Facilitating Inter-State Mobility

What is the issue?

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- Despite the absence of any explicit barriers to mobility, India's inter-state mobility is relatively lower.
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- Analysing the reasons behind and making necessary policy alterations are essential to facilitate mobility to seek opportunities.
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How is the internal migration pattern in India?

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- Internal migration rates across states are **relatively lower in India** than in other many other countries.
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- Roughly, **internal migrants** represented 30% of India’s population as per 2001 Census.
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- However, two-thirds of these were **migrants within districts.**
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- There is a higher rate of migration from faraway districts of the same state than from nearby districts of a different state.
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- Moreover, more than half of them were **women** migrating after marriage.
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- Notably, states with higher rates of access to higher education and public employment have relatively less student and skilled migrants moving out.
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- The **rate of migration** has almost **doubled** between 2001 and 2011 relative to the previous decade.
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- However, labour migrant flows within states are much larger than flows across states.
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- Evidently, state borders remain impediments to mobility though there are no explicit barriers to inter-state mobility in India.
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What are the reasons?

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- Barriers to internal mobility include **physical distance and linguistic differences.**
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- Differences in **economic and social features** among different states are also among notable reasons.
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- Despite these, there are a range of other factors that works as disincentives to inter-state migration.
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- **Social Benefits** - A majority of social entitlement programmes are administered by state governments, even when they are centrally funded.
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- In essence, many of the social benefits and entitlements are not portable across state boundaries.
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- Access to subsidised food through the public distribution system (PDS) is a major reason.
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- Evidently, in states where the PDS offers higher levels of coverage, unskilled migrants are less likely to move out-of-state.
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- Even admissions to public hospitals, schools, etc are administered through ration cards issued and accepted only by the home state government.
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- **Education** - Many universities and technical institutes are administered by state governments.
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- Notably, state residents get preferential admission in these through “state quota seats”.
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- The “domicile certificates” necessary for this require continuous residence in the state, ranging from 3 to 10 years in different states.

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- **Employment** - Though accounting for only about 5% of total employment, public sector employs more than half of the higher-skilled.
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- However, in most states, more than three-fourths of government jobs are with the state rather than the central government.
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- Here again, state domicile is a common requirement for jobs in state government entities.
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- Moreover, states are increasingly expanding and promoting the “jobs for natives” policies in the recent period.
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- E.g. Karnataka recently directed both public and private sector firms to reserve 70% of their jobs for state residents or would lose access to state government industrial policy benefits.
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What could be done?

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- India's “fragmented entitlements” should be integrated to offer citizens access to social benefits irrespective of the residing state.
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- This is essential to boost growth and check poverty, by facilitating access to productive opportunities available across the country.
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- A nationally portable identity could prove to be an important step.
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- States should rationalise the discriminatory policies and become more inclusive in offering employment and education.
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Source: Indian Express

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