**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 shows interest in skills for youth for addressing social issues like modern slavery, child labour, migrant labour, unemployability of youth. Officials on the Migrant issue. We send this to people who we believe are involved in impressing the migrant's conditions. You are welcome to unsubscribe yourself, if you so choose,

**-EDITOR**

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

Skills for Freedom is an answer to Modern Slavery in Tamil Nadu. It is a joint effort for enhancing the employment opportunities of rural youth in Dindigul, Karur, Tirupur Districts.

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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**1.CHILD LABOUR:.**

**FORMER CHILD WORKERS LABOUR HARD TO COME OUT IN FLYING COLOURS**

Dharmapuri/Coimbatore/ Vellore/Virudhunagar: Thursday was a day of crowning glory for a batch of students in Tamil Nadu, who once slogged it out as child labourers but braved all odds and have come out on top in Plus Two examinations.

V Karthick of Kakkanjipuram in Palacode, Dharmapuri, who was rescued from a construction company in 2007, scored 1156 marks and has secured the State first rank among rescued child labourers, said officials of National Child Labour Project (NCLP). Karthick was forced to work for `45 a day while in fourth standard until he was rescued. He was enrolled in a special school run by NCLP where he studied up to seventh standard before joining a main stream school. He scored 475 marks in Class ten.

Later, with the help of the district collector and NCLP, he joined Vijay Vidyalaya where he studied classes XI and XII. His hard work has borne fruit as he scored 185 in Tamil, 188 in English, 200 in Maths, 194 in Physics, 195 in Chemistry, and 194 in Biology. Karthick wants to become a cardiologist and has requested the district administration to support him.

Five girls figure in the list of seven rescued child labourers who have performed well in Coimbatore district. M Manimegalai, student of government higher secondary school at Devanurpudur near Pollachi, sscored 995 marks, the highest in the group. She scored 176 in Tamil, 144 in English, 185 in History, 139 in Economics, 159 in Commerce, and 195 in Accountancy. Manimegalai was rescued from a brick kiln in her village. Her father Murugan, who works in a grove, said he would extend all support possible to enable Manimegalai continue higher studies.

Other rescued child labourers include Vigneskumar (925 marks), S Manikandan (888 marks), A Vinitha (892 marks), S Kowsalya (970 marks), Amsaveni (745 marks) and A Gomathi (897 marks). The Central government provides Rs 6000 annually to each rescued child labourer towards higher studies, said NCLP officials.

Eighteen-year-old Najuma of Konavattam in Vellore is among the 15 labourers rescued by Child Labour Abolition Support Scheme (CLASS) officials nine years ago. She has now emerged with flying colours scoring 909 marks (Tamil - 177, English - 159, Physics - 156, Chemistry - 147, Biology - 130, and Mathematics - 140). The second daughter of Abdul Wahab and Mumtaj, Najuma had never been to school until a teacher attached to CLASS found her (then eight years) rolling beedis in 2005. The rest, as they say, is history. Najuma wants to pursue a course in fashion designing, a dream she has nurtured for more than three years.

In a district notorious for child labour, 73 dropouts, who were rescued and put through formal education under the National Child Labour Project, have passed class XII examinations in Virudhunagar. Of the 73 students, three have secured district ranks in the NCLP circle. Eight students have scored over 1000 marks.

C Muthuselvi from Kalaimagal higher secondary school secured district first rank scoring 1135 marks with centum in Accountancy . K Gowsalya of SRN higher secondary school has secured district second rank scoring 1103 marks with centum in Accountancy and R Alaguraja of Thevamar higher secondary school secured the third rank with 1051 marks. Collector V Rajaraman awarded shields to the district toppers on Thursday evening. However, it was desolation for the group that belonged to CE higher secondary school, Vannarapet, in Tirchy district as all the four candidates failed in the examination.

**CABINET APPROVES CHANGES TO CHILD LABOUR ACT, BANS EMPLOYMENT OF THOSE BELOW 14 YEARS**

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ban on employment of children below 14 years, with a caveat that children can pursue family businesses, entertainment and sports activities after school or in vacations. The penalty provisions for employing a child have been increased to jail term of three years and fine of up to Rs 50,000.

Children can be employed only in non-hazardous family enterprises, TV serials, films, advertisements and sporting activities (except circus) with a condition that they would be made to do these jobs after school hours. The decision has been slammed by child rights activists as retrograde advocating a complete ban saying it was in contravention with the Right to Education Act. Activist lawyer Vrinda Grover described the cabinet decision as ``regressive'' impacting the most vulnerable people in the country. ``It goes against the RTE law that says equal opportunity must be provided to children. The provision home based industries will be used for exploitation of children and betrays the real intent of this government. We are legalizing a horrible reality instead of banning it.''

A new definition of adolescent has also been introduced to further prohibit employment of those aged 14-18 years in hazardous jobs, a government statement said. The amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act has, however, relaxed the penal provisions for parents or guardians, who were earlier subjected to same punishment as applicable to the employer of the child.

The amendment bill, approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi, provides that there would be no punishment for parents or guardians in case of first offence, while a maximum penalty of Rs 10,000 can be levied in case of the second and subsequent offences. Under the existing law, any violation attracts imprisonment of a minimum three months to a maximum of one year for the first offence, while the fine is Rs 10,000-20,000. This has been enhanced to imprisonment of six months to two years and fine of Rs 20,000-50,000 for the first offence. For the second offence, the jail provision has been increased from 6-24 months to 12-36 months. The current law prohibits employment of children, aged below 14 years, only in 18 specified occupations and 65 processes and regulates the conditions of working of children in other occupations/processes.

The new bill provides that employment of children below 14 years will be prohibited in all occupations and processes. Besides, the age of prohibition of employment will be linked to age under Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The new provisions are part of the official amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012.

The bill also provides for constitution of Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Fund for one or more districts for the rehabilitation of the child or adolescent rescued. Thus, the Act itself will provide for a fund to carry out rehabilitation activities, said the official statement. On the exceptions made in the new laws proposed, it said: "While considering a total prohibition on the employment of child, it would be prudent to also keep in mind the country's social fabric and socio-economic conditions."

It added: "In a large number of families, children help their parents in their occupations like agriculture, artisanship etc. While helping the parents, children also learn the basics of occupations." Therefore, it said, striking a balance between the need for education for a child and the reality of the socio- economic condition and social fabric in the country, the Cabinet has approved that "a child can help his family or family enterprise, which is other than any hazardous occupation or process, after his school hours or during vacation".

