**SKILLS FOR FREEDOM**

**Newsletter from India**

 **No: 9 January: 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 - Peace Trust’s project to support School Education, Health Protection, Livelihood Development and Skill Training for Gainful Employment among Vulnerable Young Population in Dindigul District is gaining momentum from its stakeholders to end modern slavery, this initiative is supported by Geneva Global/ Freedom Fund.
* 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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**MIGRANT LABOURERS**

**LANDLESS LABOURERS LEFT HIGH AND DRY**

The recent floods have delivered a double blow to Irular and Dalit landless labourers in settlements across Puducherry, Villupuram and Cuddalore district as they face an uncertain period without work and neither are they eligible to claim any compensation for crop loss.

Only the farmers who own these lands are being compensated for the crop loss and not the Dalits - who form 70 to 80 per cent of the landless labourers in these places.

Intellectual Circle for Dalit Action (ICDA), an independent group comprising professors and researchers, conducted a fact-finding in the flood-hit areas and has demanded a comprehensive compensation package that would meet the losses incurred by these labourers and Irular families in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

The four-member team, led by writer-activist Stalin Rajangam, visited the flood-hit areas, including Marakkanam, Periyakattupalayam, Parangipettai and Kurinjipadi. Anbuselvan, an independent researcher, who was part of the team, said that relief amount had been given to farmers who own lands and for crop loss. However, Dalit landless labourers did not get it.

 “They are off work for the over 40 days and they do not foresee regular agricultural labour at least for the next six months, so the government should fix a minimum relief amount and distribute it properly to the affected,” he said. The ICDA interviewed 180 flood-affected families and also found that the saltpan workers face similar woes.

 “The 300 Dalit workers at the saltpans in Marakkanam are highly affected by the floods. The workers for who the next salt-making season falls on March are left with no work. Keeping in mind the welfare of the salt workers, the government should give assistance like how the government, provides assistance for fishermen during the fishing-ban season to support the fishermen families,” he said.

The team recommended formation of a committee comprising members from the government machinery, political parties, NGOs, media representative and social activities to avoid any omissions and disparity in the assessment of loss of properties in flood and distribution of relief material.

When contacted, Rural Development Secretary Gagandeep Singh Bedi said that relief was reaching the downtrodden families. The government was providing Rs. 5,000 for the landless labourers whose huts had been completely damaged.

In addition, at least 1.25 to 1.3 lakh landless labourers were given employment under Mahamata Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the district during this period. They were being paid Rs.183 per day. It was envisaged that at least 200 people were given employment in one village panchayat.

They were drafted as ‘thooymai kavalarkal’ (protectors of hygiene) and their work would be to clear the blocked channels and also garbage. Mr. Bedi claimed that in Tamil Nadu, one crore man days of work had been generated every week as a priority under this scheme as part of flood relief measures. He added that the women formed 86 percent of workforce and nearly 40-50 per cent belonged to downtrodden communities. “Besides, funds are disbursed through the Government Calamity Release Norms. Nearly 1,200 medical camps are organized specifically for the downtrodden apart from a thousand veterinary camps for those engaged in animal husbandry. At least Rs 15 lakh has been spent in constructing shelters in Periyakattupalayam for the Dalits,” he said.

**GERMANY: COLOGNE GETS 516 CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS, MIGRANT DEBATE INTENSIFIES**

Merkel announced a proposal Saturday that would make it easier to deport migrants who commit crimes, which still needs parliamentary approval. Attacks on women in Cologne and other German cities on New Year’s Eve have prompted more than 600 criminal complaints, with police suspicion resting on asylum seekers, putting pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel and her open door migrant policy. The attacks, mostly targeting women and ranging from theft to sexual molestation, have prompted a highly-charged debate in Germany about its welcoming stance for refugees and migrants, more than one million of whom arrived last year.

The sudden nature of the violent attacks and the fact that they stretched from Hamburg to Frankfurt prompted Germany’s justice minister Heiko Maas to speculate in a newspaper that they had been planned or coordinated.

The debate on migration will be further fuelled by the acknowledgement by the authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia that a man shot dead as he tried to enter a Paris police station last week was an asylum seeker with seven identities who lived in Germany. In Cologne, police said on Sunday that 516 criminal complaints had been filed by individuals or groups in relation to assaults on New Year’s Eve, while police in Hamburg said 133 similar charges had been lodged with the north German city. Frankfurt also registered complaints, although far fewer.

The investigation in Cologne is focused largely on asylum seekers or illegal migrants from north Africa, police said. They arrested one 19-year-old Moroccan man on Saturday evening.

In Cologne, where a 100-strong force of officers continued their investigations, around 40 percent of the complaints included sexual offences, including two rapes.

**DWINDLING TRUST**

The attacks, which prompted violent far-right protests on Saturday, threatens to further erode confidence in Merkel, and could stoke support for the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party ahead of three key state elections in March.

