



Oxfam Report: Inequality Kills

For Prelims: Oxfam Report and its key findings.

For Mains: Key Findings, Causes of Inequality, Impact of the Covid-19.

Why in News

Recently, the [Oxfam report](#) titled “**Inequality Kills**” was released, the report **pointed out a stark income divide worsened by the Covid pandemic**, globally and in India.

Key Points

- **Magnitude of Growing Inequities:** Widening economic, gender, and racial inequalities—as well as the inequality that exists between countries—are tearing our world apart.
 - The wealth of the **world’s 10 richest men has doubled** since the pandemic began.
 - The incomes of **99% of humanity are worse off because of Covid-19**.
 - Inequality **contributes to the death of at least one person every four seconds**.
- **Economic Violence:** A kind of economic violence is perpetrated when structural policy choices are made for the richest and most powerful people. This affects the poorest people, women and girls, and racialized groups most.
 - **Unequal Access to Healthcare:** Healthcare of good quality is a human right, but is too often treated as a luxury for rich people.
 - **Gender-Based Violence:** It is rooted in patriarchy and sexist economic systems. For example, sex-selective abortions.
 - **Poverty-Induced Hunger:** Hunger is one of the ways in which poverty kills, and it is faced by billions of ordinary people all over the world each day.
 - **Inequality of Climate Change Crisis:** The emissions of the richest people are driving this Climate Change crisis, with the CO₂ emissions of 20 of the richest billionaires estimated on average to be 8,000 times that of the billion poorest people.
- **Vaccine Apartheid:** Rich countries may back their pharmaceutical monopoly billionaires and hoard vaccines to protect their populations, but in so doing they push their own people toward risk from the mutations that vaccine apartheid is creating.
 - Vaccine apartheid as a concept calls attention to the effects of inequitable vaccine distribution policies on historically subordinated peoples.

Indian Scenario

- **Decline in Social Security Expenditure:**
 - A Covid continued to ravage India, the country’s **healthcare budget saw a 10% decline** from RE (Revised Estimates) of 2020-21.
 - There was a **6% cut in allocation for education**.
 - The **budgetary allocation for social security schemes declined from 1.5% of the total Union budget to 0.6%**.
- **Growing Inequalities:** According to the report, the **income of 84% of households in the country declined in 2021**, but at the same time, the **number of Indian billionaires grew**

from 102 to 142.

- **Growing Rich:** During the pandemic, the wealth of Indian billionaires increased from Rs 23.14 lakh crore to Rs 53.16 lakh crore.
 - India has the third-highest number of billionaires in the world, just behind China and the United States.
 - There is a 39% increase in the number of billionaires in India in 2021.
- **Growing Poor:** More than 4.6 crore Indians are estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020. This is nearly half of the global new poor according to the United Nations.
 - Also, in the same year, the share of the bottom 50% of the population in national wealth was a mere 6%.
 - The unemployment in India has also increased.
- **Blow to Gender Parity:** Women collectively lost Rs 59.11 lakh crore in earnings in 2020, with 1.3 crores fewer women in work now than in 2019.
- **Increasing Fiscal Deficit:** Lowering [corporate taxes from 30% to 22%](#) to attract investment last year (2020) resulted in a loss of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, which contributed to the increase in India's [fiscal deficit](#).
- **Unequal Federalism:** Despite the country's federal structure, the revenue resources remained concentrated in the Centre's hands.
 - However, the management of the pandemic was left to the states - who were not equipped to handle it with its financial or human resources.

Way Forward

- **Clawback extreme wealth into the real economy to tackle inequality:** All governments should immediately tax the gains made by the super-rich during this pandemic period.
- **Redirect that wealth to save lives and invest in our future:** All governments must invest in evidence-based and powerful policies to save lives and invest in our future.
 - The legacy of the pandemic must be quality, publicly-funded, and publicly-delivered universal healthcare.
- **Change rules and shift power in the economy and society:** This includes ending sexist laws, including those which mean that nearly 3 billion women are legally prevented from having the same choice of jobs as men.

[Source: IE](#)

National Technical Textiles Mission

For Prelims: Technical Textile, Schemes related to Technical Textile.

For Mains: Significance of Technical Textile in Indian Economy.