Commenting on the proposed changes, Enakshi Ganguly from Haq: Centre for Child Rights said the amendment will ``increase informalization of labour'' and a worrying sign. Child rights activists say that lifting the blanket ban on child labour would prove to be detrimental and unfairly puts the onus of continuing traditional arts and crafts on women and children.

As for the punishments, the bill provides that in case of first offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the act, penalty would be imprisonment for a term not less than six months but which may extend to two years or with fine not less than Rs 20,000, but which may extend to Rs 50,000 or with both.

At present, the act provides a penalty of an imprisonment for term not less than three months but which may extend to one year, or with fine not less than Rs 10,000 but which may extend to Rs 20,000 or with both. As per the bill, in case of a second or subsequent offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the act, the minimum imprisonment would be one year which may extend to three years.

The existing law provides that the penalty for second or subsequent offence of employing any child is an imprisonment for a minimum term of six months which may extend to two years. The bill also provides that the offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the act by an employer will be cognizable. That means that an offender can be arrested without warrant by an officer.

**NGO RESCUES 10 CHILD LABOURERS NEAR LABOR DEPT BUILDING**

LUDHIANA: Members of Navchetna, an NGO working for child labour in the city, on Monday start their awareness campaign against child labour in city. However, they were in for a shock when they spotted 10 child labourers near the labor department building on Gill road.

Sukhdhir Sekhon, Navchetna president, said, "As many as 10 child labourers were spotted near the labor department building and nearby areas. We had gone there to start our awareness campaign. Three children were working at a scrap shop in the building, one was working at the backside of the building in a car washing garage, three were selling tobacco in shops near the labour department building and one child was working at a shop."

He added, "Charity should begin at home. The labor department, besides raiding different places in the city, should also look in their backyard. All the children rescued near the department building were working on the daily wage of Rs 50-100 per day and were between 6 and 14 years of age.

The NGO members also met with the parents of these children and urged them to send their wards to government schools in the nearby areas localities. They also gifted them books and pencils. "We also met the shopkeepers who had employed these children and told them that it was wrong and illegal to employ children. Instead when any child comes to ask for employment, they should motivate them to study and go to school," Sukhdhir added.

Ludhiana coordinator, labor-cum-conciliation officer, Mona Puri said, "We continuously conduct raids in the city. The NGO members should have informed us if they were going to do some campaign. If they had spotted or rescued any children, they should have come to us and got them registered at schools under the National Child labor Project. We are working in accordance with the Bachpan Bachao Andolan as directed by the court."

**RESCUED CHILD LABOURERS SCORE WELL, SET HIGH AIMS**

VirudhunagarTrichy:

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

A decade ago, they were dropouts working in fireworks units, brick kilns and commercial establishments to support their families. Rescued under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP), these children were later admitted to regular schools. This year, 73 of them appeared for the Plus Two examinations, and each one of them passed.

Among them, C Muthuselvi secured 1135 marks, scoring 200 out of 200 in Accountancy , 199 in Commerce and 194 in Economics. Ten years ago, she was working in a small-scale unit that manufactured paper pipes for fireworks industry . She still works there to to support her family. Project director of NCLP T Narayanasamy said they had been rescuing children from these units since 1987.Last year, 85 such children appeared for Class 12 examination but not all of them could pass.

Twelve-year-old tive Elimination and Rehabilitation Society (CHEERS) in Trichy rescued her. She was shifted to a special training centre and later got admission in a school in Namakkal which provided her free education for two years.

When the Plus Two results were announced on Thursday , it was a vindicating moment for Mahalakshmi and the people who stood by her. She had scored 1142 out of 1200. She was one among the seven child labourers rescued by CHEERS who appeared for the Plus Two examination this year.

**FORMER WORKER WANTS TO BE A TEACHER**

Having lost her mother at the age of three, C. Muthuselvi of Tiruthangal was rolling dummies for firecrackers till she was admitted to the ‘Rs. 100 school’ (a reference to the special training centre run under National Child Labour Project) across the street in 2008. On Thursday, she walked into the Standard Fireworks Rajaratnam College for Women in Sivakasi to get an application form for admission to B.A. (English Literature).

With her score of 1,135, Muthuselvi of Kalaimagal Higher Secondary School, Tiruthangal, can walk into any top-ranking college. When her peers clamour for professional courses with lesser scores, Muthuselvi says, “I want to be a teacher. This has been my childhood dream.” She is among the 73 children, including 27 Dalit students, mainstreamed by the NCLP to have passed Plus Two this year.

The NCLP in Virudhunagar district has scored a centum with all its children getting through. K. Gowsalya of S.R.N. Higher Secondary School, Tiruthangal, a former worker in fireworks, has scored 1,103. R. Alaguraj of Thevamar Higher Secondary School, Sivakasi, who was assisting his father in hair dressing, has scored 1,051. Muthuselvi’s father works in a printing unit for daily wages and her aged grandmother, Mariammal, takes care of her. “I assist my grandmother in her night idli shop in Muthumari Nagar from 9 p.m. to midnight. I wake up at 4 a.m. to continue my study,” says Muthuselvi. She wants to do B. Ed. to become a teacher.

Virudhunagar district has 19 special training centres of the NCLP where child workers and school dropouts are provided elementary education before being integrated in mainstream schools. “We now have 166 former child workers of Virudhunagar district pursuing higher education, of whom 14 are in engineering colleges and three are studying law,” says T. Narayanasamy, Project Director, NCLP.

Integration of child workers with mainstream education is effected with the involvement of NCLP instructors, who closely follow the children right from a young age. The children identified by the NCLP are aged 9 to 14 years. “We strive to provide the best education for these children. We get them admitted to private schools with private sponsorship,” says M. Sivajothi, an NCLP instructor.

**FORMER CHILD LABOURERS EYE MEDICAL SEAT**

Karthik, an 18-year old erstwhile child labourer has secured 1,156 marks in Plus-Two examinations this year. A few years ago, Karthik never would have dared to dream. The 18-year old erstwhile child labourer has secured 1,156 marks in Plus-Two examinations this year.

His stoic tone belies the bygone struggles and downplays his current feat. At an age of nine, poverty drove him to a construction site with his father. It was the intervention of the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) that rescued Karthik from a building site, where he was giving a helping hand to his family of eight in Palacodde block here.

“I wanted to help my family, my parents never forced me. It was poverty that forced me to discontinue studies,” said Karthik talking about that dark period. He then attended a special school of the NCLP for two years, before he was mainstreamed for Standard VII. In Class X, he proved his mettle with 475 marks. Jointly, with the help of the district administration, he was admitted to a private school and put in a hostel free of cost. Karthik now wants to become a cardiologist.

