Science, Technology and Innovation Hub @ Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University for enhancement on livelihood of SC/ST Community

The 'Science, Technology and Innovation Hub for Empowerment of SC/ST Community', a Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi, sponsored Research and Development wing for scientific and technology-based solutions of societal problems with special emphasis on marginal class of society, established at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad is on its way to achieve yet another milestone. ***The DST has sanctioned at budget of Rs. 2.62 Crores for a period of three years to the Hub***. This is one of the unique projects the University has ever undertaken since inception which allows wonderful opportunities to the faculty members to get connected to the society by utilizing outcomes of their research. **The long awaited 'Technology Van' has been dedicated to the service of Nation by the auspicious hands of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Pramod Yeole on May 1, 2021.**

The University, since its inception, has stood as a monarch in providing essential higher education and thereby empowering lives of multitudes across region that was long deprived economically, socially and educationally. While bearing the pious name and philosophy of 'Symbol of Knowledge' Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the University has ever been responsive to the needs of society through its specifically designed academic endeavours. Since last two decades, the University has secured a very recognizable status in international academic framework through the cutting-edge research and development work being carried out by the University. However, undoubtably, outcome of such work has found very little contextual interpretation or direct relevance to the upliftment and livelihood generation of marginal class of society till now. The utmost dream of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, to unleash the potentials of Universities for the needs of weakest part of rural India was thus, somehow supressed until Professor Mahendra D. Shirsat, Professor Bharti W. Gawali and Professor Arvind Dhabe remarkably responded to a nationwide call by Social Equity and Empowerment Division (SEED), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India for exercising expertise available with academia for empowerment of SC/ST population in rural India. As a very rare incidence in recent history of the University, academic departments from three different horizons namely Deen Dayal Upadhyay KAUSHAL Kendra, Department of Computer Science and Department of Botany kept no stone unturned to establish 'Science, Technology and Innovation Hub for Empowerment of SC/ST Community' at the University Campus. Professor

M.D. Shirsat, Professor B.W. Gawali and Professor A.S. Dhabe, along with a team of young and enthusiastic faculty members of the three departments (namely Prof Ramesh Manza, Dr. Pravin Yannawar, Dr. Kunal Datta, Shri Visal Ushir, Shri Amogh Sambare and Shri Rantandeep Hivrale) made regular visits to different rural areas in Kannad taluka, to understand the grassroot level problems, discussion with authorities at various levels and accordingly design the necessary action plan. Moreover, 10 project fellows have been appointed to facilitate the implement of this project. Finally, on May 24, 2019, the Hub was inaugurated at the University campus in presence of apex DST Officials. **The DST has sanctioned at budget of Rs. 2.62 Crores for a period of three years to the Hub**. At its initial phase of three years cycle, primary objective of this hub is to provide generic and specialized skillset in the field of Electricals, Electronics, Automobile, Computer and Medicinal Plants to the SC/ST population of six villages in Kannad taluka namely Chikalthan, Narsingpur, Deogaon, Lohagaon, Nagad and Andhaner. The local administration of all the villages pro-actively assisted in all possible issues to take forward the activities of hub.

Under the most able guidance of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, **the hub has already completed its objectives at Chikalthan village in March, 2020**. Total **273 residents of Chikalthan village have been trained** and provided with certificates in various fields. **Total eight micro-entrepreneurships have been initiated at the village with all first-generation entrepreneurs. An area for over 4 acres have been brought under methodical cultivation of medicinal plants, for the first time in Marathwada.** Most notably, the staff appointed under the hub stayed for the entire period in Chikalthan village to carry out regular on field activities. Significant linkages have been created with various job sectors so that once the eclipse of pandemic is over, there will be creation of job opportunities for the successful trainees. The same pedagogy will be followed for rest of the villages as well. Although activities at second village, namely Narsingpur, has started in collaboration with Shivaji College, Kannad; due to the pandemic, the ongoing have been heavily hampered. Still the hub has maintained its outreach activities through Youtube channels and technologies developed to combat the pandemic.

Although this project has been sanctioned to initiate highly structured programmes for enhancement in the livelihood of only SC/ST community, it has been ensured to have substantial involvement of villagers from all other community as well. This has help to create conducive environment in the adopted villages.

The 'Technology Van' has been sanctioned by DST under the hub with an aim to carry glimpses of technology and training facilities to remote areas. The van has been equipped with on board training facilities encompassing areas of Solar based installations, Control panel wiring, PLC programming and agricultural automation. As first flagship attempt of the University to make its expertise reach to remote areas of the region, the 'Technology Van' has already started on the roads of Marathwada to reach the needy SC/ST community.

Professor M. D. Shirsat and Professor Bharti Gawali,
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