua Mukti Morcha, an organisation that works for the rehabilitation of bonded labourers, a team from the Delhi government’s labour department and other officials surveyed the construction site and found 45 labourers working at the site were bonded labourers brought from Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh. The labourers, all from the Madiga community, were taken back to Andhra Pradesh, where they will be admitted to rehabilitation facilities, said officials.

The investigation team found the contractor who had brought the 45 labourers to Delhi and filed an FIR against him and the company for having brought the workers here on the payment of an advance, after which none of them was allegedly given their daily wages regularly. According to Nirmal Gorana of the Bandhua Mukti Morcha, “According to a survey conducted by the previous government of Delhi, 70 per cent of labour in Delhi is bonded labour. Despite having constituted a team to conduct this survey, no action was taken to bring an end to this practice that is in violation of the Bonded Labour Act, 1976. Gurvaiah, 18, was brought to Delhi two years ago and has since been working here for various companies at minimum wages and often inconsistent rates. “I was brought here two years ago. My family was offered Rs 15,000 if I agreed to work in Delhi. We needed the money for my father’s treatment. I have no idea whether he has been treated or not because I have not been able to return to my village. I am paid between Rs 300 and 400 per day for nearly 12 hours of work.” He said they were given no medical attention for injuries while working. His wife, Sunita was paid a lower amount and often not paid at all, he added.

**DICTUM & DIASPORA | INDIA’S NOT SO HIDDEN SHAME: CHILD SLAVERY AND BONDED LABOUR**

The Indian political class is not seized with the great questions of social justice such as alleviation of poverty, equality of genders, freedom from hunger, corruption, child labour and violence against women.

Slavery is legally banned. But millions of India’s children live and work in slave labour conditions — bonded labour, sex trafficking, child labour, domestic ‘help’ servitude and many other forms. According to the latest official public figures available there are at least 14 million children living under slavery. If one did a more honest counting and reporting, this number would surely jump to twice that – perhaps closer to 30 million. The basic domestic laws outlawing children working in hazardous occupations and even as domestic help or in roadside establishments have been on the books for many years. But according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) millions of children continue to be employed as domestic labour including over a hundred thousand of them in the national capital itself. Over 12 million children between the ages of five and 14 continue to work in dangerous occupations such as construction, manufacturing of beedis, bangles and fireworks. This is so, despite the ILO’s worst forms of child labour convention (No.182) banning exploitative forms of child labour including trafficking, slavery and hazardous employment.

Many middle class as well as rich Indians utilize child labour when it is illegal, immoral and unconscionable. Don’t tell me they are doing a favor to the destitute who will starve without this slave labour. They must stop the inhuman, bonded and slave child labour and instead employ the parents and guardians of these helpless children, pay them decent wages for appropriate and regular working hours, overtime pay, statutory holidays and medical benefits. That will free the children to go to school and have decent lives. The shameful statistics of bonded and enslaved children in hazardous or otherwise legally prohibited occupations betray the horrible legacy of the last 68 years of delinquent and corrupt politicians and other public servants most of whom have been breathlessly lining their own pockets while sermonizing about ordinary Indians’ duties to the country. I wonder how any of them go to sleep at night knowing millions of Indian children – their children’s and grandchildren’s contemporaries – continue to be exploited and often sexually abused. Why has India not yet signed the ILO convention no.182? Why has it squandered the almost seven decades of independence without tackling poverty, hunger and slave child labour? Why have Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha been basically silent over child slavery, poverty and hunger in the country? Why the silence of the state legislatures over slave/bonded child labour, poverty and hunger? The Indian political class is not seized with the great questions of social justice such as alleviation of poverty, equality of genders, freedom from hunger, corruption, child labour and violence against women. Unless some drastic changes take place the next seven decades may go as badly as the last seven for the ordinary Indians. History will record that many NGOs and Indians have worked tirelessly to tackle India’s great shame of bonded/slave and domestic child labour, hunger and poverty while the midget minds of the Indian political and ruling classes remain mired in their petty quarrels. The bestowal of the Nobel for Peace on the much-deserving Kailash Satyarthi was the severest possible indictment of India on the world stage for the continuing child labour and slavery in the country. Even that stern international rebuke for the dereliction of their duty to the nation hasn’t awakened the slumbering souls of the political class numbed by power and corruption.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

