Violence against Migrants – Gujarat

Why in news?

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Gujarat has witnessed the violence against Hindi-speaking migrants recently.

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What is the background?

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- A child was allegedly raped by a man from Bihar.
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- This has triggered the violence against Hindi-speaking migrants.
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- The alleged rapist had been arrested on the same day.
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- However, incidents of “revenge attacks” against “non-Gujaratis” were followed and has triggered a mass exodus to Bihar, UP and MP.
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What are the larger problems?

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- Though the child rape is the immediate trigger of violence, there are some structural issues regarding the employment scenario in Gujarat.
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- As in other States, Gujarat is seeing increasing discontent over the lack of adequate jobs for young Gujarati people.
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- The CMIE’s unemployment rate monthly time series shows that 4.6% of those surveyed and actively looking for work in Gujarat were not employed in September 2018.
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- This is less than the national average (6.8%), but there has been a relative increase in this number since the previous year in Gujarat.

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- Lack of job opportunities for the locals bubbled up the demand for limiting jobs for migrants and the associated resentment against ‘outsiders’.
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How Gujarat benefitted from migrants?

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- The Economic Survey in 2016-17 pointed out that Gujarat is among the States, including Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and West Bengal, with the highest net in-migration of workers.
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- It also found that States that were relatively better developed than the rest of the country were also host to more migrants.
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- Migrants have played a vital role in greasing the wheels of growth by providing cheap labour in the many small and medium enterprises in the manufacturing and construction sectors.
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- The industry and commerce associations in Gujarat have complained about the recent flight of migrants, with the festival season looming.
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- This reflects the importance of migrant labour in Gujarat.
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What were the governmental measures?

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- According to a government resolution passed in March 1995, locals are defined as people living in the state for the last 15 years in Gujarat.
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- The criterion has now been reduced to 7 years.
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- As per the original resolution, all private, state and Central government entities in Gujarat have to ensure that 85% of jobs in the workers’ grade are reserved for local residents.
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- The percentage can be 50% for managerial and supervisorial positions.
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- The Gujarat government recently announced that it will soon introduce a law

that mandates industries set up in the state to ensure that 80% of the workforce are Gujaratis.
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- The rule is already present but currently there is no Act to back it up and penalise those who violate it.
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- The government is also trying to fine-tune the definition of “domicile” in the state.
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- The state government also plans to ensure that 25% of those hired are from the area or region where the industry is set up.
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- However, 92% of the workforce (total 8.23 lakh jobs) were locals in about 4,700 large industrial units in the private sector in Gujarat.
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- In the state government-controlled establishments, the percentage of locals was as high as 98.9.
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What should the government do?

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- The State must follow a more holistic policy of creating incentives for firms leading to greater employment, instead of merely dictating higher recruitment of locals.
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- Nativist arguments against migrants neither serve the interest of the State concerned nor address the issue of ensuring job-oriented growth.
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- Apart from steps to arrest the violence against the migrants and to stop the exodus, the Gujarat government must commit itself to a facilitating role for job-creation.
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Source: The Hindu

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