



Interstate Migrants Avoiding Big Cities

'**Migration and its impacts on cities**', a report by the **World Economic Forum**, shows that smaller cities are rapidly growing, but at the same time struggling to cope with the infrastructure demands as civic revenue resources are on the decline.

- Attractive incomes, ample employment opportunities and comparatively low living costs are driving **interstate migrant populations** to smaller cities that are emerging as **counter-magnets** to megalopolis.
- **The UN Migration Agency (IOM)** defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of
 - The person's legal status;
 - Whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary;
 - What the causes of the movement are;
 - What the length of the stay is.
- **The Economic Survey 2016-17** had noted that **counter-magnet region** dynamics are observed in **Jaipur** and **Chandigarh** (to Delhi), **Surat** has started acting as a counter-magnet region to Mumbai and attracts migrants from the neighbouring districts of Maharashtra, **Pune** also has become a counter-magnet to Mumbai.
 - That interstate migration is multiplying and migrants prefer smaller cities to settle down.
 - The high cost of living and overcrowding megapolis has drawn migrants to these small cities in search of better opportunities in all areas of life.
 - These small cities are now a preferred destination for many citizens across India for better job opportunities, education, healthcare services, real estate investment and better quality of life, among others.

Rising Urban Agglomeration

- According to the **2011 Census**, the population of Class I cities (having more than 1 lakh population) is on the rise.
- In 2001, the total number of Class I cities was 441, which constituted 62.29 per cent of the total urban population, while in 2011, the number of Class I cities increased to 468, constituting 70.24 per cent of the total urban population. Not surprisingly, the share of the workforce engaged in the agriculture sector (cultivators and labourers) came down from 58.2 per cent in 2001 to 54.6 per cent in 2011.
- Cities, including Surat, Faridabad and Ludhiana total over 55 per cent of in-migrants while Jaipur is growing as the urban agglomeration with migration spreading to the suburbs.

Challenges

- Municipal bodies in smaller cities are facing a daunting challenge to accommodate the rising population because of inadequate revenue resources.
 - The total revenues of the municipal sector account for only 0.75 per cent of the country's GDP as against 6 per cent in South Africa, 5 per cent in Brazil and 4.5 per cent in Poland.

- The inadequate understanding of city planning and inability to translate the plans into actions is hampering the growth of smaller cities. Smaller cities are unable to attract investment and entrepreneurs for infrastructure development.
- The existing institutional framework of municipalities is unable to deal with the standard problems of urban infrastructure utilities like street, electricity and water, along with sanitation, drainage, waste management and the provision of other basic services.
- Providing security, sufficient open spaces, public parks and playgrounds, health facilities, and air pollution are still a bigger challenge in smaller cities.

Government Initiatives

- The government is adopting various measures to provide better living conditions in small cities through various schemes:
 - Smart Cities Mission
 - Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) Project
 - Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) or Housing for All by 2022 Mission
 - Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)
 - Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
 - Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)
- Creating rural urban agglomerate to provide urban amenities in the rural areas is one such step to check rural-urban migration.
- Government is implementing various schemes to provide basic needs and develop rural infrastructure for improving the living conditions of rural masses so that distress migration of people from rural areas to cities could be reduced.
- In a market economy like India, the movement of people for better economic opportunities is inexorable, but schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREG) have succeeded in reducing such migration.