Merkel’s popularity has dwindled as she refused to place a limit on the influx of refugees. A survey sponsored by state broadcaster ARD showed that while 75 percent of those asked were very happy with Merkel’s work in April last year, only 58 percent were pleased now. Almost three quarters of those polled said migration was the most important issue for the government to deal with in 2016.

The Cologne attacks also heated up the debate on immigration in neighbouring Austria.

“What happened in Cologne is unbelievable and unacceptable,” Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner, a member of the conservative People’s Party that is junior coalition partner to the Social Democrats, told newspaper Oesterreich.

There had been a handful of similar incidents in the border city of Salzburg. “Such offenders should be deported,” she said, backing a similar suggestion by Merkel. Swiss media contained numerous stories about sexual assaults on women by foreigners, fuelling tensions ahead of a referendum next month that would trigger the automatic deportation of foreigners convicted of some crimes.

In Germany, on Monday, a regional parliamentary commission will quiz police and others about the events on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. The anti-Islam PEGIDA, whose supporters threw bottles and fire crackers at a march in Cologne on Saturday before being dispersed by riot police, will later hold a rally in the eastern German city of Leipzig.

The far-right will likely seize on reports that the Paris attacker, who was shot last week as he wielded a meat cleaver and shouted “Allahu akbar” (God is Greatest), was known to police for drug dealing and harassing women.

He had an apartment in an accommodation centre for asylum seekers in Recklinghausen, north of Cologne, where he had painted the symbol of the Islamic State on the wall of two rooms.

**WOMEN DESERT RURAL LABOUR FORCE, TAMIL NADU BREAKS THE TREND**

CHENNAI: Women in rural areas are increasingly withdrawing from the country's labour force. This trend is particularly evident in states like Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh where women have opted out of the labour force over the years. This is more in check in states like Tamil Nadu where the difference in gender gap between 2004 and 2011 is 8. In Karnataka it is 16 while in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh it is 15. The higher the gender gap the lower the female participation in labour force.

According to a study conducted by National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), the main reasons are lack of job opportunities for women in rural areas and the poor performance in the agriculture sector. Due to the fall in number of women in the labour force, the gender gap has increased to 25 percentage points in India between 2005 and 2011.

"Women who lost jobs in agriculture did not find place in other sectors of the economy. One of the reasons is the poor education of rural women that acts as a barrier to a smooth inter-sectoral labour mobility. Nearly 69% of rural women are either illiterate or have been educated only up to the primary level," said the study done by Sunita Sanghi, A Srija and Shirke Shrinivas Vijay of NITI Aayog.

Across rural India, between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, barring Himachal Pradesh, all other major states experienced an increase in the gender gap between male and female labour force participation. The increase is seen more in Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Jharkhand and Odisha.

"Agriculture, which was the primary work area of women in these states, has seen a decline. However, many women workers who have been displaced from agriculture did not find jobs in non-farm sectors. The jobs created were mostly in the construction and utilities sector where women have a small share in employment," said the study. Even in the services sector, jobs created were in transportation, storage, communication, trade, and hotels and restaurants which did not benefit women who had to leave agriculture.



"Looking at age of women who are unemployed is important to decide on decline of women in labour force," said Madras Institute of Development Studies professor D Jayaraj. "While there is a rise in real wages of women labour force after introduction of MGNREGS, younger women in the school and college going ages are migrating to towns for education. It is only the older women, who have lost employment opportunities," said Jayaraj.

Creation of more jobs in manufacturing sector in rural areas is one way to arrest the trend.

**MIGRANTS LEFT OUT IN THE COLD**

Fountain Ink – Dec’15.

BY KIRTHI RAO

Labour mobility is going up by the day as poor people travel from state to state looking for a livelihood, but while the law has ample provision, few implement it and fewer even know about it. It is a hot afternoon on the dusty metalled road off the Noida-Greater Noida expressway. The shadows cast by the tall buildings being constructed all around are short and offer no shade. Tall grass grows in the spaces between two constructions sites, next to which is a colony of squat tin-roofed shanties with a small shop with a mud-floor verandah. A group of men sit there playing cards while the woman in the shop boils tea. It’s easy to forget the city is only minutes away. It’s unsurprising that these men and women are not visible to the city either. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen law is directed at securing working and living conditions for a segment of the working poor—labour that moves from one state to another. The provisions of this 1979 law (and the newer Building and Other Construction Workers law) require that workers be provided temporary shelter with sanitation, clean water, facilities for food and medical support, safety gear, wage and attendance record, work certificates and crèches for children. It applies to cases where more than five migrant workers are employed through contractors and sought that both the employers and contractors be registered. Nearly everyone, including the labour officialdom responsible for implementing the law, though, affirms that no one takes it seriously. Even as the government moves sluggishly to bring a revised law, migrant construction workers remain unaware of any protections.

Samin, one of the men in the group, has been working at construction sites for the past five or six years, he’s not exactly sure. He does not have any proof he has worked even for the past year, let alone the years before that. His wife Jainab used to stay back at home, which is in West Bengal’s Cooch Behar district, but they recently started working together at the construction site, like many of Samin’s friends and their wives at the worker’s jhuggi or colony.