“I am happy beyond words,” said his father Velu (44), who ekes a livelihood as a hawker dealing with utensils. “I want my son to help the poor by becoming a doctor,” said his mother Uma Maheshwari, For this Aruthathiyar family, dreams now ride on Karthik’s shoulders. V. Mahalakshmi’s father died when she was eight. Her mother was eking out a livelihood as a daily-wage labourer for a family of four and poverty forced Mahalakshmi to quit school after Class VI.

Life took a turn when NCLP officials in Tiruchi readmitted her to school after her undergoing a bridge course in the special training centre. On Thursday, this Dalit girl, who would have lived as a child labourer, secured 1142 marks in the higher secondary examinations. “I would complete my lessons on day-to-day basis. I always want to become a doctor and I’m confident of entering a medical college,” said Mahalakshmi, whose younger sister Priyadarshini, also once a child labourer, is awaiting her SSLC results. Her brother is working as a casual labour at Tiruchi Airport.

Mahalakshmi was one among the 579 former child labourers who could attend school thanks to the initiatives of the NCLP. As many as 600 students from 15 districts wrote the higher secondary examinations and 579 of them passed.

Even though C. Muthuselvi from Thiruthangal in Virudhunagar district has scored 1135, she refused to join the rate-race of engineering admissions. “I always nurtured the dream of becoming a teacher and I will study English literature,” said Muthuselvi, who worked as a child labourer in the match industry after he mother died. When she is at home, Muthuselvi assists her grandmother who runs an idly shop.

**19 GIRLS RESCUED FROM CHILD MARRIAGE CLEAR EXAMINATION**

The Plus-Two examination results turned out to be very special for 19 girls of this backward district. Rescued from child marriage, 17 of these girls studied in government schools in interior villages. After given counselling, the girls took to education and majority of them passed out of the science group. The topper among scored 867 marks.

Separate counselling sessions were held for their parents on educating their girl child and on the socio-psycho-health hazards of early marriage, said an official. Post rescue, the District Child Protection Unit made it a point to regularly follow up the status of the rescued girls to make sure that they were not married off again. The field staff made constant visits to their houses to ascertain if the girls carried on with their education. Now that the girls have cleared the Plus-Two exam, the district administration plans to organise a career guidance programme and assistance to get educational loans, officials said.

**FORMER CHILD LABOURERS SCORE HIGH IN SSLC EXAM**

TRICHY: A few years ago, out of compulsion, several children here were forced to take up jobs meant for adults, sacrificing their chance for an education in the process.

They became housemaids, goat herders, vendors and workshop assistants, among other things, to save their families from the consequences of poverty. Later rescued and put back in schools, these children turned out to be remarkably studious. When the SSLC examination results came out this year, all the 22 child labourers-turned-students passed and scored more than 60%. For this, they have to thank the efforts of the Child Labor Elimination and Effective Rehabilitation Society (CHEERS).

Four of them- three girls and one boy- secured more than 400 marks. S Sathishkumar, who was rescued as a child labourer from a tea shop in Ramachandra Nagar in 2008, became the topper of the group by scoring 438 marks. He was enrolled at a special training centre and shifted to a regular school in 2009. He completed his Class 10 from Kalaimagal High School in Edamalaipatti Pudhur. V Priyadharshini, who used to work as housemaid and later became a student at a government higher secondary school near Trichy international airport, scored 436 marks.

N Gomathi who used to herd goats for a living a while ago scored 424 marks. She was a student at government girls' higher secondary school in Manapparai on the outskirts of Trichy. Another girl V Mariya who was forced to work in a washer man's place in her area was rescued by CHEERS in 2008. She became a student of Kalaimagal high school in Edamalaipatti Pudhur and scored 419 marks.

Though the students successfully passed the Class 10 examination, their family circumstances and financial position would deeply influence their further education. "We have to ensure that all of them join higher secondary or diploma courses so their future will be bright," said project director of CHEERS S Pearline Selvakumar.

Couple of weeks ago, 15 former child labourers who were rescued this way and put in schools passed their Plus Two examinations with flying colors. One of the students V Mahalakshmi scored 1142 marks after she received free education at the Vinayaga Higher Secondary School in Namakkal. The school admitted her based on her good marks in Class 10.

**NOIDA'S INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS DOMESTIC CHILD LABOUR**

NOIDA: From the 1954 film Boot Polish to the recent Stanley Ka Dabba, I Am Kalam and Chillar Party, Bollywood has addressed child labour often. Remember the scene from Baghban when a boy polishing shoes catches the eye of Amitabh Bachchan, who decides to pay for the his education? In real life, things aren't so bright.

Although employing children under 14 years as domestic help, among others, is illegal in the country, they continue to work in homes in complete disregard to the law. Child labour is a common sight everywhere, but now, the issue is getting some more attention from the authorities.

Proposed amendments to be introduced in the Child Labour Act, for which the Union Cabinet accorded its approval recently, took the rules about employing children further. The amendments propose that children below 14 years can be employed only in non-hazardous family enterprises, TV serials, films, advertisements and sporting activities (except circus) with the condition that they be made to do these jobs after school hours. Though the decision is being criticised by activists who are demanding a complete ban, it again throws light on the issue we see everyday but probably ignore - of children working in our homes.

According to Bachpan Bachao Andolan, over 25-30 lakh households in NCR employ children as domestic help. Activists say that while exploitation of kids may still come to light in public places like tea stalls and eateries, the ones working in homes are more vulnerable to abuse by the employer.

Servants aged 11-12 common in Noida: Residents Noida residents say there are umpteen households employing children as domestic help. Mukul Jaiswal, who lives in Sector 51, says, "Recently, I visited one of my friends when his domestic help came to serve tea. I was taken aback - she was just 12-13 years old. When I asked my friend, he said, 'Child labour crime hai par kisi gareeb ki madad karna nahin'. He thinks that by making the little girl work in his home, he is helping her and her family. I tried to talk to him but he refused to even acknowledge it. I don't want him in jail, so I didn't complain to anyone."

Geetanjali Dubey, who lives in Sector 19, tells a similar tale. "Many of my neighbours employ girls as servants. In fact, one neighbour has an 11 year-old-girl working for her. She says the girl is there to play with and take care of her baby during daytime. When I tried to reason with her, she said, 'Main kaun sa usse kaam karati hoon, main toh usse khelne ke paise deti hoon," she says. Anupama Sharma, a homemaker in Sector 11, says, "People are fully aware that they shouldn't employ children, but they don't care. If someone confronts them, most of them say, 'She just looks young'. One of my neighbours has trained her child maid to tell others that she is 19, and one of my husband's friends asks their maid to wear salwar-kameez so she looks older. You won't go and complain about your friends, but it's sad that we're not able to stop them." Homemaker Neelu Sharma adds, "I've seen many cases where people employ small kids at home - be it their maid's kids, or someone they brought from their villages to 'give them a bright future'.