**330,000,000 PEOPLE DROUGHT HIT IN INDIA**

NEW DELHI: A week after the courts made an example of the Indian Premier League to forcibly turn the country’s head to the drought ravaging large parts of middle India, the Centre has placed the bald figures before the Supreme Court. The numbers are staggering.

A total of 33 crore people are affected by the drought. That’s a quarter of the population of India. 2,55,923 villages. 254 districts. 10 states. The figures were on Tuesday supplied by additional solicitor-general (ASG) P A Narasimha to a Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice M B Lokur. The Bench was hearing a petition filed by the NGO Swaraj Abhiyan which states that not enough attention is being given to a drought that has enveloped parts of 12 states: UP, Karnataka, MP, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Haryana and Chhattisgarh.

And if April is the cruelest month, what might May be? Ninety-one reservoirs have only 23 per cent of their capacity left and the figure is likely to dwindle further when the summer peaks next month. At this time in 2012, India’s reservoirs still carried 28 per cent of their capacity. In 2009, there was 26 per cent remaining.

India faced a similar situation several times in the last 15 years. In 2002, 383 districts in 17 states were affected by a drought. In 2004, 223 districts in nine states suffered. In 2009, 388 districts in 15 states were hit. So having seen it all before, the Bench asked, why was the Centre sleeping over the situation for so many months and not sharing rainfall data with the states so that mitigating arrangements could be made.

 

The ASG’s spin on the numbers was that if an area is declared as drought-affected, it does not mean that its entire population is affected. For, not all are farmers. Nor are they all engaged in agriculture-related occupations. As per Central Statistics Office estimates, the share of agriculture and allied sectors (including agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery) was 15.35 per cent of the Gross Value Added during 2015–16 at 2011–12 prices. Over 58 per cent of rural households depend on agriculture.

The Bench asked the ASG why modern technology is not being used to assess the situation. “Between June and September, if rainfall is less than 75 per cent, the Centre should have told the states to be alert. In November and December, satellite information would confirm whether rainfall has been scanty. In January and February, you can come to conclusion whether crops have failed and you can ask the states to declare a drought. For mitigation purposes, your activity will start in August.”

**Maha Cap on Borewell Depth**

The Maharashtra government has banned digging of borewells below 200 feet due to acute water crisis in the State. Meanwhile, in Marathwada, only 3 per cent of water is left in dams in the parched region, officials have said.

**WATER WILL CONTINUE TO BE SCARCE**

Updated: April 26, 2016 / The HinduA focus on minor irrigation projects and drip irrigation could go a long way in coping with frequent crises.

The incidence of drought can no longer be considered a rare event. Climate change has quickened the occurrence of extreme events such as drought, floods and cyclones in different parts of India. It is alarming that the frequency and severity of such extreme events has increased in recent decades. India has experienced numerous drought years in the past, but the frequent recurrence after 1988 — in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2015 — is highly worrisome. It causes enormous hardships to resource-poor farmers, who are forced to fend themselves through sale of assets and migration to urban areas. Though the impact of drought varies across regions, it invariably affects human, livestock and natural resources.

Severe drought conditions are being experienced in some parts of the country this year as well. The Union government has already declared that the country is grappling with severe drought conditions which are estimated to have affected a sizeable population, nearly 330 million people. More than 50 per cent of the districts across the country have had rainfall deficit, many in tandem with high temperatures of above 45 degrees Celsius. The most severely affected States include Maharashtra, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Telangana. Given the current scenario, the government has initiated drought relief programmes to compensate crop losses, encourage judicious use of groundwater, and has sent ‘water trains’ to the highly water-scarce areas besides extending financial help to the States to cope with the emerging crisis.