When they are at the site, they leave their three children behind in the temporary brick structure with a corrugated tin roof under the watch of one of the older children. This company does not let children come to the site. There is no crèche or arrangement for the children here.

Before he got married, Samin had to share the jhuggi (worksite) room with four other men. He thought bringing Jainab would afford him a little more space. Though it would not double their earning, her income would add to his. After all, a beldaar or petty wage worker hardly gets enough and he could take more money home with her working. She didn’t want to come—she doesn’t know the language and would be completely confined to the jhuggi—but she had no choice in the end. Jainab moved after having their third child, whom she still breastfeeds.

There is electric lighting after sundown, which is more than what she is used to at the village. But there are no toilets or separate bath areas for the women. The builder has also not provided a canteen. This means the women have to wake up before first light in the morning to relieve themselves in the open and then cook. Initially, the company supplied wood for cooking, but since only a year of work is left, the workers now buy their own five-kilogram or smaller gas cylinders and refill them weekly for Rs 100 a kilo at nearby shops. Not having to deal with smoky wood is a good thing but the cost is now upon the workers.

The water is brackish in Noida but this is all the workers get to drink. Some companies do get tankers for drinking water but not this one. It grows unbearably hot in the summer, resulting in a thirst that can’t be quenched, which is perhaps why people frequent the “Bangali” clinic nearby, as Samin and his friends call it, for diarrhoea medicine.

Today is an “off day” for the workers. It’s summer and work has slowed down, so many returns to their village to harvest the winter crop. About 100 workers remain, though at peak the site has over 700. This flexibility is very important, say Samin and his friends at the shop run by one of the jamadars, the ones who “supply” and manage teams of workers for the main labour contractor the company recognizes. Samin’s family’s land, however, is so small that they didn’t need him for harvest. Construction work, however unreliable and far from home, is what he will probably be doing for the foreseeable future.

Getting work is like walking a tightrope. Staying in the good books of contractors or his munshis or helpers is not always enough. You need to keep your ears and eyes open: Samin only landed this job by walking over to the site and speaking to one of the contractors’ helpers. It is risky, because it’s common for an unknown contractor to fleece workers and run away. “The company pays the contractor and if he runs away then the workers are not paid at all,” Samin’s friend explains. “If the attendance card is shown, the worker may be paid, but if not, the worker has no option but to let it go and find work elsewhere. It is hard to track down such contractors. How does one find pickpockets?”

This attendance card contains details on attendance, overtime, and any expenses paid by the contractor, his assistant or representative. Wages are paid based on these entries. However, the risk often pays off. Samin got lucky: this company, though strict, pays well and seems to provide more facilities than his previous employer. Nobody at the site knows if there are any laws they can use against errant companies or contractors, though a couple of Samin’s friends remember applications brought by an official which after filling got them card and then a bicycle each. The cards have been submitted for renewal by the company now, so nobody has it. At another site a kilometer away, no such registration happened though that is the older site.

For most people, “labour office” is the one run by the company, though they know there’s a labour court somewhere. None of the petty workers and the better-paid masons—and even the contractor (and his munshi)—at either site have heard about the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, or even the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board created under the 1996 Building and Other Construction Workers law. Their expectations are based on experience: a company should build temporary dwellings with water and electricity; provide safety gear and stand ready to pay in case of a grievous injury; the contractor should get workers on time; allow holidays without taking away their work; get work done; pay wages on time and not run away. Akshay, brother of contractor Sanjay, knows contractors need to be licensed for the company to work with them under law, but says the workers, usually illiterate and dependent on the munshis, know nothing of this.



One of the many construction sites in Noida where migrant workers are employed.

Samin’s friends from Madhya Pradesh on the other side of the labour colony feel more secure working with a contractor (likely a jamadar) who is their relative. For Samin, “security” lies in working with companies known to treat labour better, preferably “limited companies”, a term workers use to refer to big construction companies. Still, they’re better off than the so-called “Malda workers”. Originally from Malda district of West Bengal, but now recruited from Bihar, Jharkhand and other states, they are brought for two months of contract labour. They live in the colony too but they are hardly ever there. While Samin and other workers are on an eight-hour shift with overtime an option, Malda workers are on a 12-hour shift with no leave or break except for food supplied by the contractor. (Though the law requires overtime to be paid with double the hourly wage, the rate differs from site to site. At the sites visited, half the hourly rate was paid for overtime work.)

“You could say these workers are sold to the company even before coming since they get an advance, and they have to work whatever happens for the 62–65 days they are here,” jamadar Taufeel says. Almost every site has a group of Malda workers, though they can never be found off the worksite easily. “They eat whatever the contractor supplies at the site, even if it’s rice, potato curries and chapatis every day,” says Arfa, the only Bengali woman who speaks Hindi in the colony. Labour contractor Mursheed is wary of talking to outsiders in case they report that he’s not following the law. There’s a case against him already, making it necessary to attend hearings at Delhi’s Patiala House Court. The company official standing next to him seems to be hearing this for the first time.

