

SKILLS FOR FREEDOM

Newsletter from India

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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 and Anti Trafficking of Person issue since 1999. Facilitating decent employment of youth is taken up.

- Peace Trust's Skills for Freedom is the only solution to end Modern Slavery in Tamil Nadu. It is on decent and skill based effort for enhancing the employment opportunities of rural youth in Dindigul, Karur, Tiruppur Districts.
- Reduce the risk for Young Workers - Peace Trust is actively involved in 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.
- Peace Trust has also been broadcasting Pasumai FM community radio.
- Peace Trust is actively engaged in building the capacity of youth aspiring for Government, Public Sector, Bank job
- Peace Trust is providing guidance for higher studies to 17 + youth.

The views expressed are not of the donors but a compilation of field realities for the purpose of sharing and action. The News Letter is for academic purpose to understand Human Resources and Skill Education.

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MIGRANTS

EMIGRATE VIOLATES OUR SOVEREIGNTY: UAE ENVOY



[Calls flagship scheme for Indian workers abroad ‘intrusive’](#)

The United Arab Emirates, one of the largest employers of Indians in the Gulf, has raised a red flag with the Ministry of External Affairs over the government’s flagship eMigrate programme over what it terms as “sovereignty issues.”

After hundreds of complaints from workers about mistreatment, the MEA’s Overseas Affairs department (then a separate ministry) had in 2015 set up a database initiative called the eMigrate programme, that gathers extensive information on emigrants as well as foreign employers, their companies and recruiting agents.

[Database issues](#)

“India wants to build a databank to extract information about these companies in the UAE. We consider this a breach of our sovereignty,” UAE Ambassador to India Dr. Ahmed Al Banna told *The Hindu* in an interview, confirming that he has raised it with the MEA’s Secretary for Overseas Indian Affairs Dnyaneshwar Mulay earlier this month.

Dr. Banna also met with the Prime Minister’s Principal secretary Nripendra Mishra on May 15, where several outstanding issues were discussed.

According to the UAE Ambassador, the concerns are not restricted to India’s database of foreign employers in that country, but includes the eMigrate programme’s mandate to inspect premises of UAE companies, which they want stopped immediately.

“Some information only the UAE government or concerned ministry is allowed to [collect]. It is also not in the Embassy or Consulate’s ambit to conduct inspections, and we have taken strong objection to that. This is not India’s work, this is ours. We have offered Indian authorities that we will give them the information they desire,” Dr. Al Banna added.



The MEA did not respond to several attempts by *The Hindu* to seek a response, and has not replied to a series of questions based on the Ambassador's comments until this story went to press. Other Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, had also raised issues with the eMigrate system as soon as it was launched in July 2015.

Glitches in implementation of the programme brought down the speed of clearances. The issue was also raised with Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he [visited the UAE in August that year](#).

But the UAE Ambassador's 'sovereignty' concerns are only one part of a much larger worry for the government as India has seen a job crunch in the Gulf markets in the past few years.

According to a World Bank study on emigrants and remittances worldwide, published in April 2017, while India retained the top position as a recipient of remittances, it saw the biggest year-on-year decline of 8.9% in 2016. In 2014 India received \$69.6 billion in remittances, which dipped to \$68.9 billion in 2015 and fell to \$62.7 billion last year.

While the timing may seem coincidental, given global job-loss trends, many say India's decision to enforce more protective measures for its labour force through the eMigrate programme in 2015 and a system of Minimum Referral Wages (MRW) in 2014 have made Indian labour much more difficult to hire by foreign employers. And India's loss has been its neighbours' gain.

"Gulf sponsors on projects requiring construction labour etc. are not quite tech-savvy, as they would rather not use the internet and put all the information required online. And when other countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc. don't put similar restrictions, recruiters and contractors find it easier to just go with them," says Asif Nawaz at the Jamia Milia University in New Delhi,

who has studied labour trends in the Gulf. He estimates that India has lost mainly to Bangladesh, which has increased its share of the labour output to the Gulf many times compared to India and Pakistan.

In 2015, of the three countries, Mr. Nawaz says, India accounted for 37% of the labour, Pakistan accounted for 44%, while Bangladesh accounted for just 19%.

However, in the first three months of 2017, Bangladesh has reversed that trend and now accounts for 51% of the South Asian labour output to Gulf countries.

When asked, the UAE Ambassador Dr. Al Banna said he hopes the government's issues over the eMigrate system would be resolved soon in order to stem that trend.

More than five million Indian nationals work in Gulf countries with a majority of them hired as blue-collar workers in labour intensive sectors including construction, industrial sector, transport, supply and service sectors.

PEOPLE LEAVE DROUGHT-AFFECTED VILLAGES IN KARNATAKA SEARCH OF LIVELIHOOD



In some places, however, the rural job guarantee scheme has stemmed exodus

Consecutive years of drought has people in the dry taluks such as Deodurg, Manvi and Lingsugur in Raichur district leaving the villages in droves. Even small and middle farmers in the irrigated belts of Raichur district have migrated as both Narayanpur and Tungabhadra reservoirs are almost dry.

Situation in some belts of southern Karnataka is as bad. For instance, in B.K. Halli in Pavagada taluk of Tumakuru district, about 800 people, of the population of 2,500, have left for Jigani and Peenya industrial areas in Bengaluru in search of work. Those left behind are mostly the elderly and children. Hanumantharayappa, a washerman in the village, said, "When there is no water to drink, where is the question of work for a washerman? My children and relatives have gone to Bengaluru and Tumakuru for work."

The picture, however, is more heartening in places where Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is implemented better, in Kalaburagi and Bidar districts.

“Over 200 people in Chindanur tanda in Chincholi taluk used to migrate to Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana every year. But this year none has left as they are provided work under the job scheme,” said Sanjeev Pawar, vice-president of the Shadipur Gram Panchayat. At present, 100 people are involved in tank-dredging work alone. These are regions where Janawadi Mahila Sanghatan and other social groups have taken up extensive campaign for creating more demand for work under the scheme.