Neelu says, "In fact, recently, when my maid had to undergo an operation, she offered me to employ her adolescent daughter for 15 days. I refused, but many others in my colony agreed. It's also common among maids to send their kids to work. I did all the chores myself and paid her for the 15 days because I didn't want her to leave. It's easier to find a groom than a maid in Noida!"

**25-30 lakh houses employ child labour as servants in NCR: NGOs**

Rakesh Kumar, director, victim assistant and campaign, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, says, "Domestic child labourers are quite common in NCR. According to an estimate, around 25-30 lakh households across NCR have employed kids as servants. In fact, the demand for domestic help in the region is such that the so-called maid agencies have turned into human trafficking agencies. We filed a PIL in 2012 against such agencies where we had stressed that no maid agency should be allowed to employ any girl or boy below 18 years of age. Even as the bill was approved last year, it is yet to become a law. We have collaborated with a number of RWAs to rescue domestic child labourers in NCR. We have requested them to make their societies domestic-child-labour free, and many of them have responded positively. I think the RWAs can do a lot when it comes to sensitizing people on the issue of child labour."

Mala Bhandari, founder of an NGO called SADARG, says, "The situation is quite dire in Noida. Whenever we get to know about such a case, we contact the police to rescue the child worker. But most cases go unreported. One can see child labourers at tea stalls and other such places. But those working at homes are more vulnerable and harder to be rescued. Nobody gets to know how they are being treated inside a home. Those who employ child labour at homes are well educated and aware of the law. If they are so inconsiderate, who does one turn to?" While Ninad, a social worker who is associated with an NGO called Vidya and Child, says, "I find it really disturbing because child labour is not even considered an issue. I have worked in several slums and these children are no less talented than anyone else. They understand the importance of education. But it's heartbreaking when we see them working as servants at such a tender age. We have tried to make their employers understand that these children are losing out on their childhood, but they argue back saying it's better than them dying due to poverty."

Kids can be easily dominated, they don't argue back: Noida maids who started working as early as 7-8 years We spoke to a few maids in the city who have been working at people's homes since childhood. Manju, 21, who lives in Harola, tells us, "Mujhe ghar ka kaam karte 12 saal ho gaye hain. When I was around seven-eight years old, I started helping my mother in doing household chores, and when I learnt enough, she sent me to a house to work. Many people prefer kids in the 7-14 age group as domestic helps because they submissively do every little chore. Kahin bhi bhej do, gaadi saaf kara lo, garden mein paani dalwa do - bachche kar dete hain. They can't fight back or argue. In short, they can be controlled and dominated over as compared to professional maids."

Anjani, 18, a maid from Sector 12, says, "I must have been eight-years old when I had come to the city. I was so fascinated by my employer's TV and fridge and those cartoons that I never complained about less food, low salary and too much work. For poor parents, kids are a liability and when some rich person tells them that they want to employ their kid and will also pay them, they happily agree. For them, it is an additional income and plus they won't have to take care of the kid. And the employer also gets a cheap deal. Dono party ki deal bahut achhi ho jaati hai, bas bachche ke liye koi nahin sochta."

**GOVT SEEKS HELP FROM TEXTILE INDUSTRY TO CURB CHILD LABOUR**

SURAT: Surat's textile industry may be contributing over 40 per cent of the man-made fabric demand in the country, but what is lesser known is the unfortunate reality of the rampant child labourers working in weaving, embroidery, zardoji units and even in the textile markets.

To curb this evil practice of child labour, the labour department has sought help from the textile industry. The civil society organization working in the sector estimate that number of child labourers engaged in city's textile industry was over 50,000. Despite of frequent raids in the textile market and the textile units the menace is far from over.

A meeting of labour department officials and textile industry stakeholders was held at the New Textile Market (NTM) on Tuesday to coin out ways and means to eliminate child labour from the industry. Ashish Gandhi, assistant labour commissioner told TOI, "Child labour is prevalent in the zardoji units and the textile markets. These teenagers are employed for petty jobs like packaging, sizing of the fabrics and zardoji work."

"Though we do not have an exact number of the child labours employed in the city, but we are doing every bit to rescue them. From January to May, we have rescued over 45 child labours from zardoji and textile markets." Gandhi said, "We have asked the textile unit owners and traders not to employee children in their units or markets."

Sources said that most of the child labourers are brought from the states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand with the help of the middlemen who pay an agreed sum to the parents of these children. In Surat, there are over 75,000 shops in the textile markets. Most of the children are engaged in these markets get paid anywhere between Rs 90 to Rs 100 a day. However in powerloom factories, they get a measly Rs 40 to 45 per day as they are mainly employed as helpers.

**NEARLY 100 ACTIVISTS SLAM MOVE TO LEGALIZE CHILD LABOUR IN FAMILY FIRMS, CALL IT 'RETROGRESSIVE**

NEW DELHI: Nearly 100 child rights activists have protested against the Centre's move to allow children under 14 years to work in family enterprises terming the move as ``retrogressive.'' In a letter to PM Narendra Modi activists have described the amendments to the child labour law as ``double-speak.''

"This is an astonishingly retrogressive amendment to Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986 (CLPRA), reversing several decades of efforts by child rights activists, by legalizing exploitation of children through work, and invisibilizing child labour. It contravenes the equitable right of all children to childhood and their entitlements to live a life with dignity as guaranteed by the Constitution of India, several legislations and the UNCRC to which India is a signatory," the letter said.

It has been signed by eminent personalities like former additional solicitor general Indira Jaising, former NCPCR chairperson Shantha Sinha and others including Harsh Mander, Vandana Prasad, Dipa Dixit and Enakshi Ganguly.

The activists said that the amendment claims to "harmonise" CLPRA with the RTE act and ending child labour is an ``unfortunate example of double-speak, as it actually results in perpetuation of child labour as bonded labourers and their enslavement at the cost of her right to education and a carefree childhood. It is totally unacceptable that the government in this way plays to vested interests, shortchanging children's rights.

The activists have demanded therefore that the proposed amendment to legalize child labour of children after schools hours and during vacations be dropped in the best interest of the equitable right of all children to education, leisure, play and childhood.

**BIAS KEEPS GIRLS OUT OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

CHENNAI: Data bears out what has always sounded plausible: Given the status of girl children in society and the traditional role assigned to men, parents would give priority to their sons over their daughters when it comes to education. School enrollment figures from the district information system show that the gender ratio is indeed skewed more in private schools than government schools — an indication as much of gender bias as a perception that private schools offer better education than government schools.   
  