Mursheed reveals he is not actually the contractor, more like a head mason or mistri, though he provided 14 workers and is responsible for dealing with the company on their behalf. At another site, while Samin points to Hitesh as his thekedar, Hitesh says he is only the munshi. Akshay, whose brother Sanjay is a licensed contractor at the same site, says there are all kinds of workers and contractors—some are relatives of contractors or their assistants, some are workers the assistant brings from his village, and some are simply workers the assistant or the contractor find near the site. In each case, the licensed contractor is the one who usually deals with the company while others in the hierarchy depend on him.

Main contractors like Sanjay need a licence that comes with official and unofficial costs, which could often include bribes and renewal fees. The company can help with paperwork. Once the chain of intermediaries begins to function and workers get “supplied”, the onus of looking after them is on the person who “arranged” them. The cut, about 10 per cent, adds up to several lakhs every month, Akshay said. Hitesh and others like Taufeel say the commission fluctuates greatly because it depends on the number of workers required.

If the company gives other kinds of commission work to contractors, it’s up to them to pay what they think is right to workers, but such work is usually available only at the end of the construction, Taufeel says. Licensed contractors, unlike their munshis, or the workers, get certificates on completing the job. Akshay says certificates help the contractor get more commissions but workers have no proof of the work actually done since their attendance cards are usually submitted at the end of the month.

Neither Mursheed nor Hitesh has ever seen any government office or official or know about any law, confirming that those dealing with workers are also sometimes ignorant about the entitlements of workers and the duties of principal employers. Hitesh, Taufeel and Akshay concede there have been cases of contractors running away. One reason is that the company delays payments. The unwritten rule is that contractors and assistants closest to workers are the only link between company and workers, and this puts the pressure of non-payment on the contractor or his munshis. So the intention of the law that licensed contractors and registered principal employers act as two sources of redress for the worker is defeated

Some companies do reimburse workers if approached and even keep an open door for complaints, such as the site where Taufeel is a jamadar. But even here, the same policy may not be available for Malda workers.

If the law and the machinery implementing it worked well, grievances could be taken to or picked up by labour offices. But workers at the second site say the only time they saw government officials was when they brought applications for the worker cards and when some came into the builder’s office and checked registers and tried to see there were no child workers.

Samin can recall no such visits.

According to an activist of Disha Foundation, an organisation supporting migrant workers in western India, labour departments are so understaffed and officials so engrossed with organised sector-related work that workers in the much larger unorganised sector miss out. Ironically, while only sporadic reports of the near-complete exclusion of unorganised workers, including migrant construction workers, from labour protections appear, reports talk almost every day about the need to loosen the hold of “Inspector Raj” and rigid labour laws. It’s clear then that discussion and remedying the weaknesses of the law, the 1979 Inter State Migrant Workmen Act and its Rules, and the need to create working supports for migrant workers is hardly a priority.

Repeated rulings in court cases under the law (usually combined with the bonded labour abolition law), from 1982 to as recently as 2014, note indifferent enforcement of the law’s provisions. This is the same law used in 1982 to protest and seek to protect interests of workers engaged in building for the Asian Games and then, for the 2010 Commonwealth Games Village workers where violations were found to be rampant. Though conditions of work vary from site to site, leave alone district to district, no state seems to have amended the rules for inter-state migrant workers or done more than paperwork, according to senior labour officials.

In Delhi and the three states of the National Capital Region, labour officials say there have been few registrations, prosecutions and convictions under this law. From February 2014 to February this year, a state as big as Uttar Pradesh had only 12 licence applications. No record of convictions is easily available.

Saying the migrant worker law is defunct, a Rajasthan labour official says the scenario was very different from the time the law was drafted. “Transport and communication has changed since the Seventies. Workers come on their own or through colleagues. This law does not cover such workers. It was never very enforceable since there are no reliable ways to track migration within states and districts,” he says. The law was drafted to support migrant workers such as the Dadan of Odisha—bonded workers like the Malda labourers—but the administrative machinery fails them even now. As an irate Haryana labour official puts it, “You can’t legislate away the problems of the poor, backward and illiterate.”

In areas where the machinery can work, it is throttled by the need to create a perception of “ease of doing business”. For example, Uttar Pradesh—which had the maximum number of prosecutions under the law till 2004-05—brought out a new “industry-friendly” policy in 2012 to attract investment into different sectors and correct regional imbalances. A senior labour official says inspections in Uttar Pradesh now require permission from the district magistrate. There is a provision to inform the establishment in advance, making the process toothless, all in the name of promoting industrial growth.

The number of inspections across the country under the Central Labour Commission for the first nine months of 2014-15 was 61, according to a March 11 Lok Sabha reply by the labour minister. The low penalties for violating the anti-bonded labour and migrant workers laws, along with the fading interest of the state in inspection based implementation, labour officials say, deaden enforcement. The poor integration and enforcement of related labour welfare provisions under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996 is also notable. Labour ministry data of 2014 cited by the minister in Parliament showed Rs 14,099 crore had been collected for state-level welfare funds, of which Rs 2,382 crore or less than a fifth was spent on welfare programmes.