As much as these relief measures are essential to ease the drinking water shortage, the problem is deep-rooted and has important implications for the agricultural sector that provides livelihood to almost 75 per cent of the population directly and indirectly. Drought conditions would severely affect the production and the productivity of key crops viz. wheat and rice, which contribute substantially to India’s food basket. In a situation of a continuous decline in the level of water tables and low capacity of water reservoirs, irrigation would contribute little to help in the drought conditions.

**Scaling up irrigated area**

Government statistics have hardly shown any increase in the total net irrigated area, which has been hovering around 63 million hectares and constitutes only 45 per cent of the total area sown in the country. Some improvement in irrigation intensity has taken place in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in recent years. But it appears to be insignificant in view of a massive increase in real public investment in major, medium and minor irrigation from Rs.235 billion in 2004-05 to Rs.309 billion in 2013-14. While the capital expenditure in major projects increased by 3.5 times, the investment in minor irrigation increased by 2.5 times only. A virtually stagnancy in irrigated area — especially of the area under canal irrigation — raises concerns about the efficiency of the ongoing investments and the quantum of investment that is further required to scale up area under irrigation.

A study carried out by International Food Policy Research Institute shows a sharp drop in the marginal returns from additional public investment in major and medium irrigation from 1.41 per cent during the nineties to 0.12 per cent when expenditure incurred during the 2000s is also considered. Evidence also shows that the ratio of irrigation potential created from public expenditure is higher for minor irrigation projects than medium and large irrigation projects. Unfortunately, minor irrigation projects have received only scant attention from policymakers over time. Minor irrigation structures play a significant role in recharging of wells, drought mitigation and flood control.

**Long-term remedial options**

While the India Meteorological Department has forecast above average rainfall during the upcoming South-West monsoon and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley expressed confidence that agriculture would withstand the ongoing drought, the situation calls for long-term solutions. Increased water conservation and promoting cultivation of less water-intensive crops can go a long way towards coping with the crisis. The other remedial option could be to adopt drought-resistant crop varieties as has been done in some parts of Odisha for paddy/rice through the help of the International Rice Research Institute. This can maintain productivity and income of the farmers and also ensure price stability to the consumers. It is important for the government to sustain an increased investment in irrigation but at the same time gear up towards faster completion of the ongoing projects.

Micro irrigation system comprising drip and sprinkler irrigation has greater potential to improve water use efficiency in agriculture. Despite various promotional efforts undertaken by State governments, their level of adoption and spatial spread has remained low. Studies show that micro irrigation system helps save water, reduce cost of cultivation and improve crop yield. Various studies showed that the net return per inch of water supplied through drip irrigation was 60-80 per cent higher than that of conventional irrigation system. However, among others, high initial capital cost, suitability of designs to different soil conditions, problems in receiving subsidy and small holdings are reportedly affecting the adoption of this technology. Subsidy being an important factor influencing adoption decision of farmers, delay in disbursement and appropriation by better-off farmers seems to have affected the vast majority of resource-poor small and marginal farmers in accessing this technology.

The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana is a good policy initiative that would accelerate public investment in both micro and macro irrigation. During the recently organized India Water Week, 2016, India has also partnered with Israel, a water-scarce country, to learn and adopt innovative strategies to harness rainwater. Small vegetable-growing farmers near Solan, Himachal Pradesh, have long adopted Israel’s water-saving technology through the assistance of the Mother Dairy retail chain that procures their fresh produce. It is an opportune time to scale up technology adoption.

Finally, the shortage of drinking water can be addressed through promoting conservation and generating awareness among people to use the scarce resource with utmost care. Media reports indicate that the funds allocated by the Centre for drinking water projects have remained underutilized in many of the States hit by water scarcity. The States must act responsibly and gear up to come out of the current situation of water crisis.

