Plight of Internal Migrants

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- The plight of “inter-State migrant labourers” is not very different from that of refugees who lack citizenship rights.
\n
- While the later is been widely debated, the former has slipped focus altogether.
\n

\n\n

What is the situation of internal migrants in India?

\n\n

\n
- Lack of citizenship is indeed a big blow to people’s lives, as it deprives them of belongingness and some critical rights bestowed by the state.
\n
- But, even with valid citizenship, a person uprooted from his domestic setting (district or state) might actually lose out many of his citizenry entitlements.
\n
- Notably, India’s 14 crore “rural-to-urban migrant workers” face a constant sense of anxiety with little control over their special or temporal existence.
\n
- A large chunk of migrant labourer “shelters and workplaces” are deemed illegal within Indian cities and they are condemned to the margins.
\n

\n\n

Does state play in role in the lives of migrants?

\n\n

\n
- While the state largely appears to be a dormant player, in reality, state is actually a negative influence on their lives in most cases.
\n

- It is proactive in allowing the absorption of cheap labour into cities, to serve the bulging demand of the urban middle class.
  \n
- Sometimes these labourers are exploited, required to work below subsistence levels, and reside in subhuman conditions.
  \n
- Further, while state's bureaucratic machinery consciously allows migrants to settle in certain zones, the same area is then perceived as encroachment.
  \n
- The onus of documenting the workers to provide them with public utilities lies on the state, but it consciously works to derecognise them.
  \n
- Further, it conveniently brackets them as "illegal", which in turn, results in them getting labelling them as "criminals" by law enforcement agencies.
  \n
- These actions are clearly to exclude them from the larger democratic stream in order to not dilute the funding and public goods for locals.
  \n

\n\n

What is the attitude of our city planners?

\n\n

\n

- "Smart Cities Mission" of 2015 proposed an investment allocation of Rs. 2,039 billion to convert 99 Indian cities into smart cities.
  \n
- While a mere 8% of the intended projects have been completed so far, forced eviction of slum dwellers have already been recorded in many cities.
  \n
- Interestingly, many smart city proposals identify slums as a "threat" to the city plan outlook, and totally fail to account for migrant labour in the schemes.
  \n
- All this is because, politically, inter-State migrants do not matter at all as their votes do not count in the destination city.
  \n
- Nonetheless, it is desirable for democratic governments to ensure equality, dignity, and provide minimum social security to all people within its territory.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