“We have camped in rural areas, moving from one hamlet to other, spreading awareness about the job scheme. Over 1,500 people have got work in the last fortnight in Chincholi,” said K. Neela, leader of the JMS.

Ballari and Koppal too have witnessed rise in MGNREGA work in places where there is greater awareness about the scheme. For instance, in Ballari district, about 34,000 people worked in 2016–17, as against 15,000 during the previous year.

In contrast, in Raichur district, activists allege procedural issues in the MGNREGA are leading to less job creation. “Earlier, one bank account would do for all the family members having job cards. Now, each member is required to have an account. Bank officials are not cooperating with people coming for opening new accounts,” alleged Vidya Patil, an activist.

“Wherever rural labourers’ organisation is active, people are getting work under the job scheme in view of agitations demanding work. The areas where the organisation has little influence such as Deodurg taluk in Raichur district, people continue to migrate on a large scale,” said Abhay Kumar, leader of the Grameena Koolikarara Sangha.

Farmers in parts of Kalaburagi and Bidar districts, which have seen relatively better rains, are engaging in agricultural activities. These were the only two districts that received more than normal rainfall during the last monsoon.

Even after red-gram crop on around 60,000 hectares of land was lost in the downpour that lashed in September 2016 in Kalaburagi district, the standing crop remained largely unaffected on nearly 4 lakh hectares.

The impact of demonetisation

Most people migrate from Hyderabad Karnataka region — particularly from Shahpur, Surpur, Yadgir, Manvi, Lingsugur, and Deodurg taluks — to be absorbed into the construction industry in

Bengaluru, Hyderabad and other metros. However, with construction activities on a downswing after demonetisation, these metros are not pulling the rural labourers like they used to.

Rural labourers and small farmers who used to migrate every year during off-agricultural season are finding it better to work under the job guarantee scheme at a wage of ₹234 a day rather than migrating to distant urban centres for uncertain work.

This apart, since most parts of the State are under the consecutive spells of drought, the demand for farm labourers has dwindled from sugarcane and coffee-growing districts.

As a result, a considerable size of labourers from Hyderabad Karnataka region, who would seasonally migrate to these places, was forced to stay back at their villages finding alternative work.

WORSENING HUNGER CRISES STROKE

GLOBAL MIGRATION: U.N. STUDY



The more people go hungry at home the more likely they are to migrate, according to a United Nations study released on Friday as the world grapples with four potential famines simultaneously for the first time in recent history.

The number of people fleeing a country increases by 1.9 per cent for each percentage increase of food insecurity, the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) said in the first report to comprehensively analyse the link between hunger and migration.

Prolonged conflict also pushes more people to abandon their homes, with refugee outflows increasing 0.4 per cent for each additional year of war, the analysis said.

“By understanding the dynamics that compel people to move, we can better address what lies at the heart of forced migration and what must be done to end their suffering,” said WFP Executive Director David Beasley.

More than 20 million people risk dying from starvation because of drought and conflict in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and northeast Nigeria, while more than 100 million face acute malnutrition worldwide, according to the United Nations.

Famine was declared in some areas of South Sudan in February — the first official famine in six years.

The WFP study, which included interviews with migrants from 10 countries, also found that hunger fuelled conflicts with reports of people joining armed groups to feed their families.

In turn, war makes food more scarce.

“We had to eat grass to survive. My kids stayed up all night crying because they were hungry,” a woman who fled Syria to Jordan with her family was quoted as saying.

A record 65.3 million people were uprooted worldwide in 2015, according to U.N. data.

Some 1.6 million refugees and migrants reached the European Union in 2014-2016 leading to disputes on how to share the burden among member states.

‘ANNA BHAGYA STOPPED MIGRATION OF FARM LABOUR’

It has been one of the most successful schemes: Siddaramaiah

Making ‘Karnataka hunger-free’ and preventing migration of farmers are the objectives of the Anna Bhagya scheme, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the renovated Sri Beereshwara Channakeshava (Varakodappa) temple at Kodi Koppalu village in the district on Monday. Addressing a huge gathering, he said Anna Bhagya has been one of the most successful schemes that prevented agriculture labourers from migrating to towns seeking jobs.

The State was reeling under severe drought for the last three years, and the farming community was severely affected. The State government’s welfare schemes such as Anna Bhagya had helped people tackle droughts.

Mr. Siddaramaiah was highly praised by former Minister M.H. Ambareesh and suspended JD(S) MLA N. Cheluvaraya Swamy for implementing a series of welfare schemes to uplift the deprived community.

Meanwhile, pickpockets stole a wallet containing 10,000 from a party worker at the venue. Some BJP and Dalit Sangarsh Samiti workers were taken into preventive custody by the police ahead of Mr. Siddaramaiah’s visit to the district.

Recently, a group of BJP workers attempted to stage a protest against Mr. Siddaramaiah at Malavalli. Subsequently, the Superintendent of Police was taken to task by the Chief Minister.

Job scheme has ensured regular income to rural people: Minister

The State government's Anna Bhagya scheme to provide rice free to the poor along with the successful implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) project has helped mitigate migration from areas reeling under severe drought, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj H.K. Patil has said.

Speaking at a Jana Mana programme organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations to receive feedback from beneficiaries of various government schemes here on Friday, Mr. Patil said that while Anna Bhagya has ensured availability of meals for each one of the beneficiaries, the effective implementation of MGNREGA project has ensured regular income to the rural people. As a result, migration from rural areas in search of livelihood has significantly come down this year, he said.

In the last fiscal, the State created 10.40 crore man-days exceeding the target of creating six crore man-days set by the Union government. This year, the State government has set a target of creating 12 crore man-days. Besides, guaranteeing jobs for the rural poor, the project has helped creation of assets in villages. Development of playgrounds, agriculture facilities, burial grounds and other such works have improved infrastructure in the rural areas, he said.

The government's social security pension has helped large sections of the deprived sections. For first time, the government cleared all new applications seeking pension. Similarly, Ksheera Bhagya [milk for children] too has helped maintain nutrition level among children, he added.

