Internal Climate Migration

What is the issue?

- There is presently an increased internal migration across the world due to political and economic instability.
- Beyond this, the internal migration due to climate change is potential of getting to be a major concern for nations.

What is the looming danger?

- Some of the slow onset climate events would be droughts, effects from sea level rise and water shortages.
- These may certainly drive many more to leave their homes and move to safer places.
- Such migration may be a choice in the initial stages.
- However, as the stress becomes more severe, the decision to move may be forced.
- E.g. people are compelled to leave their island nations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans with gradual rise in sea levels
- These climate exiles are an ongoing process.
- Notably, it would likely increase out-migration over time.

Which regions are vulnerable?

- A recent report by the World Bank on internal climate migration highlights the possible migration reality.
- In Latin America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa over 140 million people would be forced to move within borders by 2050.
- This would be as a result of slow onset climate events alone.
- In the worst-case scenario, about 40 million of these migrants would be in South Asia.
- This is the most populous of the regions studied, with a number of climate change effects anticipated.

How would South-Asia be affected?

- South Asia is characterised by **rain-fed farmland** in large parts of the region.
- Variability in the **monsoons** and **warmer temperatures** is sure to lead to **crop failures**.
- This will lead to **migration** from the Gangetic plains and from the rice-growing northeast of Bangladesh and the inundated coasts.
- The numbers on forced internal migration in South Asia could increase six-fold between 2020 and 2050.
- This will continue to rise beyond 2050 without appropriate climate action.
- But even with inclusive development and climate-friendly scenarios, tens of millions would still be forced to migrate.
- This normally makes people **migrate to big cities**.
- However, those along the coast such as Mumbai, Chennai, Chittagong and Dhaka will themselves be vulnerable.

- **Storm surges** and other effects from **sea level rise** make these coastal cities unfavourable.

What are the concerns?

- The **poor** would be the worst affected by these slow onset events.
- Most of them would migrate out of rural areas to nearby urban settlements such as **cities and the peri-urban surroundings**.
- Such "**hotspots**" of in and out migration would be stressed for natural resources, public services and livelihoods.
- In India, the areas between Chennai and Bengaluru could be the potential spots.
- In India, there are already signs of **unplanned and frontier-led growth** in peri-urban areas.
- Planning that ignores the **ecosystem services** provided by local natural resources generates further problems for the vulnerable.
- The implications of internal migrations will significantly affect **development** in these areas and the lives of vulnerable people.

What should be done?

- **Policy** - Understanding migration patterns, getting socioeconomic data on migration and appropriate planning are essential.
- Current climate modelling methods are not accurate at high resolutions for local decision-making.
- Policies to reduce GHG emissions are of utmost urgency.
- **Cities** - The peri-urban areas, expected to be hotspots, already have many

problems.

- These include water shortage, waste management, nutritional deficiency, limited services and poor infrastructure.

- Thus, integrating internal migration with ongoing development planning is vital.

- **Ecosystem** - Ecosystems, part of the natural resources in peri-urban areas, ought to be protected as "special ecological zones".

- This is crucial to ensure that as urban settlements expand, they don't spoil the ecosystem services.

- **Social** - Ignoring issues of social justice and equity in adaptation can lead to serious governance failure.

- Skill building, job training and education and job opportunities for locals and migrants thus have to become a focal point.

- Rights for those who are forced to migrate would be fundamental in these preparations.

Source: The Hindu