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Textiles cleared 20 strategic research projects worth Rs 30 crores in the areas of **Specialty fibers and Geotextiles** under the Programme '**National Technical Textiles Mission.**'

Technical Textiles

- Technical textiles **are functional fabrics** that have applications across various industries including automobiles, civil engineering and construction, agriculture, healthcare, industrial safety,

personal protection etc.

- Technical Textile products derive their demand from development and industrialization in a country.
- Based on usage, there are **12 technical textile segments**: Agrotech, Meditech, Buildtech, Mobiltech, Clothtech, Oekotech, Geotech, Packtech, Hometech, Protech, Indutech and Sportech.
 - **For example**, 'mobiltech' refers to products in vehicles such as seat belts and airbags, airplane seats; geotech, which is incidentally the fastest growing sub-segment, used to hold back soil, etc.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It was **approved in 2020 by the [Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs \(CCEA\)](#)** with the aim **to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles** and increase the use of technical textiles in the domestic market.
 - It aims at taking the domestic market size from USD 40 billion to USD 50 billion by 2024.
- **Ministry:**
 - A Mission Directorate is operational in the Ministry of Textiles.
- **Components:** It will be **implemented for four years starting from 2020-2021** and has four components-
 - **First component:** It will **focus on research, development and innovation** with an outlay of Rs. 1,000 crores.
 - The research will be at both fiber level and application-based in geo, agro, medical, sports and mobile textiles and development of biodegradable technical textiles.
 - Research activities will also focus on the development of indigenous machinery and process equipment.
 - **Second component:** It will be for the **promotion and development of the market for technical textiles.**
 - **Third component:** It will **focus on export promotion** so that technical textile exports from the country reach from Rs 14,000 crores to Rs 20,000 crores by 2021-2022 and ensure 10% average growth every year till the Mission ends.
 - An **export promotion council** for technical textiles will be set up.
 - **Fourth component:** It will **focus on education, training and skill development.**
 - The Mission will promote technical education at higher engineering and technology levels related to technical textiles and its application areas.
- **Scenario of Technical Textile:**
 - The growth of technical textiles in India has **gained momentum in the past five years**, currently growing at an **8% per annum rate.**
 - It is aimed **to hasten this growth to 15-20% range** during the next five years.
 - The current world market is USD 250 billion and **India's share in it is USD 19 billion.**
 - India is an aspiring player **with USD 40 billion in this market (8% Share).**
 - The **biggest players are the USA**, western Europe, China and Japan (20-40% share).
- **Initiatives Related to Technical Textile:**
 - **[Production Linked Incentive \(PLI\) Scheme for Textiles Sector:](#)** It aims to promote the production of high value Man-Made Fiber (MMF) fabrics, garments and technical textiles.
 - **Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) Codes for Technical Textile:** In 2019, Government of India dedicated 207 HSN codes to technical textiles to help in monitoring the data of import and export, in providing financial support and other incentives to manufacturers.
 - **100% FDI under Automatic Route:** The Government of India allows 100% **[Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\)](#)** under automatic route. International technical textile manufacturers such as Ahlstrom, Johnson & Johnson etc have already initiated operations in India.
 - **Technotex India:** It is a flagship event organized by the Ministry of Textiles, in

collaboration with [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry \(FICCI\)](#) and comprises exhibitions, conferences and seminars with participation of stakeholders from across the global technical textile value chain.

- [Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme](#): To improve exports and indirectly promote investments in textile machinery.

[Source: PIB](#)

Web 3.0

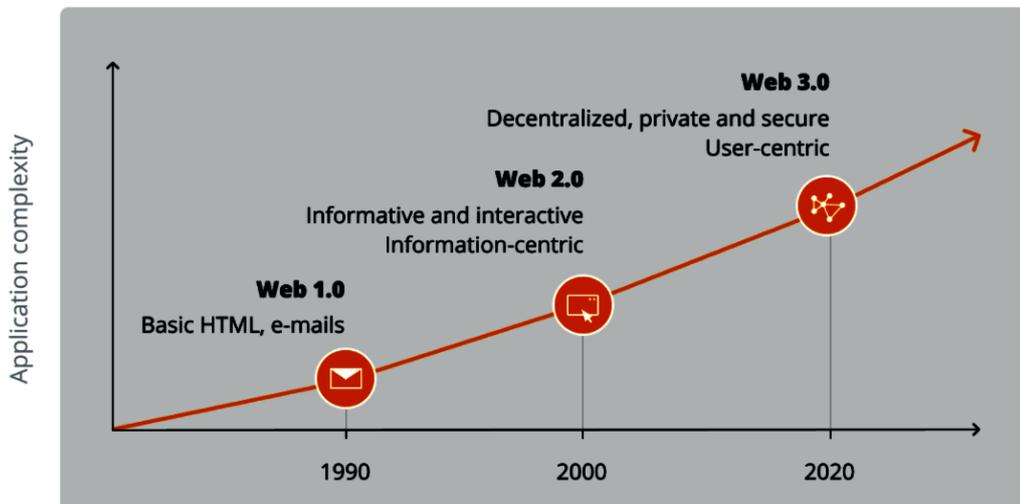
For Prelims: Web 1.0, Web 2.0, Web.3.0, Internet, Blockchain Technology.