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**HOW HOT IS THE EARTH NOW?**

25 Apr 2016

The weather may not be warmer where you live, but northern Eurasia and several oceanic areas are heating up. These unreported high temperatures have contributed to an amazingly high global temperature rise, especially when land and sea temperatures are both taken into account. The authority on global climate is NASA, so we had a look at their raw data in their GLOBAL Land-Ocean Temperature Index.

Taking into account how Arctic sea-ice loss and accompanying tundra temperatures have been reported, the northern areas occupy media items quite a lot. The point is that we will all be affected as secondary effects on vegetation, agriculture, prices of food and rise in sea levels bite. Last year, we had the highest recorded global temperatures yet recorded. Trouble is that 2014 had the same headlines and it is likely that this very heavy El Niño will help 2016 to exceed the record again. One hope is that 2017 will not be a record breaker, as El Niño ends in the next few months.

The politicians who make so many promises and the scientists who make climate models will be celebrating if next year cools slightly, but what if it does not reveal a break in the trend? The 1.5oC temperature rise that was bandied about in Paris will be forgotten and the 2oC rise will be hard to prevent.

March this year was globally more than 30% up in temperature (at 1.28oC ) from last year, while February was 50% up (at 1.34oC .) April seems cool to me but who knows what is going on in the Pacific or how the southern oceans are modifying their storms? It will only be a few days till we find out, but this is not just a competition for observers.

Instead of simply looking, I have to tell myself what I can do to mildly affect this trend. The diesel car scandal continues to heat up in the same way as the earth. The recycling habits we have need continuous revision. Maintaining wildlife and even very large forests could turn out to be a wise option in the long term. Flooding, CO2 absorption and multiple ecosystem effects flow from stewardship of our environments.

**AIR POLLUTANTS MAY INCREASE RISK OF MANY CANCERS: STUDY**

Beijing: Long-term exposure to environmental pollutants may be associated with an increased risk of mortality for many types of cancer, a new study has warned.

The findings add to growing concern around the health risks of prolonged exposure to ambient fine particulate matter, researchers from the University of Birmingham in the UK and University of Hong Kong said.

Particulate matter is the term for particles found in the air, including hydrocarbons and heavy metals produced by transportation and power generation, among other sources. The study focused on ambient fine particulate matter, or matter with an aerodynamic diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5). For every 10 micrograms per cubic meter of increased exposure to PM2.5, the risk of dying from any cancer rose by 22 per cent, researchers said.

"The implications for other similar cities around the world are that PM2.5 must be reduced to reduce the health burden. Air pollution remains a clear, modifiable public health concern," said Neil Thomas from University of Birmingham.

"Long-term exposure to particulate matter has been associated with mortality mainly from cardiopulmonary causes and lung cancer, but there have been few studies showing an association with mortality from other cancers," said Thuan Quoc Thach from University of Hong Kong. "We suspected that these particulates could have an equivalent effect on cancers elsewhere in the body," said Thach.

Researcher’s recruited 66,280 people aged 65 or older between 1998 and 2001, and followed the subjects until 2011, ascertaining causes of death from Hong Kong registrations.

Annual concentrations of PM2.5 at their homes were estimated using data from satellite and fixed-site monitors, researchers said.

The study showed that for every 10 micrograms per cubic meter of increased exposure to PM2.5, the risk of dying from any cancer rose by 22 per cent, they said.

Increases of 10 micrograms per cubic meter of PM2.5 was associated with a 42 per cent increased risk of mortality from cancer in the upper digestive tract and a 35 per cent increased risk of mortality from accessory digestive organs, which include liver, bile ducts, gall bladder, and pancreas. For women, every 10 micrograms per cubic meter increase in exposure to PM2.5 was associated with an 80 per cent increased risk of mortality from breast cancer.

Men experienced a 36 per cent increased risk of dying of lung cancer for every 10 micrograms per cubic meter increased exposure to PM2.5, researchers said.

They believe that possible explanations for the association between PM2.5 and cancer could include defects in DNA repair function, alterations in the body's immune response, or inflammation that triggers angiogenesis, the growth of new blood vessels that allows tumors to spread.

The findings were published in the journal Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention.