

Inclusive growth: Help workers through new professional tax

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placement can be made humane, compassionate and more participative. Here a great deal more can be done.

The responsibility of the affluent section which benefits more from the new infrastructure created is higher. To illustrate, when Maharashtra faced drought in 1970s, a tax on professional workers mainly in Mumbai financed the entire employment guarantee scheme. Interestingly enough, this tax was never merged with the total revenue of the state. There was a clear accountability about the way this tax revenue will be used.

My proposal is that a tax be levied on all of us professionals living in Ahmedabad and other cities to be put in a

separate fund to look after the education, health and shelter needs of the workers displaced due to the infrastructure, so called cleanliness drives or other disturbances. I know that many readers would assert that state should bear this cost on its own. But knowing the situation of revenue of

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most states, I don't think that is a very hopeful direction.

Various NGOs working on the issues of workers welfare in urban and rural areas must help in ensuring that the fund so created is used efficiently i.e., on generic medicines (which will reduce the health cost drastically), preventive medicine, good quality education for children and neat housing for them with no right to transfer the property.

MINDS ON THE MARGIN

Any region which grows fast is bound to attract labour from rest of the regions but particularly economically backward regions. When these workers go back, they can potentially become the ambassadors of the region which hosted them and also future consumer of the goods and services from there. Understandably, many of them don't want to go back. That is how many people from different parts of the country went abroad and today are remitting huge amount of money contributing to the growth of their native region.

This is a process which happens at all scales and practically all over the world. However, the assimilation of such workers in different regions has been of different nature. Gujarat is one state which has welcomed workers from all over the country with various skills and backgrounds without ever creating a sense of social exclusion.

Having said that, I must also say that given the high growth of the economy, both in agricultural and industrial sectors, there are bound to be higher expectations about the care that workers receive in the state. Internally and externally displaced workers pose different challenges. Large scale urban infrastructure development is necessary to make cities better for all the citizens. That there will be displacements can also be understood. However, this dis-