The Disha activist pointed out that the funds were used not to institute systematic assistance such as awareness building material, but for one-time grants or freebies (like bicycles) that serve little purpose. Though not as strident as the calls for easing labour laws, recommendations to make them effective and widen the system to protect migrant workers are almost as old as the law itself, and have issued from the executive, the judiciary and civil society.

Many judicial pronouncements have sought to widen applicability and improve enforcement of the law, in response usually to petitions filed by organizations like Peoples Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Bandhua Mukti Morcha. In 1983, the Supreme Court clarified that the law would apply even if the contractors recruited through middlemen or “old hands” or by “sending word”; this makes the law adequate despite the changed communication system.

The Gujarat high court noted in the Rohit Vasavacia case in 1983 that “… the Courts quite often view offences relating to contravention of the provisions regarding employment of contract labour with consideration as in the case of all white collar crimes, though they are the crimes which ought to be considered grave. If the provisions of the (law) are to be complied with strictly by the contractors and principal employers, deterrence is called for and deterrence can only be by making the penal provisions much more stringent.” In 1990, the Orissa high court laid down that officials of the state from which migrants originate should not be hindered in enforcing the law in the “recipient” state. The National Commission of Women also suggested amendments to the wording of the law that, for instance, specify the responsibilities of the principal employer more clearly. More bottom-up recommendations have come from non-governmental agencies under the banner of the National Coalition for Security of Migrant Workers (NACSOM), who presented them to the erstwhile Planning Commission in 2010.

The experience of the implementation of welfare boards shows that merely constituting special bodies for different segments of workers and raising funds is not enough. Awareness building through worker resource centres, not just migrant resource centres or construction worker resource centres, on the lines of Delhi’s Mission Convergence scheme (previously Gender Resource Centres) could be encouraged and tested through pilots. Portability of schemes such as ration-card-linked food grain allowance and health insurance through Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) is approved in letter. However lack of awareness and accessibility at ground level pre-empts their use by migrant workers.

Neither Samin nor his friends thought their ration cards were any use in the city. Most did not even know about RSBY, leave alone availing benefits where they find work. The same lack of awareness and representation holds back use of schemes like the low-cost small bank account programme, state level labour welfare phone-lines and construction workers’ welfare funds. According to a February news report in The Economic Times, the labour ministry is working on a scheme to track internal migration to register workers on an online repository to provide social benefits. Another proposal, according to the report, is a multi-lingual national helpline number. It needs to be seen how information is collected for the tracking system.

But these good intentions are unlikely to work unless backed by awareness building, some handholding and deterrence-based regulation among the employers. Another need relates to enforcing sanitary conditions at the worksites and dwellings provided to migrant workers. This requires coordinated work among government departments and urban local bodies where the workers work. Rural local bodies could also be given a more direct role in assisting workers with information about support systems at different destinations. The law for migrant workers has often been criticized for its impracticability and poor enforcement over the years. Given the changed environment with better communication and newer laws, a need is felt either to amend the law or integrate it with other more comprehensive legislation. But just as the migrant traverses the rural and the urban in a complex and transitory map, support for the migrant involves not just the functioning of labour laws and administration but that of local bodies in rural and urban areas as well.

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**SKILL / EDUCATION**

**90% OF TN'S JOBLESS ARE LITERATES: REPORT**

Coimbatore: Renowned for its quality of education, Coimbatore has also been kind to job-seekers, with the unemployment rate standing at 3.7%, much lower than the state average of 4.5%, according to the latest Census data.

TamilNadu's unemployment status is however slightly better than the national average which stands at 5%. Of the 32.86 lakh unemployed in the state, 30.53 lakh residents are literate, 4.3 lakh of them being graduates. Chennai's unemployment rate stands at 6%.

The Census, however, does not count casual workers in unorganized sectors as unemployed; it is but a count of people who told the surveyors that they are searching for a job.

Experts say skill gap among graduates, gap between industry growth and growth of graduate population and rising aspirations for better jobs are some factors that contribute to unemployment. "Unemployment is rampant in India, and Tamil Nadu cannot remain untouched. But a part of the unemployed population must be in the transition stage, wondering whether to pursue a job or higher education," said R Maria Saleth, honorary professor of Madras School of Economics.

She believes more people are educated now than compared to 2001 Census. "We have better literacy levels now. More people are pursuing a graduate degree, but we don't know if we have enough job opportunities for all these graduates," Saleth said.

Skill gap is another major contributor to unemployment. Senior Nasscom director K Purushottaman, said, "The rise in graduate population is not in tune with industry growth. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh account for 40% of engineering graduates in the country, while the highest recruiting sector, information technology is growing at around 15% only."

At the same time, firms are unable to recruit skilled graduates, he said. Thus, most companies are forced to hire the best talent and train them in specific skills. Nowadays, youth are more ambitious when compared to a decade ago.