In private schools across the state, the ratio of boys to girls is typically 10:8, while in a government school it is 10:9. This may not seem a significant disparity in a class of 40 students, but if you consider a district the numbers can add up substantially. The difference in the enrollment of boys and girls is an average 30,000 in private schools in a district. In government schools, it is around 10,000.

And this is the trend across all districts, with minor variations. Urban Chennai fares as badly as rural Dharmapuri or Perambalur. Gender discrimination has no barriers, apparently.   
  
According to activists and teachers, parents across socio-economic platforms have realized the importance of education. "Parents have become aspirational, and they presume that it is a private school that can offer their children quality education. If there is only one child in the family, irrespective of what the economic conditions are, parents prefer sending him/her to a private school," says A Narayanan, a development activist and director of Change India. "But, if the parents have a second child, and if it is a boy, then gender discrimination comes into account," Narayanan says.   
  
Narayanan says that parents would then shift their daughter to a government school, and admit the boy in a private school. "In some cases, parents would have admitted their daughter to a private school, but would shift her to a government school in Class 6 or 8," says Narayanan.   
  
Educationist Vasanthi Devi feels that parents look at sons as assets and girls as liabilities. "For many parents, a son is a permanent asset. They feel that if he is well educated he would earn well, and will bring progress in their living standards. So, investing on sons is considered appropriate," says Vasanthi.   
  
And, this thinking is more prevalent among the socially and economically weaker sections. "Girls are termed as liabilities, who do not bring returns to the family. So, they feel that there is no point in investing on their education, and thus are sent to government schools," Vasanthi Devi says.   
  
Prince Gajendra Babu, general secretary of state platform for common schools, says that as the economic status lowers, the gender bias becomes more pronounced. "Parents may aspire to send their children to private schools, but when it is the question of a girl, then they give it second thoughts. There are cases where we have seen parents considering sending their daughter to a private school, but would have changed their mind," says Gajendra Babu. While there are no kindergarten classes in government schools, parents send the daughter to a private nursery school, and when she turns five, she is sent to a government school.   
  
Vasanthi Devi suggests that the gender bias will end with improving literacy levels. Narayanan however says that there is transformation among the youth of the state towards gender bias. He says, "The youth from villages who migrated for work and are settled in cities today seem to want not to discriminate. But, there are still people or sections of society where the transformation is incomplete or lacking."   
  
The experts say that gender discrimination in education can be resolved if the quality of education in government schools is improved. "While surveys and reports suggest that levels of learning are getting better among government school students, the infrastructure in these schools should be upgraded," said a teacher in a government school. "Despite there being 14 freebies under the Right to Education such as textbooks, buspass and lunch, parents feel that it is education in a private school which will bring progress in their children's life, and this is evident in the enrollment in government schools dropping over the years," said the teacher.

From universities to coaching shops

The Ministry of Human Resource Development announced a short while ago that it was introducing changes in the structure and functioning of central universities, numbering around 40. The suggested changes were made public in a proposed Universities Act. A large number of academics from various colleges and universities based in the National Capital Region examined the suggestions. They went through the proposed changes with a fine-tooth comb, since the proposed changes, if implemented, would affect the academic quality of tertiary education at the college and university level. After frequent meetings over six months, they have jointly produced a document titled ‘What is to be Done About Indian Universities? Reflections from Concerned Teachers’.

The document explains at length why they have found unacceptable, for academic reasons, much of what has been suggested. It is available on Facebook and has already brought in many worthwhile posts. It is an extremely important statement from a large body of teachers, containing their responses to the proposals, as had been requested. Hopefully, it will be discussed widely by the HRD Ministry, the University Grants Commission, and other organisations related to undergraduate and graduate teaching.

Education, unfortunately, has not been taken seriously enough by governments, either past or present. The abysmally low budget for education is now down to around a minuscule 3 per cent. Despite this, there is still a fond belief that development can be achieved. Development needs well-educated people or else it goes nowhere. Do politicians fear an educated citizenry?

**Reform over overhaul**

Governments tend to start at the wrong end in their attempts to improve education, drawing plans to make dramatic changes at the highest levels, advocating more central universities, IITs, IIMs and the like. As is often said, the concern should be to improve the levels of existing institutions. Yet the nitty-gritty of education lies in the quality of schooling. Proposals made by United Progressive Alliance-II, for more universities, continue to be the project of the present government. But a serious revision of the educational system in India requires laying a good foundation for primary and secondary schooling by improving their quality in a systematic and rational manner. This applies as much to content as is does to facilities.

A higher budget would allow for a larger number of schools, and these are desperately needed. But numbers are not enough. The location of the school has to be such that it is not hijacked or marginalised by upper castes and the wealthy. The socially and economically underprivileged are then left without education. Schools also have to be adequately equipped, teachers properly trained, and the benefits of education made apparent. This needs as much careful attention as tertiary education. Without good quality schooling, the institutes of higher learning are handicapped. Students with substandard schooling are unable to cope with higher education, the heavy financing of which has little meaning.

Education has many functions. It provides information, as the Internet does, but the difference is that it is meant to provide reliable information, and teach students to think logically and analytically. If knowledge has to advance, existing knowledge should be questioned. Such critical enquiry is the crucial point of education in any field — whether the sciences, social sciences or the humanities. It is also incidentally the best job training a student can receive. Myth-spinning is important to a child’s imagination but should not be confused with learning and scholarship.

The linking of schooling to tertiary education also has to do with some reactions to the suggestions made in the proposed Universities Act. The proposed standardising and centralising of the syllabus has been suggested as a way to improve the quality of education. Also, the centralised recruitment of faculty and students, we are told, will allow them mobility. Can the complete syllabus for all subjects in 40 universities be centralised and standardised? It will be a mammoth, unnecessary exercise, predictably a disaster. The budget would have to be doubled to provide for adequate libraries and laboratories. Or will education be reduced to a set of statements to be memorised?

Better institutions will have to lower their standards to accommodate those that are inferior, in order to standardise the syllabus. The quality of education will have to be that of the Lowest Common Denominator. High standards demand diversity and a constant and reliable upgrading of knowledge, essential for nurturing intellectual curiosity. With standardisation and centralisation, universities will become teaching shops and coaching schools. A common entrance exam will mean a rush for the metropolitan universities, as these are better launching pads for decent jobs. How then will the system of quotas and reservations play out? Will the numbers have to be continually reconfigured?

The other major problem will be language. Today, regional languages are the effective medium in most universities, particularly at the undergraduate level. So, can teachers and students be moved from, say, Punjab to Kerala, with the demand that they have to use whatever language is current in the new place? Or will the transfer of teachers and students be also used as a punitive measure to silence opposition? Bilingualism — a regional language and a common language — may be one solution, provided a common language can be agreed upon.