Taking a dig at politicians levelling allegations against the Congress government, Mr. Patil said that those who were accusing the government of neglecting the interests of the farmers were not farmers in the real sense. Several farmers taking part in the district level Jana Mana programme praising the State government's schemes such as Krishi Bhagya and Ksheeradhara bore witness to the government's initiatives for strengthening the farm sector yielding results. It is better they go to the villages and do a reality check with real farmers working in the fields, Mr. Patil said.

Water supply

Referring to drinking water supply in Gadag town, Mr. Patil said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would inaugurate the second phase of a project to supply drinking water from the Tungabhadra to Gadag and the 24 x 7 water supply scheme on June 4.

NET MIGRATION FALLS IN BRITAIN

NUMBER OF EU CITIZENS LEAVING U.K. RISES, WHILE ARRIVAL OF FOREIGN STUDENTS FALLS

Net migration into Britain fell to 248,000 in 2016, led by a significant rise in the number of EU citizens leaving the U.K. and a fall in the international students arriving. While the fall will be welcomed by some, including the Conservative party, which in its manifesto maintains a commitment to lowering net migration to the tens of thousands, it will raise concerns among others about potential skill shortages in the U.K.

Brexit impact

Figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on Thursday showed a statistically significant fall in net migration by 84,000 compared to 2015, driven by the number of EU citizens leaving Britain more than tripling. Some 43,000 citizens of so-called EU-8 nations, including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, left Britain during the year, while fewer numbers came to the country.

The figures are considered significant, highlighting the impact that last June's referendum on leaving the EU is having on citizens of other European countries residing in Britain.

There was also a significant decrease in long-term immigration to study, which fell by 32,000 from 2015 to 136,000. The ONS noted that this was also driven by a decrease in students from Asia, whose numbers fell to 64,000 from 80,000 in 2015 (it does not break it down by country until later this year). However, separate data from the Home Office (which includes data on students on visas for less than a year) showed a slight increase in the number of visas issued to Indian students, whose numbers rose by 6% year-on-year to 11,642. Home Office data also showed that from outside the EU, the highest number of long-term visas were granted to Indian and Chinese nationals.

Emotive issue

The issue of immigration has emerged as a particularly emotive issue in Britain's election campaigning. While the Conservatives have pledged to control and reduce immigration because high levels made it "difficult to build a cohesive society", the Labour Party has promised "fair rules and reasonable management of migration". The far-right UKIP party, which released its manifesto on Thursday, said it would target reducing net migration to zero. Among the major parties, it has fallen to the Liberal Democrats to commit to "making the positive case for immigration".

Industry leaders and think tanks have expressed their concerns about immigration control in the U.K., particularly once it exits the European Union.

In April, Jaguar Land Rover's CEO Ralf Speth highlighted the importance of access to a skilled international workforce in an interview with the BBC. Think tank Our Global Future published a report earlier this month noting the importance of immigration to the U.K. economy, estimating that an annual net migration figure "well in excess of 200,000" will be needed in the long term to avoid "catastrophic consequences for the economy".



HOW GENETICS IS SETTling THE ARYAN MIGRATION DEBATE

New DNA evidence is solving the most fought-over question in Indian history. And you will be surprised at how sure-footed the answer is, writes Tony Joseph

The thorniest, most fought-over question in Indian history is slowly but surely getting answered: did Indo-European language speakers, who called themselves Aryans, stream into India sometime around 2,000 BC – 1,500 BC when the Indus Valley civilisation came to an end, bringing with them Sanskrit and a distinctive set of cultural practices? Genetic research based on an avalanche of new DNA evidence is making scientists around the world converge on an unambiguous answer: yes, they did.

This may come as a surprise to many — and a shock to some — because the dominant narrative in recent years has been that genetics research had thoroughly disproved the Aryan migration theory. This interpretation was always a bit of a stretch as anyone who read the nuanced scientific papers in the original knew. But now it has broken apart altogether under a flood of new data on Y-chromosomes (or chromosomes that are transmitted through the male parental line, from father to son).

LINES OF DESCENT

Until recently, only data on mtDNA (or matrilineal DNA, transmitted only from mother to daughter) were available and that seemed to suggest there was little external infusion into the Indian gene pool over the last 12,500 years or so. New Y-DNA data has turned that conclusion upside down, with strong evidence of external infusion of genes into the Indian male lineage during the period in question.

The reason for the difference in mtDNA and Y-DNA data is obvious in hindsight: there was strong sex bias in Bronze Age migrations. In other words, those who migrated were predominantly male and, therefore, those gene flows do not really show up in the mtDNA data. On the other hand, they do show up in the Y-DNA data: specifically, about 17.5% of Indian male lineage has been found to belong to haplogroup R1a (haplogroups identify a single line of descent), which is today spread across Central Asia, Europe and South Asia. Pontic-Caspian Steppe is seen as the region from where R1a spread both west and east, splitting into different sub-branches along the way.

The paper that put all of the recent discoveries together into a tight and coherent history of migrations into India was published just three months ago in a peer-reviewed journal called 'BMC Evolutionary Biology'. In that paper, titled "A Genetic Chronology for the Indian Subcontinent Points to Heavily Sex-biased Dispersals", 16 scientists led by Prof. Martin P. Richards of the University of Huddersfield, U.K., concluded: "Genetic influx from Central Asia in the Bronze Age was strongly male-driven, consistent with the patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal social structure attributed to the inferred pastoralist early Indo-European society. This was part of a much wider process of Indo-European expansion, with an ultimate source in the Pontic-Caspian region, which carried closely related Y-chromosome lineages... across a vast swathe of Eurasia between 5,000 and 3,500 years ago".

In an email exchange, Prof. Richards said the prevalence of R1a in India was "very powerful evidence for a substantial Bronze Age migration from central Asia that most likely brought Indo-European speakers to India." The robust conclusions of Professor Richards and his team rest on their own substantive research as well as a vast trove of new data and findings that have become available in recent years, through the work of genetic scientists around the world.

