From the Northeast to South India: the Distinct Corridors of Migration

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Why in the News

According to a survey by Seven Sisters Development Assistance, a Guwahati-based non-governmental organisation, every study district of the Northeast has its own migration corridor for jobs in South India. The survey was conducted in some administrative blocks of eight districts of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Its original report was not found for this check, so no exact percentages are given here.

The corridors and the destinations

- Most migrants from Tripura's Dhalai district go to Karnataka, Assam's Nagaon district has a distinct route towards Hyderabad, and from Meghalaya's North Garo Hills a large number of people go to Tamil Nadu.
- Within the Northeast, Guwahati and Shillong draw the most migrant workers.
- Most migrants work outside their home state. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the leading destinations.

The reasons: push and pull

- Push factors: a shortage of work in the village, inadequate land for farming and the need to repay debt.
- Pull factors: better living conditions, better jobs and higher wages.
- In many cases push and pull reasons come together. Scheduled Tribe families form a large share of the surveyed families, and most have inadequate land for farming.

The migrants' situation

- The migrants are mostly young and male.
- Family and friends' networks play a large part in finding work; direct applications to an employer are rare.
- Income is limited and most families receive remittances.
- Long working hours and the lack of paid leave, especially among daily-wage workers, are a matter of concern.
- Most families say the migrants will stay home if a local livelihood becomes available. Local enterprise was considered the most effective option.

The limit: the survey is based on a sample from eight districts, so it cannot be taken as a representative figure for the whole Northeast. According to the authors, the recent rise in migration may look exaggerated, because the survey mostly reached people who are still away.

Way Forward

- The study's conclusion is that the aim is not to stop migration but to make it "a choice rather than a compulsion".
- Local enterprises, skill training and additional sources of income should be created for small farmers.
- In the destination states, the registration of migrant workers, paid leave and compliance with the rules on working hours should be ensured.
- To cut dependence on informal networks, verified recruitment and information support centres should be set up.

Mains Examination Practice Question

Analyse the reasons for migration from the Northeast to South India and the challenges faced by migrant workers. (150 words)

Answer Outline

Introduction: according to a survey, every study district of the Northeast has its own migration corridor to South India.

Main Body: the reasons include push factors like the shortage of work in the village, small landholdings and debt, and pull factors like better jobs, wages and living conditions. The challenges: dependence on networks, limited income, long working hours, the lack of paid leave and families' dependence on remittances.

Conclusion: policy therefore needs attention to both safe migration and local employment.

What role can local livelihoods play in making migration "a choice rather than a compulsion"? (150 words)

Answer Outline

Introduction: when a village has alternative sources of income, families can turn migration from a compulsion into a means of additional income.

Main Body: local enterprises, skill training, market linkages and support activities for small farmers can raise income. This will reduce the pressure that debt and the shortage of land create.

Conclusion: at the same time, registration and protection of labour rights are essential for those who do migrate.

Sources

- The Hindu: Some northeast districts have their own migration corridors for jobs in southern India, reveals survey (5 November 2026)