**Schools for the rich and poor**

This is just a sample of the kind of problems that will confront us if the proposed changes are introduced. It doesn’t take much foresight to predict the major casualties in our university system. Poor quality education and large numbers of young people who are unqualified for the jobs they seek doesn’t make for a healthy society. Neither the sciences nor the social sciences can be taught merely as identical information in 40 universities. Every discipline requires thinking, questioning and debating, as there is intellectual content in each subject, essential to its understanding. This debate cannot be dictated. A syllabus handed down ‘from above’ and not thought through by the faculty will be turned into merely memorising information.

If state universities provide poor quality education, then quality education will shift to private universities that do not have such restrictions. But private universities are usually unaffordable for most students. Public universities will become institutions for the poor, just as the government school system has.

A bigger problem will be the end of the autonomy of the university, as has been pointed out in the response by the Delhi academics. The viability of a university depends on its being an autonomous institution responsible for maintaining high standards and initiating innovation. The quality of the public university system and its continuance is crucial to any modern society. Private universities, however good they may be, cannot provide the required tertiary education for everyone. The proposed changes will therefore destroy the more significant aspects of the role and function of the university as an educational institution.

Let girls learn

**India appreciates US First Lady Michelle Obama's efforts to boost  girls’ education across the world through her “Let Girls Learn”  program has been widely acclaimed as an inspiring initiative   
By Ritu Verma** 

We all have heard of the days when our ancestors were living without education and about the social status of the world at large at that time. Strikingly, there was no place of their own for women in the society those days and no one talked or even thought about their rights and opportunities in life. Parents, then, had only one aim: marry off their girls and get free of the burden.

With the passing of time, we moved ahead and realised the power and value of education, whether it is for a boy or a girl. Now, there are so many programs and projects promoting education across the world and all the powerful personalities and leaders of the world are making plans and working to encourage education. 

Michelle Obama, First Lady of the United States, who believes that girls play an important role in building up a nation, initiated the Let Girls Learn program to encourage girls’ education across the world.   It has a funding of $340 million which would be spent in three years.  She visited Japan and Cambodia recently as part of her campaign to improve Girls’ Education globally. In Japan, she met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Akie Abe.  In Cambodia, she met   Prime Minister Hun Sen and discussed with them her program of “Let Girls Learn”. 

This program, led by Peace Corps and other aid corporations, aims to help at least 62 million girls all over the world who are unable to get education. Further, the program will be implemented initially in 11 countries, including Cambodia, Ghana, Georgia, Uganda and Togo. Along with this, she is also ruminating over hundreds of other projects that would encourage girls’ education and other child welfare programs all over the world. 

India stands 177th in world ranking with 61 per cent literacy rate, but only 53.87 per cent girls are literate in the country**,**whereas Finland, Greenland and Luxembourg stand 1st in the ranking with 100 per cent literacy**,**and the US stands 22nd with 99 per cent literacy. Thus, the data is much enough to show that India needs immediate action in this sector, if needed, with the help of a cooperating hand.     

No doubt, India is continuously revising its education plans and policies to engage more girls in education. On this, Kapil Rampal, Director of Ivory Education, says that “the coalition between America and Japan on ‘Let Girls Learn’ program will open a new luminous way for other countries to encourage girl's education. We need some kind of improved plans and facilities that can enable the Indian schools, colleges, universities and institutes to go higher in the field of education.” 

As part of strengthening India-America bilateral relationship, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama met on January 25, this year, discussed and agreed on several issues from economy to education. Considering the need of improving girl-boy education ratio in India, it would be highly beneficial for the education sector in India if both the countries cooperate in this sector too. 

In 2013, for the development of education in the country, the government of India launched a scheme named Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) as a comprehensive CSS (Centrally Sponsored Scheme) for higher education. It aims to provide funds for higher educational institutes throughout the country. Nearly 316 state public universities and 13,024 colleges will be benefited by this scheme.  It shows the government is ready to provide funds and facilities to improve the literacy rate in the country, but what we need is the right concept and vision to use the funds rightly for the betterment of higher education. Michelle Obama’s ‘Let Girls Learn’ program can be a model for India’s efforts to educate its girls.

**2. MIGRANT LABOUR**

**INDONESIA BELIEVES MOST MIGRANTS AT SEA NOT ROHINGYA: AUSTRALIA**

SYDNEY: Indonesia has told Australia that most of the migrants stranded at sea in Southeast Asia are illegal labourers from Bangladesh, not oppressed Muslim Rohingya, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said in comments published on Friday.

More than 3,500 migrants have swum to shore or been rescued off the coasts of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Bangladesh since a Thai crackdown on human-trafficking in early May threw the illicit trade into chaos. Speaking to The Weekend Australian newspaper, Bishop said Indonesia estimated that only 30 to 40 per cent of the thousands still stranded at sea were Rohingya -- an impoverished Muslim community from Myanmar's western Rakhine state.

"They (Indonesia) believe there are about 7,000 people at sea [and] they think about 30 to 40 percent are Rohingya, the rest are Bangladeshi; and they are not, in Indonesia's words, asylum-seekers, they are not refugees -- they are illegal labourers. They've been promised or are seeking jobs in Malaysia," Bishop said. "They said the Rohingya have gone to Bangladesh and have mixed up with the Bangladeshis who are coming to Malaysia in particular for jobs."

Bishop said that Indonesia's director-general of multilateral affairs, Hasan Kleib, had told her that on one vessel, Bangladeshis accounted for 400 of the 600 people onboard. Myanmar has faced increasing international pressure to stem the exodus from its shores and deliver urgent humanitarian relief to thousands still trapped at sea.

Yesterday it said its navy had rescued a boat in the Bay of Bengal and brought to shore 208 people. Tin Maung Swe, a senior official in the western state of Rakhine, told AFP that "about 200 Bengalis" were onboard. "Bengalis" is a term often used pejoratively by Myanmar officials to describe the Muslim Rohingya minority, 1.3 million of whom live in the country but are not recognised as citizens.

Australia, which maintains a hardline policy of denying asylum-seekers who arrive by boats resettlement and which turns back vessels when it can, has maintained its refusal to resettle any stranded boat people, saying to do so would encourage people-smuggling. "I will say or do nothing to encourage people to take to the sea in boats and any suggestion that there is some kind of special resettlement program here in Australia for people taking to the sea in boats just encourages people-smuggling," Prime Minister Tony Abbott said yesterday. "So it would be utterly irresponsible of me or anyone to suggest for a second that we will reward people for doing something so dangerous."