Peter Underhill, scientist at the Department of Genetics at the Stanford University School of Medicine, is one of those at the centre of the action. Three years ago, a team of 32 scientists he led published a massive study mapping the distribution and linkages of R1a. It used a panel of 16,244 male subjects from 126 populations across Eurasia. Dr. Underhill's research found that R1a had two sub-haplogroups, one found primarily in Europe and the other confined to Central and South Asia. Ninety-six per cent of the R1a samples in Europe belonged to sub-haplogroup Z282, while 98.4% of the Central and South Asian R1a lineages belonged to sub-haplogroup Z93. The two groups diverged from each other only about 5,800 years ago. Dr. Underhill's research showed that within the Z93 that is predominant in India, there is a further splintering into multiple branches. The paper found this "star-like branching" indicative of rapid growth and dispersal. So if you want to know the approximate period when Indo-European language speakers came and rapidly spread across India, you need to discover the date when Z93 splintered into its own various subgroups or lineages. We will come back to this later.

So in a nutshell: R1a is distributed all over Europe, Central Asia and South Asia; its sub-group Z282 is distributed only in Europe while another subgroup Z93 is distributed only in parts of Central Asia and South Asia; and three major subgroups of Z93 are distributed only in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Himalayas. This clear picture of the distribution of R1a has finally put paid to an earlier hypothesis that this haplogroup perhaps originated in India and then spread outwards. This hypothesis was based on the erroneous assumption that R1a lineages in India had huge diversity compared to other regions, which could be indicative of its origin here. As Prof. Richards puts it, “the idea that R1a is very diverse in India, which was largely based on fuzzy microsatellite data, has been laid to rest” thanks to the arrival of large numbers of genomic Y-chromosome data.

Gene-dating the migration

Now that we know that there WAS indeed a significant inflow of genes from Central Asia into India in the Bronze Age, can we get a better fix on the timing, especially the splintering of Z93 into its own sub-lineages? Yes, we can; the research paper that answers this question was published just last year, in April 2016, titled: “Punctuated bursts in human male demography inferred from 1,244 worldwide Y-chromosome sequences.” This paper, which looked at major expansions of Y-DNA haplogroups within five continental populations, was lead-authored by David Poznik of the Stanford University, with Dr. Underhill as one of the 42 co-authors. The study found “the most striking expansions within Z93 occurring approximately 4,000 to 4,500 years ago”. This is remarkable, because roughly 4,000 years ago is when the Indus Valley civilization began falling apart. (There is no evidence so far, archaeologically or otherwise, to suggest that one caused the other; it is quite possible that the two events happened to coincide.)

The avalanche of new data has been so overwhelming that many scientists who were either sceptical or neutral about significant Bronze Age migrations into India have changed their opinions. Dr. Underhill himself is one of them. In a 2010 paper, for example, he had written that there was evidence “against substantial patrilineal gene flow from East Europe to Asia, including to India” in the last five or six millennia. Today, Dr. Underhill says there is no comparison between the kind of data available in 2010 and now. “Then, it was like looking into a darkened room from the outside through a keyhole with a little torch in hand; you could see some corners but not all, and not the whole picture. With whole genome sequencing, we can now see nearly the entire room, in clearer light.”

Dr. Underhill is not the only one whose older work has been used to argue against Bronze Age migrations by Indo-European language speakers into India. David Reich, geneticist and professor in the Department of Genetics at the Harvard Medical School, is another one, even though he was very cautious in his older papers. The best example is a study lead-authored by Reich in 2009, titled “Reconstructing Indian Population History” and published in *Nature*. This study used the theoretical construct of “Ancestral North Indians” (ANI) and “Ancestral South Indians” (ASI) to discover the

genetic substructure of the Indian population. The study proved that ANI are “genetically close to Middle Easterners, Central Asians, and Europeans”, while the ASI were unique to India. The study also proved that most groups in India today can be approximated as a mixture of these two populations, with the ANI ancestry higher in traditionally upper caste and Indo-European speakers. By itself, the study didn’t disprove the arrival of Indo-European language speakers; if anything, it suggested the opposite, by pointing to the genetic linkage of ANI to Central Asians.

However, this theoretical structure was stretched beyond reason and was used to argue that these two groups came to India tens of thousands of years ago, long before the migration of Indo-European language speakers that is supposed to have happened only about 4,000 to 3,500 years ago. In fact, the study had included a strong caveat that suggested the opposite: “We caution that ‘models’ in population genetics should be treated with caution. While they provide an important framework for testing historical hypothesis, they are oversimplifications. For example, the true ancestral populations were probably not homogenous as we assume in our model but instead were likely to have been formed by clusters of related groups that mixed at different times.” In other words, ANI is likely to have resulted from multiple migrations, possibly including the migration of Indo-European language speakers.

TRAFFICKING

SEVEN HELD FOR SELLING BABY

The Anti-Human Trafficking Cell of Madurai city recovered an 18-month-old male child that was illegally sold by a woman through brokers to a couple in Thoothukudi in 2015.

Seven persons, including the couple that adopted the child, four brokers, and the mother of the child, have been arrested.

Tip off

Based on a tip off, the Anti-Human Trafficking cell Sub-Inspector of Police, N. Subathra, conducted a discreet investigation.

The police found that the baby was sold for Rs. 2 lakh and the S. S. Colony police registered a case under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015.

Subsequently, the police arrested the mother, a 24-year-old woman of J. J. Nagar in Madakulam, who had conceived the child out of wedlock with a man identified as Azhageswaran.

The police also arrested two women brokers, P. Janaki (52) and her daughter S. Sumathi (31) of Usilampatti and two more brokers S. Sooriammal and M. Balamurugan of Thoothukudi.

The baby was recovered from a handicapped couple, R. Sankaranarayanan (43) and S. Veerammal (41) of Thoothukudi and was handed over to a child care centre in the city.

The police are on the lookout for Azhageswaran.

