Migration is No Longer a Once-in-a-Lifetime Event

What is the issue?

On examining the recent trends, one can notice that migration has connections with climate change, technology, government policies and the state of the economy.

What is migration?

- Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence, across either internal (within country) or international (across countries) borders.
- As per the **Census 2011**, India had 45.6 crore migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001 (31% of the population).
- In 2011, 99% of total migration was internal and immigrants (international migrants) comprised 1%.

What are the patterns of migration?

- Internal migrant flows can be classified on the basis of origin and destination.
    - Rural-rural
    - Rural-urban
    - Urban-rural
    - Urban-urban
- As per the 2011 census, there were 21 crore rural-rural migrants which formed 54% of classifiable internal migration.
- Another way to classify migration is
    - Intra-state (migrating within the state)
    - Inter-state (migrating between the states)
- In 2011, intra-state movement accounted for almost 88% of all internal migration.

A net out-migrant state is one where more people migrate out of the state than those that migrate into the state. Net in-migration is the excess of incoming migrants over out-going migrants.

What are the reasons for migration?

- **Climate change-** people migrate from vulnerable to safer areas in the hope of having stable lives.
- Most of the world's population, especially in Asia, live in coastal cities, and with temperatures rising these are going to be the first ones to get impacted by rising sea levels.
- **Technology boom-** With jobs vanishing quickly because of rising applications of AI and advanced tech, people are forced to move to places where they can find work to support their livelihoods.

- Ironically, it is also the solution to some of the most pressing issues unfolding in critical fields like agriculture.

*Under **Singapore's flagship '30 by 30' initiative,** the country aims to grow at least 30% of its food requirements by 2030.*

- **Upgradation of lifestyle**- People migrate to upgrade their lifestyles in countries which have better governance, infrastructure and migrant-friendly policies.
- The two major countries that offer these are Canada and Japan.
- The recently launched **Start-Up Visa Programme of Canada** also gives generous grants to tech companies to relocate to Canada and bring their ideas to life.
- With the threat of demographic decline in Japan, more than 13%of all homes in Japan are abandoned and the vacant housing stock keeps growing as older adults pass away and the young move to bigger cities.
- **Reasons for internal migration-** Reasons of marriage and family constitute the core part.
- Movement for work was higher among inter-state migrants.

What are the issues faced by migrant labours?

***Article 19(1)(e)** of the Constitution, guarantees all Indian citizens the **right to reside and settle** in any part of the territory of India, subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of the general public or protection of any scheduled tribe.*

- Lack of social security and health benefits
- Poor implementation of minimum safety standards law
- Lack of access to affordable housing and basic amenities in urban areas
- Challenges in integrating the immigrants and combating xenophobia
- Job competition between migrant and native workers
- Fiscal costs associated with provision of social services to the migrants

What steps were taken by the government with regard to migrant labour?

- **Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW Act)-** Labour contractors recruiting migrants are required to
    - Be licensed
    - Register migrant workers with the government authorities
    - Arrange for the worker to be issued a passbook recording their identity
- Guidelines regarding wages and protections (including accommodation, free medical facilities, protective clothing) to be provided by the contractor are also outlined in the law.
- **Transportation of migrants during lockdown-** The central government authorised states to use the State Disaster Response Fund to provide accommodation to traveling migrants.
- Buses and Shramik special trains were permitted by the central government subject to coordination between states.
- **Food security**- **One Nation One Ration Card** scheme was implemented to ensure the portability of ration cards.
- This will allow people to access ration from any Fair Price Shop in India.

- **Housing-** The Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan has launched a scheme for **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes for Migrant Workers and Urban Poor** to provide affordable rental housing units under PMAY.
- **Financial aid during the pandemic-** Some state governments (like Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) announced one-time cash transfers for returning migrant workers.
- UP government announced the provision of maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 for returning migrants who are required to quarantine.

What is the need of the hour?

- With migration emerging as an inevitable trend in the coming times, it is vital that a developing country like India should account for that while formulating national policies.
- Predictive methods of migrant estimations and according policy responses in terms of adequate infra support to them will help in creating sustainable cities and stable livelihoods.

References

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