**QATAR HITS BACK AT AMNESTY LABOUR CLAIMS**

DOHA: Qatar insisted on Thursday it was "committed" to improving conditions for its huge number of migrant labourers following an Amnesty report accusing Doha of failing to deliver on promised reforms.

The 2022 football World Cup host defend itself after Amnesty said Doha was still "failing migrant workers" in key areas such as pay, the "kafala" system that blocks workers from leaving the country and curbs on changing employers, despite promising wholesale change more than 12 months ago. It was the latest criticism against Qatar over labour practices in the country but Doha hit back in a statement from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, insisting that reforms had been put in place.

"Significant changes have been made over the last year to improve the rights and conditions of expatriate workers," read the statement. "No one should be in any doubt that we are committed to effective and sustainable change." Adding that "we disagree with a number of its (Amnesty's) claims", the ministry said reforms in the past 12 months included the introduction of an electronic wage protection system to ensure workers get paid on time and promised accommodation improvements for more than 250,000 workers.

The ministry added the number of labour inspectors -- 294 -- would be increased to 400 by the end of the year. In addition more than 51,000 site visits were carried out in 2014, said the ministry. It also said that "the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of expatriate workers" was at the heart of Qatar's economic and social policies.

Pointing to the money earned by labourers, the ministry said that more than $12 billion (10 billion euros) had been sent home by labourers in 2014, "considerably more than they would earn at home". Qatar is expected to more than double the number of migrant labourers in the country to 2.5 million by 2020 ahead of hosting the World Cup. The Qatari response did not specifically address the kafala issue but earlier this month Abdullah bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, the minister of labour and social affairs, told AFP he was "90 percent" certain it would be replaced by the end of 2015.

**AMNESTY REPORT SAYS QATAR STILL FAILING MIGRANT WORKERS**

BERNE/DOHA: Qatar, host of the 2022 World Cup, is doing little to improve conditions for migrant workers despite promising reform last year, Amnesty International said on Thursday, but Doha said several of the allegations were inaccurate. Amnesty said little had changed for the 1.5 million migrant workers and soccer's governing body FIFA had a "clear responsibility" to put pressure on Qatar to do more.

"Without prompt action, the pledges Qatar made last year are at serious risk of being dismissed as a mere public relations stunt to ensure the Gulf state can cling on to the 2022 World Cup," said Amnesty researcher Mustafa Qadri. "Last year the government made promises to improve migrant labour rights in Qatar, but in practice, there have been no significant advances."

Qatar's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs said in a statement: "Significant changes have been made over the last year to improve the rights and conditions of expatriate workers." It said the ministry had launched a wage protection system, an electronic payment system to ensure wages are paid on time and increased the number of labour inspectors. It said more accommodation was being built for more than a quarter of a million workers across Qatar.

Amnesty's report rated Qatar's response to nine migrant labour rights issues, saying late "limited progress" had been made on five, while authorities had "failed to make any improvements" in the other four. "(FIFA) has yet to demonstrate any real commitment to ensuring Qatar 2022 is not built on a foundation of exploitation and abuse," Qadri said.

FIFA was not immediately available to comment. Qatar unveiled proposed reforms a year ago including replacement of a law under which workers need their employer's permission to change jobs and reforms to a law requiring workers to obtain an exit permit before leaving Qatar.

Amnesty said there had been no progress on those issues. The human rights group said the proposed electronic payment system was still being implemented and many migrants interviewed "complained of late or non-payment of wages."

Qatar had also failed to meet its target of having 300 labour inspectors in place by the end of last year, it said. "There has been only limited progress on measures to improve safety on construction sites, regulate exploitative recruitment agencies and improve access to justice for victims of labour exploitation," said the report.

A statement from Qatar's Supreme Committee (SC) for Delivery & Legacy, in charge of organizing the 2022 games, said its staff had helped raise money for Nepali workers to return home after the April 25 earthquake killed thousands of people and all requests to return home had been approved. "The SC will continue to move forward... to deliver a FIFA World Cup that preserves the rights and dignity of all individuals who will work to make the tournament a success," it said.

**Qatar’s developmental model is based on enslaved labour**

## There are around 1.4 million workers living in conditions that amount to modern day slavery in Qatar.'

The report, ‘The Case Against Qatar,’ produced by **Sharan Burrow**, Secretary-General of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and her colleagues, is an indictment of the Qatar government’s treatment of the workers building infrastructure for the 2022 Football World Cup to be held there. Ms. Burrow spoke to **Basharat Peer**.

**Abuse of migrant workers, their abysmal working on infrastructure projects in the Gulf and other Middle Eastern states are well documented. How different is the case of migrant workers in Qatar from other Arab states?**

There are around 1.4 million workers living in conditions that amount to modern day slavery in Qatar. It is one of the richest countries in the world but Qatar has chosen a developmental model that is based on enslaved labour. What Qatar chose is a system where a worker is owned by his employer. When your employer forces you to live in squalor, makes you work longest hours in extreme heat, doesn’t allow you to change jobs, doesn’t pay your wages on time, abuses you physically and psychologically, you have no way out, you can’t leave. You are trapped.

**What about the process by which the workers are hired?**

If you are an Indian worker in Qatar, to get there you mostly go through employment agencies. They charge about $ 2,000 to a worker a job. A poor Indian worker can’t afford that kind of money and often has to borrow the money. And the workers reach Qatar without any guarantees that their contracts will be honoured. I have talked to hundreds of workers who were offered a particular job and arrived in Qatar to find themselves in jobs that are much harsher and paid much less. On my most recent trip to Qatar, I met many workers who were trafficked from Nepal, they arrived in Qatar without any of the promised jobs available and the burden of a loan. They are forced to take anything they get, in the harshest conditions.

**Your report, “The Case Against Qatar” has become the primary source on the number of worker deaths in Qatar and has been quoted in scores of influential media reports in the context of the infrastructure being built for the Football World Cup. The numbers you quoted are being debated and questioned as inaccurate.**

The sources for the numbers of deaths we quoted were the Indian and Nepali embassies. According to their numbers, around 400 workers from India and Nepal die in Qatar every year. It is shocking when you consider that these are numbers only from two countries. On the basis of these numbers we extrapolated that around 4,000 workers will die in Qatar before the first ball is kicked in the Football World Cup in 2022. The ITUC September 2013 estimate of 4,000 deaths by the time the World Cup starts, does not include fatalities from the 40 per cent of workers from other countries of origin. It is based on a conservative estimate of 400 fatalities per year over nine years (2014-2022 inclusive) with a conservative estimate of an overall average workforce increase of 10 per cent over the period with a concomitant increase in fatalities.