A HASSAN GIRL WHO WAS SOLD AS

A BRIDE IN FARAWAY BIKANER



Low sex ratio in States such as Rajasthan has resulted in the creation of a human trafficking network in Karnataka

Gowamma had given up all hope of seeing her daughter again. The teenaged pre-university student, Suma, had gone missing on September 29 last year, and Gowamma had spent more than six months searching for her, waiting for her. The distressed mother had not dared to file a police complaint as someone told her Suma might have “eloped” with some “boyfriend”. Worried that the police might dig up dirt on her daughter, and that her family reputation would be in tatters, Gowamma chose not to approach official channels. Then, one afternoon, in March this year, she received a phone call from an unknown number. It was her daughter, Suma, at the other end.

“In the first call, she hardly shared information about her whereabouts. She said she was doing well and cut the call. And when I tried to call her back there was no response,” the mother recalls. But Suma called again. With some more details of her whereabouts. “That when she told me she was in Rajasthan and wanted to come back.”

With her meagre salary as a garment worker, Gowamma had no idea how to reach Rajasthan to bring her daughter back. Her husband had died a few years earlier and she had a son to take care of at home. She knew she had no choice but to seek official help; she approached the district vigilance committee on human trafficking. Based on her complaint, The Hindu carried a report on April 26. A judge in the Karnataka High Court took note of the news report and through his subordinates contacted the police and insisted on a thorough inquiry into the case.

Thus began an elaborate operation to trace Suma in Rajasthan and bring her back to her home in Hassan.

Gowamma shared the phone numbers from which she had received the calls. Two teams, including one headed by Additional SP Jyothi Vaidyanathan, left for Rajasthan and traced Suma with the help of the numbers. "We had not heard of human trafficking in Hassan in the recent years," said a police officer, a member of the team that visited Rajasthan.

Suma was away from home for seven months and she had travelled nearly over 3,000 kilometres in that period. She told the police she was first taken to Bengaluru by two women in Arasikere, who assured her a job. "My mother was working hard and I wanted to come home after achieving something in life. As they assured me a job I went to Bengaluru with them without informing my mother," she said.

It did not take her long to realise that she had been caught in a trap of trafficking. She was taken to Chennai, where she was kept in a room. Many men came to see her. She did not understand what their intention was. "The trafficking team had intended to marry her off in exchange for a big sum of money. As they could not arrive at a deal in Chennai, the girl was taken to Bikaner in Rajasthan", said Superintendent of Police R.K. Shahapurwad.

After reaching Rajasthan, she was first "married off" to an old man. The girl, however, refused to stay put with him, forcing the old man to "return" her to the broker from whom he had "purchased" her. Later, she was married to a 23-year old person, who is believed to have paid Rs.3 lakh.

Now, at 17, the girl is four months pregnant. She is being kept in a children's home run by the Women and Child Development Department in Hassan.

Gowamma is very worried about the future of her daughter. Suma has reportedly told the officers that she would like to go through the pregnancy and support her child. She was also quite sympathetic to her husband, who, she said, did not ill-treat her.

While she wants the women who trafficked her daughter arrested and severely punished, Gowamma is sympathetic to the daughter's husband and mother-in-law. "They have taken good care of my daughter. If my daughter wishes, she may stay with the family when all the legal issues are cleared," she said.

The police, who investigated the case, stress the need for a special team involving senior officers to bust what they suspect is a nation-wide racket of trafficking, with the low sex ratio in some parts of the country fuelling it.

From Arasikere the girl was taken to different places, offering room to suspect the role of a wide network. "During the investigation, we could make out many girls might have been caught by this trafficking network. But, so far, in Hassan, we have not received any complaint of a similar nature. Of course, there may be girls from other places," said R.K.Shahapurwad, SP of Hassan.

The police who went to Rajasthan have got the girl's husband and mother-in-law, who "purchased" her into the custody. According to the sources, the efforts to nab the brokers involved in the whole incident are still on.

The low sex ratio in Rajasthan is said to be one of the reasons for the trafficking. "We need a special team with a good number of officers, who can visit different places of the country at a time and trace the brokers. I am sure, a well-planned investigation into this case will definitely bring out many horrifying stories," said a police officer, who was part of the team.

POLICE CHECKING TRAFFICKING ASPECT

14 MIGRANT CHILDREN RESCUED FROM HOUSE AT MENONPARA

A day after rescuing 14 migrant children from a house at Menonpara, near here, and bringing them under the temporary care of the Palakkad district child welfare committee, the police are investigating whether it is an attempt of human trafficking.

Two office-bearers of the New Delhi-based Grace Care Society, who allegedly took the children to Menonpara and arranged their stay there, are in police custody. Chittur Circle Inspector V. Hamsa is leading the investigation team. The children, claiming to be natives of Greater Noida, are lodged at the Government Children's Home at Muttikulangara here.

District Collector P. Marykutty said the boys, aged between 11 and 14, did not possess any valid document. The district child welfare committee said the children would be released only after confirming that they were not being trafficked and on furnishing all documents.

Thomas George, one of the persons in custody, said the children were taken to Menonpara as part of an educational initiative of Grace Care.

He said the documents were with the organisation, which included consent letters from families. Meanwhile, an office-bearer of the organisation contacted the district police from Noida and said he would reach Palakkad soon to produce the Aadhaar cards of the children.

However, the district child welfare committee maintained that Aadhaar cards were not enough and they should be supported by certificates of their parents, a letter from the village officer, and also the confirmation of the child welfare committees concerned in their respective village.

107 CHILDREN RESCUED IN KOTA DIVISION

Over a hundred children have been rescued from four cities of Kota division within five days of a special drive launched by the Rajasthan Police's Anti Human Trafficking Cell.

The one-month-long special drive, which started on May 15, aims at rescuing missing children, child labourers and minors engaged in begging.

Six FIRs registered

Most child labourers were rescued from Kota city, said Dharmraj, the Anti Human Trafficking Cell in-charge. Sixty children, including five girls, were rescued from different areas here, he said, adding that one of the five girls was begging when she was rescued. Children were also rescued from Udoghnagar, Borekheda and Kunadhi, where they were working at dhabas , mechanic shops and bangle manufacturing units, he said. Six FIRs have been registered against owners and proprietors of the firms where the children were found working. The children have been sent to various shelter homes.