For Mains: Different Versions of Web, Blockchain Technology, Decentralized Technology and its Significance, Data Security, E-commerce.

Why in News

The concept of **Web3**, also called **Web 3.0**, used to describe a potential **next phase of the internet**, created quite a buzz in 2021.

// The history of the internet



Key Points

▪ About:

- **World Wide Web**, which is also known as a Web, is a **collection of websites or web pages stored in web servers** and connected to local computers through the internet.
- These websites contain text pages, digital images, audios, videos, etc. Users can access the content of these sites from any part of the world over the internet using their devices such as computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.
- Web 3.0 is a **decentralized internet** to be run on [blockchain technology](#), which would

be **different from the versions in use, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0.**

- In Web3, **users will have ownership stakes in platforms and applications** unlike now where tech giants control the platforms.
 - Gavin Wood, founder of [Ethereum](#), a block chain technology company, used the term Web3 first in 2014 and in the past few years many others have added to the idea of Web3.
- **Previous Versions:**
 - **Web 1.0:**
 - Web 1.0 is the **world wide web or the internet that was invented in 1989**. It became popular from 1993. It **lasted until 1999**.
 - The internet in the Web 1.0 days **was mostly static web pages** where users would go to a website and then read and interact with the static information.
 - Even though there were [e-commerce](#) websites in the initial days it was still a **closed environment** and the users themselves could not create any content or post reviews on the internet.
 - **Web 2.0:**
 - Web 2.0 **started in some form in the late 1990s itself though 2004 was when most of its features were fully available**. It is still the age of Web 2.0 now.
 - The differentiating characteristic of Web 2.0 compared to Web 1.0 is that **users can create content**.
 - They can **interact and contribute** in the form of comments, registering likes, sharing and uploading their photos or videos and perform other such activities.
 - Primarily, a [social media](#) kind of interaction is the differentiating trait of Web 2.0.
- **Need of Web 3.0:**
 - In Web 2.0, **most of the data** in the internet and the internet traffic are **owned or handled by very few companies** ex. Google.
 - This has **created issues related to data privacy, [data security](#)** and abuse of such data.
 - There is a sense of disappointment that the **original purpose of the internet has been distorted**.
- **Significance of Web 3.0:**
 - **Decentralized and Fair Internet:** Web3 will deliver a **decentralized and fair internet** where users control their own data.
 - **Eliminates Intermediaries:** With block chain, the time and place of the transaction are recorded permanently.
 - Thus, Web3 enables peer to peer (seller to buyer) transactions by eliminating the role of the intermediary. This concept can be extended to
 - **Decentralization and Transparency:** The spirit of Web3 is Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO).
 - DAO is all about the business rules and **governing rules in any transaction are transparently available for anyone** to see and software will be written conforming to these rules.
 - With DAO, there is **no need for a central authority to authenticate or validate**.

Way Forward

- Web3 is in its very initial days and there is **no consensus if it will take off like Web 1.0 or Web 2.0 did**. There is **much skepticism** from top tech brains in the industry and the **academic community** that **Web3 does not solve the problems it purports to solve**.
- Web3 **will require deviation from the current architecture** where there is a front-end, middle layer and back-end.
- Web3's architecture **will need backend solutions for handling block chain, persisting and indexing data in block chain, peer to peer communications and so forth**.
- Similarly, the middle layer, also called the business rules layer, **will need to include handling block chain-based backend**.