Associate professor at PSG Institute of Management, R Jagajeevan, said, "In the 1990s, most average graduates were willing to take up any job to begin with, and then hunt for their desired job. But today, youngsters have greater aspiration. They are willing to wait until they land the right job."

**SKILL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR URBAN YOUTHS**

Employment through Skills Training and Placement (ESTP), under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) programme, is under way in 24 municipal-administrated areas of the state. Training is being provided in job-oriented trades to educated youngsters and the needy.

The training programme, undertaken by the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), will train youths in automotive repairs, driving, banking and accounting, electronics repair, wireman, garment-making, fashion designing, medical and nursing care, media, printing, beauty culture and hair dressing, toy-making and hotel management among others. In the first phase, a target of 3,197 candidates has been set, said an official.

The national mission is aimed at basic development in urban areas and lays special emphasis on providing job-oriented training, employment generation and livelihood projects for the urban poor. It aims at providing shelters equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner.

Moreover, the mission would also deal with livelihood concerns of urban street vendors by facilitating access to suitable spaces, institutional credit and social security. The training programme under NULM is designed to offer skills to urban poor youths and upgrade their existing skills so that they can set up self-employment ventures, as well.

Through an MoU with Assam State Urban Livelihood Mission Society, IIE aims to provide the training for self employment and provide support towards gainful employment.

**TSUNAMI**

**TSUNAMI 2004: COURAGE IN FACE OF DISASTER**

The flight over the dark brown sea off Car Nicobar 11 years ago is as clear to Nitin Sathe as if it was yesterday. The air commodore and his men had taken off from Tambaram on January 2, 2005, on a mission to make the IAF base at Car Nicobar, ravaged by a tsunami a week earlier, functional.

Miles from the mainland, across the Bay of Bengal, it served as the country's southern-most defence post. Sathe recalls his journey to the plundered paradise and the non-war operation that shaped the rest of his life in his book `Tsunami 2004: The IAF story , A Few Good Men and the Angry Sea'. "We saw the horrific devastation caused by the tsunami. It was of Biblical proportions, as if we were creatures on Noah's Arc watching our worlds float by," Sathe writes in his book. The book recounts the role the IAF played in rehabilitating the island of Car Nicobar after the tsunami. Replete with photographs and accounts from diaries of survi vors and IAf officers who carried out rescue operations when the tragedy struck, Sathe's narrative is poignant."None of us had the guts to go near these bodies since they were decaying... Occasionally, we found large quantities of cash and valuables next to the bodies. " Recalling his days on the island, Sathe tells TOI about the sense of being marooned."There was this apprehension of the unknown," he says, adding "The adjoining islands were out of bounds.Logistics management was a challenge since there was no transport and the runway was in a bad shape."

Besides restoring the air base runway so that bigger aircraft carrying relief could land, the team had to care for the locals. "Some of them were flown out, but those who remained wanted to move on and survive. There was no negativity," he says. This gutsy streak is also perceived in the narrative, where, despite the scale of destruction, Sathe finds time for humour.

The idea behind the book, says Sathe, was not to recount a tragedy but to appeal for a standard blueprint for disaster management. "We cannot prevent a tsunami, but can plan our reaction better. How we deal with a calamity defines us. We don't have a standard operating procedure focusing on budget and resource allocation. This book is an attempt to understand disaster and fight it," says the man with 30 years of service as a helicopter pilot.

**TRAFFICKKING**

**IS MAY BE TRAFFICKING IN BODY PARTS: REPORT**

Dec 26 2015: The Times of India (Chennai)

Seized Document Shows Outfit Allows Organ Harvesting

Islamic State has sanctioned the harvesting of human organs in a previously undisclosed ruling by the group's Islamic scholars, raising concerns that the extremist group may be trafficking in body parts.

The ruling, contained in a January 31, 2015 document, says taking organs from a living captive to save a Muslim's life, even if it is fatal for the captive, is permissible.

The authenticity of the document, which the US officials say was among a trove of data and other information obtained by their special forces in a raid in eastern Syria in May, couldn't be confirmed independently.

“The apostate's life and organs don't have to be respected and may be taken with impunity, “ says the document, which is in the form of a fatwa, or religious ruling, from the IS's Research and Fatwa Committee. “Organs that end the captive's life if removed: The removal of that type is also not prohibited,“ Fatwa Number 68 says, according to a US government translation.

The document does not offer any proof that IS actually engages in organ harvesting or organ trafficking. But it does provide religious sanction for doing so under the group's harsh interpretation of Islam. Previously, Iraq has accused the terror outfit of harvesting human organs and trafficking them for profit.

US officials say the records that were seized have given the US government a deep look into how IS organizes, raises funds and codifies laws for its followers.

Iraq's ambassador to the UN, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, said the documents should be examined by the UN Security Council as evidence that IS could be trafficking in organs to raise cash. The May raid in Syria, which resulted in the death of IS top financial official Abu Sayyaf and the capture of his wife, netted seven TB of data, said Brett McGurk, US President Barack Obama's special presidential envoy for the global coalition to counter IS.