L-G ORDERS DRIVE AGAINST BEGGING

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Thursday ordered a joint drive by the Delhi Police and the Social Welfare Department to curb organised gangs that force people, particularly children, into begging.

Mr. Baijal said in a series of tweets that he had chaired a meeting to review cases of missing children and human trafficking in the city.

‘Skill training must’

While he commended the police’s efforts to locate missing people through Operations Milap and Pehchan, Mr. Baijal said there was a need to improve the government-run beggar homes and provide skill training to the residents.

In another tweet, Mr. Baijal ordered the Delhi Police and Social Welfare Department to launch joint drives against organised begging.

ONLINE TRADING OF HUMANS

Supernova brings to light, on stage, the grave issue of human trafficking

Playwright Rahul Rai explores the interplay between technology and human trafficking in his latest play, #Supernova . The play, designed and directed by Abhishek Majumdar, is set in eastern Uttar Pradesh and tells the story of a father who is in desperate search of his missing son, who has been sold in Dubai. The boy’s online profile #Supernova suggests to his clientele that he is a good performer in the sex trade. While a client falls in love with the boy, the father gives up his search for his son.

The Human Trade Network has commissioned four plays from theatre companies in Burkina Faso, Germany, Romania, and India. The Indian Ensemble from Bengaluru was chosen from India. “Eight months ago, Abhishek asked if I am interested in writing about human trafficking,” says Rahul.

Rahul, who has also co-founded T for Theatre with Shruti Sharma , says he wrote about seven drafts of the play. “I did research online, I read newspaper reports, and Abhishek gave me a lot of

feedback.” Even though the research didn’t involve personal, first person accounts, Rahul says there was an incident in his home town, Gorakhpur, that may seem far removed his own reality, but, at the same time, was hauntingly near. “A boy from Gorakhpur went missing, and it is believed that he has been in Saudi Arabia for two years. I can’t imagine what he might be going through.”

Explaining the title of the play, Rahul says: “The boy is very famous online. Also he always loved stars and wanted to be like a ‘supernova’. And so he kept his name as Santosh Supernova.”

Since the play is one that represents stark reality, has the play, then, been written in a cinematic style? “When I write a scene, I give more importance to the ambience,” says Rahul, adding: “I was part of the Writer’s Bloc, where I received the feedback that my play seemed more like a film and not much like theatre!”

The play is in Hindi and Bhojpuri. Rahul elucidates: “I feel that language makes a character more authentic. I have written plays in Hindi and Haryanvi, another in Hindi and Awadhi.”

Apart from the powerful script and performances by Avneesh Mishra and Sandeep Shikhar, the soundscape is definitely something to watch out for, informs the producer of the play, Vivek Madan.

The sound design has been created by Nikhil Nagaraj and the music is by M.D. Pallavi. “A lot of technology has gone into creating the sound,” says Pallavi. Nikhil adds: “The idea was to bring in Indian elements and create an emotional texture.”

Pallavi will also be singing live on stage. “It was an interesting challenge to create the soundscape. The play is dark and tragic, but the soundscape creates an ambience without bringing the emotion of the tragedy. The emotional tension is created by the actors alone,” says Pallavi.

#Supernova will be performed on June 3 and June 4 at Max Mueller Bhavan at 3.30 and 7.30 p.m. The play is of mature content and is strictly for people above 18. Tickets on bookmy show.

BONDED LABOUR

124 ‘BONDED’ LABOURERS RESCUED FROM BRICK KILNS



37 child workers among the group that belongs to Odisha

As many as 124 bonded labourers, including 37 child workers, from Odisha were rescued from brick kilns by a team of district officials at Tripurantakam in Prakasam district on Tuesday.

District Legal Services Authority Chairman and Principal District Judge M.G. Priyadarshini took a complaint suo motu and facilitated the rescue of the workers from the Balangir district of western Odisha.

Detailed probe

On a complaint, a case under the Bonded Labour (Prohibition) Act was registered against a brick kiln owner, Venkateswara Reddy, and further action would be taken after a detailed probe, said Additional Superintendent of Police A. Udaya Rani.

DLSA Secretary T. Raja Venkatadri said each worker would get Rs. 20,000 from the Union and the State governments as compensation.

District Child Protection Officer Supriya, who was part of the rescue team, said the workers, including 69 women from the neighboring State, were allegedly paid Rs. 20,000 each as advance and brought here to work. They lacked even washrooms and none of the children was put in schools as per law.

Pouring out their woes, a group of rescued workers said they used to start work at the break of dawn and continue till late midnight with short breaks for cooking food and attending nature's call. No regular work

With no regular work back in their villages, they settled for work away from their homeland going by the promise of a decent pay and accommodation, explained a worker, Shankar. But their hopes were belied. On coming here, the kiln owner allegedly started beating them whenever they reported sick and fell short of the brick output, added another worker Govardhan.

They were forced to make about 2,000 bricks a day. "On an average they were paid a paltry Rs. 130 per day after long hours of back-breaking work under the hot sun," complained yet another disappointed worker Jilani.

HIGH COURT ORDER ADDS TO WOES OF BONDED LABOURERS

THE ORDER STRUCK DOWN A SECTION OF BONDED LABOUR ACT

A Madras High Court verdict past three years ago has adversely affected the relief and rehabilitation of bonded labourers in Tamil Nadu, say activists.

The order struck down Section 21 of the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976, as a result of which conviction rates have fallen. Section 21 of the Act empowered executive magistrates in the district administration (Revenue Divisional Officers in the case of Tamil Nadu) to try cases relating to bonded labour.

The High Court struck down the section in June 2014 and ordered that these cases be transferred to Judicial Magistrates in every district. “Because of the High Court order, bonded labourers who are already victims of violence, are further deprived of timely justice,” contends K. Krishnan, Secretary of National Adivasi Solidarity Council.