[Source: TH](#)

Domestic Hazardous Waste

For Prelims: Domestic Hazardous Waste, Solid Waste Management Rules 2016.

For Mains: Domestic Hazardous Waste and its impact, Need to manage Domestic Hazardous Waste, Solid Waste Management Rules 2016

Why in News

Segregation of domestic hazardous waste remains a distant dream for most Indian cities in absence of robust framework and infrastructure.

- **Indore is the only city in the country** that safely handles its domestic hazardous waste.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Domestic Hazardous Waste is any **chemical or product that can cause serious illness or pose** an environmental or health threat if improperly stored, transported or disposed of.
 - When hazardous waste is disposed of in the trash, down the drain, or on the ground, our water and soils can be contaminated or trash collectors can be harmed.
 - Most products labeled dangerous, flammable, poison, combustible and corrosive are considered hazardous waste.
 - **Examples:** Auto batteries, Fertilizers, Batteries (non-alkaline), Paint.
- **Domestic Hazardous Waste in India:**
 - In 2020, a significant level of toxic heavy metals and persistent organic contaminants like pesticides have been found by the researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and IIT Bombay.
 - They analysed fine particles from eight dump sites across the country.
- **Governing Household Waste:**
 - Household waste is governed by the rules outlined in the [Solid Waste Management Rules 2016](#).
 - These rules divide household waste into dry and wet waste.
 - Wet waste is categorised as any waste that decomposes or degrades by itself.
 - All other waste falls into dry waste according to the rules.
- **Issues:**
 - **Not Fully Covered in Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016:**
 - The **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016** define it as “discarded paint drums, pesticide cans, compact fluorescent lightbulbs, tube lights, expired medicines, broken mercury thermometers, used batteries, used needles and syringes and contaminated gauge, etc generated at household levels”.
 - The definition is not exhaustive, and so leaves a lot to the imagination of individual households and local government bodies such as Panchayats and municipalities.
 - For example, the rules **leave out cigarette butts** even though they contain traces of heavy metals and other chemicals.
 - **Not in Ground Translation of Rules:**
 - According to the rules, Households must segregate waste into wet, dry and domestic hazardous categories.
 - Local government bodies must collect the hazardous waste, and / or set up collection centres every 20 km so households can deposit it on their own.
 - The local authorities must then safely deliver the collected waste to disposal

facilities. The rules also direct the authorities to develop the necessary infrastructure and sensitise people by 2018.

- But none of these requirements have been translated on the ground.
- **Not Enough Disposal Facilities:**
 - Even if the waste is collected, the country does not have enough disposal facilities to safely treat them.
 - A disposal facility typically has engineered landfills that stop the percolation of toxic leachate into the ground, and / or controlled incinerators.
 - Currently, **there are only 45 of these facilities**, as per the Handbook on Chemicals and Hazardous Waste Management and Handling in India released in 2019 by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Way Forward

- Given the poor performance, the country may **consider including hazardous waste under [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#)**.
 - Under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), **manufacturers have the responsibility of collecting and channeling** their post-consumer products.
 - India currently has an **EPR policy only for plastic products and electronic and electrical equipment**. In Canada, domestic hazardous waste has been under EPR since the 1990s.
 - The policy has relieved the government and taxpayers of the cost of domestic hazardous waste collection.
- The authorities **must also ensure safe storage of the waste** and its transportation to the hazardous waste disposal facility.
 - Since, it is the **responsibility of the municipal authorities** under the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016**, to collect hazardous waste quarterly or periodically, and/or set up deposit centres where such waste can be dropped off by waste generators.

[Source: DTE](#)

India's Trade with China

For Prelims: India-China Trade, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), ASEAN, European Union, Pangong lake, New Border Law.

For Mains: India's Economic Dependence on China and way ahead.

Why in News

India's trade with China in 2021 crossed USD125 billion with imports from China nearing a record USD100 billion, underlining continued demand for a range of Chinese goods, particularly machinery.

- This is [when the relations hit a new low](#) due to the prolonged standoff by the militaries in eastern Ladakh.



Key Points

▪ India's Biggest Exports to China:

- India's biggest exports to China in recent years were iron ore, cotton and other raw material-based commodities, which have seen a recovery in demand in China last year (2021).