**India’s Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj has contested your numbers. The counter-argument on the number of worker deaths is that those numbers include all deaths of Indian and Nepali citizens living in Qatar, not just workers. Ms. Swaraj tweeted that only 109 Indian workers have been killed in on-site deaths in Qatar since 2007.**

When the authorities in Qatar or the Fédération Internationale de Football Association try to create statistics, they only report the incidents that occur in football stadiums that are being built. They are building a whole city; they can’t limit the work-related deaths only to the stadiums. What the Indian Foreign Minister is denying is the deaths that occur after injuries sustained on site, deaths that occur because of respiratory diseases contracted in relation to work, and deaths caused in other ways — whether a heat stroke or a heart attack in living quarters —which occur because they are working there. The number of work-related deaths is much higher than the number of on-site deaths reported. Fatalities of workers who are passing away in the appalling labour camps, in worksite accidents, on their way to and from the construction sites or other workplaces in company-organised transportation, are all work-related.

**You don’t agree with the critiques that the worker deaths in Qatar are exaggerated.**

Qatar’s public relations campaign is trying to convince the world that these deaths are not related to work but Qatar refuses to conduct post-mortems, it refuses to collect and make available the statistics on incidence of mortality and morbidity and worst of all it refuses to take responsibility and change its system of modern slavery.

As we know from the recent experiences of journalists at the *BBC*, German national broadcaster*WDR/ARD* and previous cases of detention and harassment of journalists, any journalist who tries to uncover information which is being suppressed by Qatar faces arrest, detention, threats, confiscation of equipment and elimination of data, including their own personal data, on any electronic devices that the journalist has with them in Qatar.

**How has FIFA responded to the critiques from the rights groups and the press?**

FIFA has the power to make the world cup conditional to rights of workers. But it did nothing. FIFA is culpable in propping up modern day slavery. Both Qatar and FIFA must reform.

**Qatar did announce some changes to the Kafala system, the non-transferable visa regime, which binds a migrant worker to an employer, who confiscates his or her passport on arrival and leaves the worker at his mercy. Were they enough? Were the changes implemented?**

Under the proposed changes, the Qatar government would take the exit visa from the employer and deposit it with their Interior Ministry. It still keeps the worker trapped. They didn’t even implement that.

**Skills for Freedom**

**Food Festival**

SPSC VEEF project has organized a Chettinadu Food Festival on 24.05.2015 for the purpose of raising awareness on healthy food habits and mobilized 250families. Varieties of healthy food items prepared and served to the participants. Participants opined that most of food item are delicious tasty and loved it. Dr.J.Paul Baskar inaugurated the festival and spokes on the role of food in maintaining better health. Participants become aware of the health benefits of various food items and had a good rapport with the project.

They are also made aware of the various courses offered in the SPSC-VEEF programme. A magic show was also organized on party the festival, participants especially children enjoyed their programme.

**Peace Industrial School**

Skills for Freedom at Dindigul is attempting to add three new courses to be approved by NCVT which has to undergo a process of visit from QCI an agency entrusted by Director General of Employment and Training which with give approval to Peace Private ITI at Dindigul as part of the skill for freedom initiative.

The campus is getting prepared for the QCI visit with the generous support from Indiska and we are involved in buying new equipments and upgrading the old ones for the following new courses Electrician, Desk Top Publish Operator, Sewing Technology. The candidates who complete the NCVT courses will, get job in Government sector and in Private Companies. Peace Private ITI has lot of unique selling points such as training on Employability skills, Computer training and Communicative English.

**NGO Management**

**One year Post Graduate Diploma in NGO Management:**

Peace institute of social work has conducted the University examination for the one year post graduate diploma in NGO Management course. The students of this courses has written exams for the following subjects

* Principle of NGO Management
* NGO Accounts & Documentation
* Fund Raising
* Social marketing
* Elective: Transfer of Technology

The exam results will be announced in the coming months and the students who passed all the subjects will get certificate from Madurai Kamaraj University. This Post Graduate Diploma course will be a prerequisite for the professional who wish to wune in the development sector.

**Education for All**

Peace College of Education a teacher education institution run by Peace Trust since 2007 has conducted University exam for 100 young teachers under a regular programme affiliated to the TamilNadu Teacher Education University. Another 200 working teachers under the distance education mode in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) have undergoing their exams.

Peace Trust has got the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) B Grade and the students pursuing B.Ed, course here become employable as the college is proving training in employability skills to the students.

**World Environment Day 5 June 2015:**

**Seminar on Sustainable Consumption**

On the eve of World Environment Day on 5 June - a day designated by the UN to raise awareness of environmental issues, Peace Trust, Regional Resource Agency of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organized a seminar on sustainable consumption in Dindigul. Students from various colleges of Dindigul district participated.

The theme of World Environment Day 2015 is 'Seven Billion Dreams. One Planet Consume with Care.' This seminar highlighted the key messages through input session followed by group discussion by the students. One of the key messages is that the well-being of humanity, the environment, and the functioning of the economy, ultimately depend upon the responsible management of the natural resources. Evidence is building that people are consuming far more natural resources than what the environment can sustainably provide. To meet this challenge we need to transition to more efficient and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns. SCP is a pattern of behaviors that aims to reduce negative environmental impacts and help meet human needs by producing more and better with less resources and fewer negative impacts.

Dr.J.Paul Baskar, Chairman, Peace Trust while delivering the presidential address stressed the need to respect the carrying capacity of the environmental resources and to manage natural resources efficiently. He further stated that to ensure prosperity and wellbeing, this year World Environment Day challenges everyone to re-imagine their dreams for a good life de-linked from excessive consumption.

Mr.Thangapandian Environmentalist recalled the famous quote by Mahatma Gandhi "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." He insisted the students to make one positive change towards a sustainable lifestyle. Mr.B.Walter Kennedy of Peace Trust outlined the environmental problems in Dindigul district which affected the carrying capacity of the environment in Dindigul as the quality of land and water is deteriorated beyond redemption.

The seminar concluded with a pledge to further equip the students knowledge level through successive awareness sessions on environmental issues and the solutions which can be adapted at household level and expand it to the society for achieving the sustainable consumption pattern in Dindigul district.

**Modern Slavery**

Peace Trust is closely monitoring the developments happening in Dindigul Textile sector in Dindigul District. Peace Trust has organized a brainstorming session in Dindigul for the core team of Peace Trust to discuss the present situation of the teenage workers in Textile sector. It has proposed rehabilitation programme for the children to continue their school education and public exams. It has also proposed to provide job oriented vocation education for the released teenage workers.