Retired judge of the Madras High Court Justice K. Chandra concurs. “There is nothing wrong in delegation of powers,” he says.

When asked for a comment, a senior official said it was easy for quick disposal of the cases when Section 21 of the Act was in place.

CAUGHT IN A VICIOUS CYCLE OF BONDED LABOUR



Though outlawed in 1976, bonded labour lives and thrives in the State, as highlighted by the Sivaji Ganesan committee. However, the State continues to maintain an Ostrich-like attitude, failing to conduct periodic surveys and implement rehabilitation programmes

The State of Karnataka in 2000 woke up to news about a certain medieval-era brutality being committed on bonded labourers, when the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha unearthed the case of five labourers being made to work throughout the day, enchained in shackles, in a quarry in Hangarahalli, near the historic town of Srirangapatna. It was the owner’s way of extracting repayment of loans, varying between Rs.500 and Rs.2,500. Four people were convicted in the case after nine long years.

While the State has since been in a denial mode on the existence of bonded labour, >a report submitted last week by a State-level investigation committee serves as a sobering reminder that feudal servitude lives and thrives here. The committee, headed by senior journalist Sivaji Ganesan, found that debt bondage, banned by law in 1976, has reinvented itself to adapt to modern agriculture and the burgeoning informal sector in the new economy. Comprehensive data needed

It is hard to accurately ascertain the extent of this scourge in the absence of a comprehensive and up-to-date Statewide survey. However, data compiled by non-governmental organisations and cited in the study provide some indicators.

Jeevika, an NGO working with bonded labourers who work in farms, assisted 7,646 bonded labourers to apply to the district authorities, for their release and rehabilitation, in 2012-13. In 2014, the

organisation detected 3,003 more cases. Raids in and around Bengaluru in recent times have exposed the urban face of bonded labour. In 2015 alone, the State official machinery, with International Justice Mission (IJM), an NGO, rescued 405 trafficked bonded workers and their families in Bengaluru and its suburbs from brick kilns and factories. Many of them had been trafficked, through labour contractors, from the impoverished pockets of the country, particularly from the Bolangir district in Odisha.

Though the more traditional form of bondage — where the debt is passed on from one generation to the next with the worker being confined perpetually to the landlord's home with no wages — has declined substantially, new forms of bondage have emerged. In the agrarian sector, the labourer is not necessarily confined physically but is bound by a high-interest debt bond to the landlord. Significantly, as the Ganeshan-committee report highlights, it has spread beyond agriculture and is prevalent in small eateries, brick kilns, agarbatti units, stone quarries, mines, the construction industry, looms and in homes as domestic labour right in the heart of cities.

Often, labourers are brought from distant places after paying an “advance” or promising a lump sum at the end of a certain period of work. Once they enter the workplace, they are often physically confined, forced to work for up to 18 hours a day and even subjected to physical abuse, as indicated by the stories narrated by rescued labourers.

As Esther Daniel of IJM says, there are no signs that bonded labour is on its way out. “In fact the crime itself is morphing and often takes the form of bonded labour trafficking, particularly for migrant labourers. Without local support systems, these migrant labourers remain vulnerable to perpetrators of this crime,” she says.

On the other hand, in rural areas, entrenched caste hierarchies and political clout conspire to keep the system going. “In villages, the only source of credit is often the landlord, who is seen as ‘generous’, for he lends readily, even though it is only in return for assured labour at very low wages,” says Kiran Kamal Prasad of Jeevika. The lender-borrower relationship is viewed as symbiotic rather than exploitative even by officials at the village, he says. “In our work we have found northern Karnataka more difficult to penetrate because the feudal powers are stronger there,” he adds.

Indeed, the urban and rural contexts, with their mix of an archaic social structure and new economic compulsions, seem to feed on each other. While agrarian crisis, lack of livelihood options and an oppressive structure act as push factors in villages, the informal sector in and around cities with lax or no labour norms absorb them readily. Brick kilns around cities like Bengaluru, for instance, are essential for the city, with its endless real estate development, and are ever-ready to absorb workers. Ironically, workers who arrive here from villages end up in situations worse than the ones they were in back home.

For instance, Rajesh Thathi from Assam, whom this correspondent had met after he was rescued from an agarbatti factory near Bengaluru earlier this year, said he had worked in a tea plantation for Rs.120 a day. He was promised Rs.7,500 per month along with provision for stay and food. “I thought I can save and send money back home,” he said. But he was not been paid any money till his rescue and was physically abused every time he demanded it and asked to be relieved from the oppressive arrangement.

Old and new compulsions

Analysing the socio-economic factors that provide ground for debt bondage, the Ganeshan committee says that borrowing often happens for a wedding or a serious illness in the family that requires hospitalisation. This again points to a mix of old and new economic compulsions: on the one hand, the system of dowry refuses to fade away. On the other, medical care is increasingly inaccessible to the poor.

While this is the reality, the state seems to maintain an Ostrich-like attitude. The Ganeshan committee is critical of the failure of the district administrations to do periodic surveys and take up rehabilitation work with seriousness, though it is mandatory. “The district officials show complete indifference to our request for information on the prevalence of bonded labour,” says Mr. Ganeshan. It is “unpardonable”, says the report, that the northern district of Bidar, which recorded the highest number of bonded labour cases as per Jeevika’s compilation of data, sent back money sanctioned by the Centre for a survey. Its claim was that there was no need for a survey since the practice simply didn’t exist in the district!

If one needs more proof for the indifference of the state and the failure of the rehabilitation programmes for bonded labourers, the Hangarahalli case provides it. British author Patrick French, in one of the chapters of his book, *India: A Portrait* recounts how he went looking for the victims of this much-publicised case and found them begging near a village temple!