▪ India's Biggest Imports from China:

- India has imported large quantities of electrical and mechanical machinery, [Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients \(APIs\)](#), auto components and, over the past two years, a range of medical supplies from oxygen concentrators to Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs).

▪ Growth in Bilateral Trade:

- The **43% year-on-year growth in bilateral trade with India was among the highest among China's major trading partners.**
- Trade figures with China's top three trading partners showed growth of 28.1% with [ASEAN](#) (to USD 878.2 billion), 27.5% with the [European Union](#) (to USD 828.1 billion), and 28.7% with the United States, to USD 755.6 billion.

▪ Trade Deficit with China:

- The trade deficit for India grew to USD 69.38 billion in 2021.
- India has been highlighting its concerns over the growing trade deficit with China for over a decade and calling on China to open its markets for India's IT and pharmaceutical products.

- Trade deficit refers to a situation where the country's import dues exceed the receipts from the exports.

▪ Steps taken to Counter Dependence on China:

- [Ban on Chinese apps.](#)
- Increasing scrutiny of Chinese investments in many sectors, and a decision to keep Chinese companies out of [5G trials.](#)
- The government has also made its [prior approval mandatory for foreign investments](#) from countries that share land border with India to curb "opportunistic takeovers" of

- domestic firms - a move which will restrict FDI from China.
- To cut import dependency on China for **APIs (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients)**, the government in March, 2020 [approved a package comprising four schemes](#) with a total outlay of Rs. 13,760 crore to boost domestic production of bulk drugs and medical devices in the country along with their exports.
 - In 2020, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry **identified 12 sectors** - to make India a global supplier and cut import bills.
 - These sectors are food processing, organic farming, iron, aluminium and copper, agro chemicals, electronics, industrial machinery, furniture, leather and shoes, auto parts, textiles, and coveralls, masks, sanitisers and ventilators.

Current Issues in India-China Relations

▪ **Military Standoff in Eastern Ladakh:**

- The border standoff between India's and China's armies began in May 2020 after a violent confrontation in the [Pangong lake areas](#), and both sides have gradually increased their deployment by pouring in tens of thousands of soldiers and heavy weaponry.
- On 12th January, 2022 the two sides met for the [14th round of Corps Commander-level discussions](#) to end the standoff in the remaining territories, and they promised to meet again shortly.

▪ [New Border Law:](#)

- China's new law on land borders has come into effect from the new year (2022).
- The law states among other things that China abides by treaties concluded with or jointly acceded to by foreign countries on land boundary affairs.

▪ **Renaming of several places in Arunachal Pradesh:**

- Several places in Arunachal Pradesh have been renamed recently by China as part of its claim on the Indian state.
- India condemned the move on a global scale and the country has responded with a clear statement that assigning invented names would do no good and would not alter the facts that the places are a part of Arunachal Pradesh.

▪ **Bridge across Pangong Lake:**

- Recently, it was found that China is building a new bridge on [Pangong Tso](#) which will provide an additional axis to deploy troops faster between the north and south banks of the lake, and closer to the [LAC \(Line of Actual Control\)](#).
 - The bridge is in their territory, and the Indian Army will have to factor this in its operational plans.

Way Forward

- To reduce the dependence of Chinese products, India needs to analyze imports from China, and develop the way forward.
- Further, based on the economic complexity model, the Indian government can formulate proper road maps through compartmentalizing them as per technology and innovation capabilities.

[Source: TH](#)

Kohima War Cemetery

For Prelims: Kohima War Cemetery, World War II, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Indian National Army.

For mains: World War II, Significance of North East India in World War II

Why in News

Recently, the United Kingdom-based **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)** has listed five sites with unusual features. These sites are associated with [World War I](#) and [World War II](#).

- Nagaland capital Kohima is included in the list because of the **Kohima War Cemetery**.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