**2,000 jihadis to be evacuated**

Two thousand Syrian Islamist fighters are expected to be evacuated soon from besieged, rebel-held areas of southern Damascus in a deal brokered by the UN, a Hezbollah TV station said on Friday. The militants include fighters of IS and the Nusra Front, al Qaida' offshoot in Syria. Manar TV said 18 buses had arrived to start taking them and 1,500 family members to areas under the control of IS and other rebel groups.

**Boxing Day alert for British cities**

A counterterrorism expert has warned that British cities could be a target of an IS terror attack on Boxing Day, marked the day after Christmas. Will Geddes, head of global security firm International Corporate Protection, believes Boxing Day on Saturday would be an ideal moment for terrorists, the Daily Express reported on Friday. His comments come as UK's MI5 has put the terror threat at severe, meaning an attack is highly likely.

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT’S DAY CONFERENCE**

International Migrant’s Day conference held at Perambalur on 18th December by Migrant Rights coalition. Dr.Bernard Samy, a renowned researcher on Migrant issues, Mr.Sivashanmugam of Meetpu Trust and Dr.J.Paul Baskar addressed a good number of migrant workers and spouses at Reddiar Hall of Perambalur.

Mr.Ponkumar a leader of Unorganized Worker Movement of Tamil Nadu and his construction workers office bearers organized the event.

The conference appealed to Union and TamilNadu State Government to improve the working conditions of Tamil Workers in Gulf Region and Malaysia considering the considerable remittance sent by the workers to TamilNadu homes and their foreign exchange contribution. The Indian Missions Abroad has to take further proactive steps to protect the citizens. The conference appealed to TamilNadu Government to set up Tamil Overseas Workers Commission to look with various issues concerning migrant workers like cheating by subagents, working conditions in receiving countries, safe repatriation back home and reintegration with families and also legal aid in case of conflict with law in working countries. Dr. J. Paul Baskar, Chairman, Peace Trust said that Perambalur the highest migrants sending district of Tamil Nadu needs more specific programme to improve the livelihood of the people.

**PEACE TRUST ANNUAL STAFF GET TOGETHER**

Peace Trust has celebrated its 31st Annual Staff Get Together on 23rd December, 2015 at Peace College of Education, Vittalnayakkanpatty, Dindigul. All the Project Coordinators have explained about their projects and they have explained their achievements and their plan in the forthcoming year. Dr. J. Paul Baskar, Chairman, Peace Trust has moderated the function. Dr. J.Paul Baskar has also explained about the Environment challenges of the world. Mr. Walter Kennedy, Project Planning Coordinator has explained about the “Sustainable Development Goals” in detail. Peace Trust has formed a volunteer team to work on the Sustainable Development Goals and Dr. J. Paul Baskar will lead the volunteer team. 35 members has joined as volunteers.

**TRAINING ON ECO BAG MAKING**

VENUE: SPSC-VEEF INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

DATE : December 17 to 19, 2015

TRAINERS: 3 Trainers from M/s Timely Aided Society, Pondicherry.

Extract: This three days training program was organized by SPSC-VEEF to introduce the students in to the world of "Usage of Kalamkari cotton cloth materials in Fashion designing industry" with the primary aim of making the students to earn while learn. It is a comprehensive understanding of cutting and tailoring used not only in clothes making and also it's used in hand bags making also. Through peer education programs students can gather more knowledge about their field, which leads a way to increase their income. Moreover this type of programs match to the demands of the current market and it helps the students to find a stable and well-paid job or even they can start their own business which helps them to stand in their own leg. The goal of this program is to give more exposure on different ways for income generation and make them to earn while they are learning.

The Kalamkari bags making training was started on December 17, 2015 and ends on November 19, 2015 i.e., for three days for the students of Tailoring Department. The trainers taught effective utilization of clothes not even wasting a single piece of cloth. All students learned with zeal and they satisfied with this training. The samples are given to Velankanni Fancy stores and getting enquiries also. Based on the feedback we will facilitate and do the needful.

**DESIGNS MADE BY STUDENTS**

**BOOK FAIR VISIT**

All the students and the staff visited the Dindigul Book Fair on 3.12.2015 by the guidance of the Vice Principal, Mr. Devadayan organized by Dindigul Literacy Forum at the venue of Dudley Higher Secondary School Campus, Dindigul. The students on seeing varied types of books with different authors imbibed with them that, Reading books cleanses the Mind and books are their silent friends.

This book fair visit has really elevated the students to buy the books in their own interest to enhance their knowledge by reading books with different authors.

Dr.J.Paul Baskar spoke on The Interactive Class rooms organized by Dindigul Book Fair as a side event and hundreds of students from Dindigul Colleges attended.