ENVIRONMENT

KODAIKANAL ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE, CAN’T SET UP HELIPAD HERE: EXPERTS

MADURAI: The Tamil Nadu ministers who spoke at the inauguration of the 56th annual Kodai festival in [Kodaikanal](#) on Saturday had stated that steps would be taken to establish a helipad to enable helicopters and small planes to land at the hill station. However, experts say that the ministers were clearly unaware that the state government has passed a government order (GO) to form the Kodaikanal sanctuary, an eco-sensitive zone, banning operation of aircraft within it.

Speaking to TOI, founder of Nature Care Trust, V Asokan, said that ministers, including Dindigul Sreenivasan and N Natarajan, who were speaking of additional facilities for Kodaikanal to enhance tourism, were clearly unaware that the GO No. 143 (Sept 20, 2013) notified Kodaikanal as a wildlife sanctuary under Section 26A1(b) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. He said that though the government order was passed, it is now awaiting the central government to declare it a sanctuary. The ministers who were talking about promotion of tourism in Kodaikanal seemed to be unaware of the details of this declaration as most of the proposals for promotion of tourism could not be implemented once the region is declared a wildlife sanctuary, he said.

There are many activities that have been identified which cannot be done within a sanctuary which will be completely under the control of the department of forests. They include commercial mining, felling trees, discharge of effluents and solid waste in natural water bodies or terrestrial area and undertaking activities related to tourism. "When even flying over it is prohibited how can the talk about establishing helipads," said Asokan. Also vehicular traffic has to be regulated within a wildlife sanctuary.

"Hence, when it comes into effect, it remains to be seen if Kodaikanal would even remain a tourist destination if the central government makes the declaration to announce it as a sanctuary," he added. The notification states that Kodaikanal, Palani in Dindigul and Periyakulam in would come under the Kodaikanal wildlife sanctuary which would be spread over an area of 60,895.482 hectares. Asokan says that the people of Kodaikanal were against the move to make the region a sanctuary as it would affect their livelihood, which is agriculture and tourism. The Ministers do not seem to have taken these into notice while making their speeches, he added.

EDUCATION

IT'S ALL SMILES ON FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL



CHILDREN ARE GARLANDED AND TAKEN IN A CEREMONIAL PROCESSION WITH DRUM BEAT TO SCHOOL

It was tear-free first day for the 20 toddlers, who joined first standard in English medium at the Vallal Pari Municipal Middle School, a government school here on Wednesday as they were garlanded and taken in a procession with drum beating to the school.

Ever since English medium was introduced in the school in 2013-14, the school authorities received the first batch of students with a difference, helping them overcome the separation anxiety and making the first day, a joyous occasion.

This year, the 11 boys and nine girls were taken in a ceremonial procession after the toddlers and their parents were received at a marriage hall and the teachers, led by D. Esther Veni. “The kids were delighted and jumped in joy as the teachers garlanded them and took them to the school in a procession amid drum beating,” she said.

As they walked down to the school, the children looked perplexed and turned bashful as senior students lined up at the entrance and welcomed them, presenting roses and chocolates. “No child cried and the parents were too happy,” she said.

After Chandrasekaran, District Elementary Education Officer flagged off the procession, Collector S. Natarajan visited the children in the classroom and blessed them with sandal. He also initiated the kids into writing Tamil alphabets in paddy grains, considered auspicious.

The children were all in smiles as teachers smeared sandal paste on their chubby cheeks and sprinkled ‘panneer.’ The children never removed the garlands and their parents were pleasantly surprised to see them in garlands when they came in the evening to take them back home, Ms. Veni said.

“The children are the fifth batch of English medium students and we have been extending this kind of reception since 2013,” she said adding they organised the procession this year to create public awareness about the availability of English medium education in government school.

English medium education in government school helped those who could not afford to admit their wards in private schools after paying hefty donation and admission fees. All the newly admitted children were given free uniforms, books and notebooks, she said.

PM SAYS, STATES NEED TO WORK TOGETHER FOR ‘NEW INDIA’

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday states need to work together for what he calls a vision to create a “New India”, addressing a meeting of the Niti Aayog’s Governing Council that was skipped by chief ministers Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal — two of his staunchest critics.

The Niti Aayog is the country’s top-most policy making body, and its governing council has among its members the Prime Minister and all chief ministers of the country.

Sunday’s meeting was called to discuss a ‘15-year vision document’ that would lay down the roadmap for India’s growth, economically and socially.

“The NITI Aayog is working on a 15-year long term vision, 7-year medium term strategy, and 3-year action agenda... This effort needs support of states,” PMO quoted Modi as saying in his opening statement.

The country is trying to push its GDP growth to upwards of 7.5% after it slipped to 7.1% in 2016-17 from 7.9% a year ago, due to the demonetisation drive in November.

Among those efforts is the rollout of a new indirect taxation regime, the GST, which the PM referred to on Sunday to drive home his point about federal cooperation.

“Consensus on GST will go down in history as a great illustration of cooperative federalism,” Modi said. “GST reflects the spirit of one nation, one aspiration, one determination.”

The Prime Minister also called for discussions on a plan to hold simultaneous elections be carried on.

Save for Banerjee and Kejriwal, Sunday’s meeting was attended by most of the other CMs.

AWARENESS

AN AWARENESS MEETING AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

A timely needed get together meeting of students conducted on 9.6.2017 for ensuring safety and security from all kinds of violation of children’s basic rights. All the students and staffs attended the meeting in the presence of the Principal. The Principal impressed the students that child labour problem is a major problem in our country, but all children are the treasure for future and they are not born to learn, play and enjoy in their childhood. The Principal also explained that a young student may drop out due to economic or academic reasons but that reasons should be tackled through appropriate measures by the concerned sources on the Principal enlightened that children are images of god and so that concerted and pragmatic efforts are needed to resolve the issues of child labour, and added we must create an awareness among the children about the right to education, mostly the issues of child laborers are employed in small –scale industries due to family circumstances and economic conditions. The Principal finally emphasized that the issue of child labour taking a strong stand against this serious problem of child labour.

Finally, a solemn affirmation was taken among the students against the child labour.

This awareness programme against child labour has kindled all the students to dedicate themselves for ensuring the safety and security from all kinds of violation of childrens basic rights.