- **CWGC is an intergovernmental organisation of six member-states** (Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom) who **ensure the men and women who died in the wars will never be forgotten**.
- It was **formed in 1917** as the Imperial War Graves Commission. However the present name was given in 1960.
- Its headquarters is situated in **Maidenhead, UK**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Nagaland's capital Kohima probably has the **only cemetery on earth that sports a tennis court**.
 - The Kohima War Cemetery is one of **23,000 World War graves across the continents maintained by the CWGC**.
- **Formation of the Cemetery:**
 - On 3rd April 1944, a **Japanese force of 15,000 attacked Kohima and its 2,500-strong force**.
 - It led to two weeks of difficult, bloody fighting as the defending forces were pushed back to the former house of the British Deputy Commissioner.
 - The **lawn of this house had a tennis court** where the British officers played for recreation.
 - The surviving defenders, encamped around the garden tennis court, prepared for their final stand. As the Japanese forces prepared to attack, they were attacked in turn by the lead tanks of a relief force, saving the defenders and pushing the attackers back.
 - Despite this setback, the Japanese force continued to fight for Kohima before they were finally forced to withdraw in May 1944.
 - **Those who had fallen in the defence of Kohima were buried on the battlefield, which later became a permanent CWGC cemetery**, with further burials from the surrounding areas.
 - **Designer Colin St. Clair Oakes incorporated the tennis court** into the design of the cemetery.
- **Other Cemeteries in the List:**
 - World War I **"crater cemeteries"** - **Zivy Crater and Litchfield Crater** - in the Pas de Calais region in France.
 - **Nicosia (Waynes Keep) Cemetery** or the "cemetery in no man's land" in Cyprus.

Significance of Kohima in World War II

- Present-day Nagaland and adjoining Manipur **comprised the only theatre of World War II in**

the Indian subcontinent.



- In 1944, following hard fighting in the Burmese jungle, the Japanese forces in the region pushed across the Chindwin River and into India. In their path was the Fourteenth Army, made up of forces from across the Commonwealth.
- This invasion hinged upon two key points, (Manipur capital) Imphal and Kohima. Defeat for the Fourteenth Army here meant that the Japanese could strike further into India.
- **Kohima was of key strategic importance**, at the highest point of the pass through the jungle mountains to Dimapur, now Nagaland's commercial hub adjoining Assam.
- The fall of Dimapur would have meant leaving the Allied defenders of Imphal at the mercy of the Japanese soldiers fighting alongside [Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army](#).

World War II

- **About:**
 - It was a **conflict that involved virtually every part of the world during the years 1939-45.**
 - It ended six years and one day after Germany's invasion of Poland on 1st September, 1939, sparked the 20th century's second global conflict.
 - By the time it concluded on the deck of an American warship on 2nd September, 1945, WW II had claimed the lives of an **estimated 60-80 million people, approximately 3% of the world's population.**
 - The vast majority of those who died were civilians, including **6 million Jews killed in Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust.**
- **Principal Belligerents:**
 - **Axis powers**—Germany, Italy, and Japan.
 - **Allies**—France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China.

Open Data Week

For Prelims: Open Data and its advantages.

For Mains: Use of open data in urban planning.

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** has announced the initiation of the **Open Data Week** to encourage the adoption of open data and promote innovation across India's urban ecosystem.

- It is being conducted during the third week of January, i.e., **from 17th January 2022 to 21st January 2022.**
- The idea is to provide a platform that offers ample opportunities on how to continue creating and promoting the use of data that **addresses complex urban issues**, such as the ongoing [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

Key Points

- **About Open Data:**
 - Open data is data that can be **freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone** - subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike. It can be understood under three broad categories:
 - **Availability and Access:** It is easily available at a minimal cost. It should also be available in a usable form.
 - **Re-use and Redistribution:** It is made available without any restriction on re-use and redistribution.
 - **Universal Participation:** Anyone and everyone can access and/or re-use it. There should be no discrimination against a person or group based on any criteria.
- **Advantages of Open Data in Urban Planning:**
 - **Transparency:** Greater transparency and integrity of the public sector. It enhances the possibility to **track public money flows and market insights.**
 - **Multi-dimensional Correlation:** It illuminates the **current and historical trends**, which can be correlated with information on **social, political, and environmental climates.**
 - **Action-Oriented Approach:** It provides the ability to **recognize, respond to, or even predict changes in real-time.**
 - Estimates of the impact of different types of change through modeling and simulation, and the ability to test those predictions with a **high accuracy** depending on the amount of data available.
 - Increased productivity via the streamlining of processes and services, by allowing the **easy identification of inefficient or ineffective practices.**
 - **Environmental Sustainability:** Reduction of **environmental impact** by simplifying the identification of its sources, and by aiding in the compliance of existing projects, services and infrastructure with environmental regulations.