**SPSC VEEF INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL - VELANKANNI**

**Special Orientation and Coaching on Competitive Exam**

SPSC VEEF Coaching Centre conducted Special Orientation for 3 Days from 03-01-2016 to 05-01-2016 to motivate the students who are from the rural remote villages to take part in the competitive exam mainly in the forthcoming 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, MSc., B.Ed., BSMS; Government Higher Secondary School, Tanjore, Mr.RajaRajan, MA., MPhil., B.Ed. Government Higher Secondary School, Nagapattinam and Mr.Sengutuvan, M.Sc., M.Phil., B.Ed. Government Higher Secondary School, Nagore. Main focus was given for the participants' expectation where they can score more marks especially in 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.

**COACHING FOR COMPETITIVE EXAM:**

The VAO coaching was followed by weekly model test Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman took special interest in this programme and worked closed with resource persons who are key bureaucrat of Tamil Nadu Government who were brought up in rural poor families.

**PONGALVIZLA & AMBEDKAR AWARD**

Dr.J.Paul Baskar was honored with Dr.Ambedkar Award instituted by Nanbargal Narpani Mandram to honor Peace Trust which started its activities well in 1986 for elimination of child labour in leather tanneries and ensures formal schooling of children from Saveriyarpalayam tannery workers hamlet in Dindigul Corporation. Mr.Mani Asst Inspector General of Police in charge of Social Justice Human Rights presented the Award to Dr.J.Paul Baskar on 13th January 2016 during the Pongal Vizha organized by the Nanbargal Narpani Mandram. The local leaders including Member of Tamil Nadu State Assembly, Mayor of Dindigul Corporation were also present in the award ceremony. First time this award is given to a non Dalit activist worked for the course of Dalit empowerment.

**SEMINAR ON AWARENESS ENSURES HUMAN RIGHTS, BETTER JOBS, ENSURES SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Seminar on Awareness Ensures Human Rights, Better Jobs, Ensures Social Justice was organised on 13.1.2016 at Peace College of Education, Vittalnayakkanpatty, Dindigul between 2.30pm to 4.30pm. Mr.Pandian Section Officer, Cooperation Food Department TamilNadu Secretariat-Chennai, Welcomed the participants Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman , Peace Trust in his presidential address said that securing Government job is not only for salary but it is also linked to power to provide service to poor and deprived. Mr.Bala Murugan Program Manager, Geneva Global spoken on various aspects of Reducing the Risk and vulnerability young workers in Textile Industry. Mr.Jaleel Program Manager explained the importance of attempting for competitive exam as a rehabilitation and mainstreaming of exploited workers. Mr.Mani Assistant Inspector General of Police, Social Justice and Human Rights spoke on Awareness and systematic approach to prepare for a Government bureaucracy and shared his own experience in becoming a top police officer and changing roles of Police Administration. Mr.Devadayan Vice Principal, Peace College of Education proposed a vote of thanks.

**JUSTICE V.R.KRISHNA IYER AWARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Human rights had assumed several dimensions in recent times and it was the responsibility of activists and the media to highlight violations in any form, especially violation of rights of women and children, said D. Murugesan, Member, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday, 26th January 2016.

Addressing the centenary celebrations of former Supreme Court Judge V. R. Krishna Iyer organised by the Society for Community Organisation (SOCO) Trust here, Mr. Murugesan elaborated how human rights had assumed new dimensions in the fields of health and education. Right to proper treatment was an inalienable human right and wasteful and unwanted expenditure was a violation.

Human rights activists should take up the issue of strict implementation of the Right to Education Act from the Kindergarten level in all schools. Similarly, they should not rest with the rescue of bonded labour but ensure that the liberated workers were properly rehabilitated and enjoyed all their rights.

He urged non-governmental organisations to create awareness of human rights among people and make the fight against violations participatory even while assuring human rights defenders that the NHRC would always stand by them. The former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court recalled that it was Krishna Iyer who gave a definition for human rights.

Mr. Murugesan also presented the Justice V. R. Krishna Krishna Iyer Award for Social Justice and Human Rights Crusade to 32 persons on the occasion. He presented the award to Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman, Peace Trust for his contribution to eliminate child labour in tanneries and textile mills. The awardees included former Additional Chief Secretary Qudsia Gandhi, Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People's Watch; C. Ramasubramaniam, State Nodal Officer, District Mental Health Programme; N. Markandan, former Vice-Chancellor, Gandhigram Rural Institute; S. P. Udayakumar, Convener, People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy; Gabriele Dietrich of the National Alliance for People's Movement and B. Thirumalai, writer.

Ms. Qudsia Gandhi dedicated her award to the unsung, unseen and fearless heroes who helped people during the recent Chennai floods. Mr. Henri appealed to the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to intervene in the issue of suspension of Madurai advocates and said that there should be talks to revive the good relationship between the Bench and the Bar.

A. Mahaboob Batcha, Managing Trustee, SOCO Trust, said that 100 people from all over the country had been chosen for the award. It was presented to 32 awardees in Chennai and the Madurai function would be followed by similar functions in Ernakulam and Delhi. M. Salihu, former Vice-Chancellor, Madurai Kamaraj University, proposed a vote of thanks.