- **Tailored solutions:** Allowing similar problems to be addressed across different legal frameworks and different demographics.
- **Democratization of Data:** It will allow information to be accessible to the average end-user.
 - It describes a methodological framework of values and actions that benefit and minimize any harm to the public or the typical user.

Way Forward

- **Leveraging Contactless Infrastructure:** The building blocks for a scalable model to harvest mass data of Indians rapidly expand their digital footprint—especially in the aftermath of Covid-19.
 - India can leverage the contactless behaviour that is already in place.
 - [Aadhaar](#) provided the idea of a unique identity to over 1 billion people in India.
 - Inter-operable payments mechanism, such as the [Unified Payments Interface](#), or UPI, to give a new definition to financial transactions.
- **Consent to Use Personal Data:** There is a need for a legal architecture that provides data privacy protection and thereby propels governance towards **data democracy**.
 - In this context, the recommendations of [Justice BN Srikrishna](#) constituted for data privacy are hugely significant.
 - Such a law is very critical in defining the digital future of India, one in which the individual will be the centre.

[Source: PIB](#)

Desh Ke Mentor Programme: Delhi Government

For Prelims: NCPCR, POCSO Act, Schemes Related to Education.

For Mains: Significance of Desh Ke Mentor Programme and Issues related to Child's Safety.

Why in News

Recently, the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) suggested that the Delhi government suspend its flagship 'Desh ke Mentor' Programme** till "the time when all the loopholes pertaining to the safety of the children are overhauled.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- NCPCR is a **statutory body set up in March 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.**
- It is **under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.**
- The Commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the child rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It inquires into complaints relating to a child's right to free and compulsory education under the **Right to Education Act, 2009.**
- It monitors the implementation of [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(POCSO\) Act, 2012.](#)

Key Points

▪ About:

- It was **launched in October 2021, aiming at connecting students in classes IX to XII with voluntary mentors.**
- People between the ages of **18 and 35 can sign up to be mentors through an app** created by a team at the Delhi Technological University and will be connected with students based on mutual interests.
- The **mentorship entails regular phone calls for a minimum of two months**, which can optionally be carried on for another four months.
- The idea is for the **young mentors to guide students through higher education and career options**, preparation for higher education entrance exams, and dealing with the pressure of it all.
- So far, 44,000 people have signed up as mentors and have been working with 1.76 lakh children.

▪ Concerns Raised by NCPDR:

- Assigning children to a mentor of the same gender as them **does not necessarily assure their safety from abuse.**
- **Lack of police verification** of the mentors.
- A **psychometric Test is not a full proof assessment of a person** in terms of potential threat to any child.
- Limiting interactions to phone calls also **does not ensure the safety of children since** “child related crime can be initiated through phone calls as well.”
- The responsibility and accountability of preventing children from such situations lies with the Department. The consent of parents cannot be used as a cushion in case of any untoward incident.

[Source: IE](#)

Ravidassias of Punjab

Why in News

Recently, the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has postponed polling for the Punjab Assembly election, which underlines the importance of the **Ravidassia community in the state.**

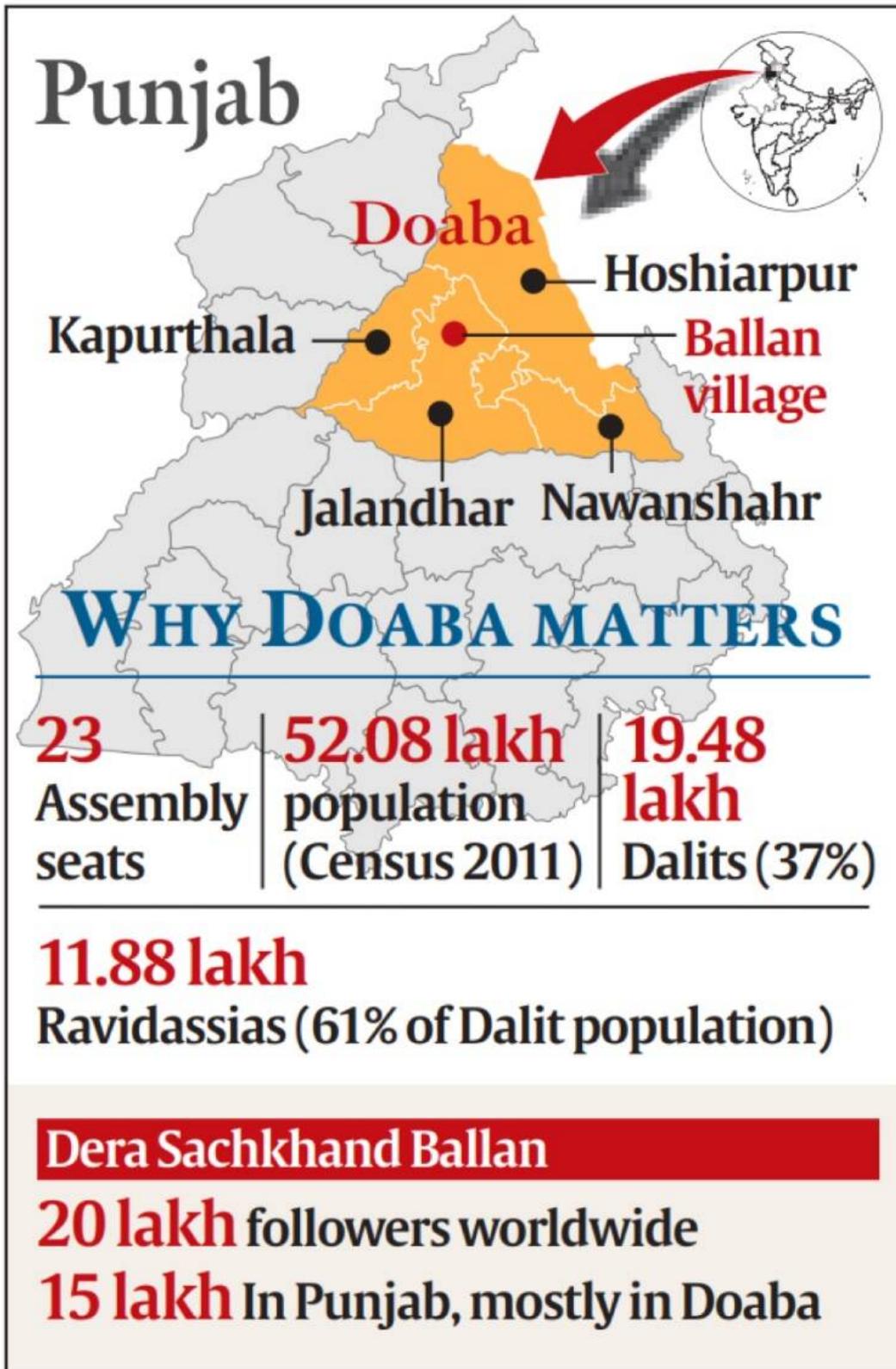
- The State government and political parties raised concern that many devotees would be in Varanasi (in a memorial temple) to celebrate **Guru Ravidas's birth anniversary** on 16th February and miss out on voting.
- Guru Ravidas's birth anniversary is celebrated on **Magh Purnima**, the full moon day in the month of Magh according to the Hindu lunar calendar.

Key Points

▪ About:

- The Ravidassias **are a Dalit community** of whom the bulk — nearly 12 lakh — live in the Doaba region.
- The **Dera Sachkhand Ballan**, their largest dera with 20 lakh followers worldwide, was **founded in the early 20th century by Baba Sant Pipal Das.**

- Once closely connected with Sikhism, the dera severed these decades-old ties in 2010, and announced they would follow the Ravidassia religion.
 - The announcement was **made on Guru Ravidas Jayanti in Varanasi**.
- From 2010, the Dera Sachkhand Ballan started **replacing the Guru Granth Sahib with its own Granth, Amritbani**, carrying 200 hymns of Guru Ravidas, in Ravidassia temples and gurdwaras.



▪ **Guru Ravidas:**

- Guru Ravidas was a mystic poet saint of the **Bhakti Movement** from the 15th and 16th centuries, and founded the **Ravidassia religion**.
- It is believed that he was **born in Varanasi in a cobbler's family**.
- He gained prominence due to his belief in one God and his unbiased religious poems.
- He dedicated his whole life to the **abolition of the caste system** and openly **despised the notion of a Brahminical society**.
- His devotional songs made an instant impact on the Bhakti Movement and around 41 of his poems were included in '**Guru Granth Sahib**', the religious text of the Sikhs.

Source: IE

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