FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY
KERALA'S NO.1 IAS ACADEMY

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FINDER
FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

Need for a unified urbanisation plan

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- The **2027 Census** will classify settlements as urban **based on outdated criteria**, potentially deepening the undercount of urban India.
- This has **renewed the demand for a National Urbanisation Policy** to plan beyond administrative boundaries.

Key Highlights:

- The **2027 Census** will use the 2011 definitions, classifying settlements as urban if they meet criteria for statutory or census towns.

Statutory Town: A place having a municipality, municipal corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, as declared under law.

Census Town: A place with a minimum population of 5,000, at least 75% of male main workers engaged in non-agricultural activities, and a population density of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

- India's urban population stood at **377 million in 2011**, projected to exceed **720 million by 2050**.
- About **94% of urban settlements** are small towns, but about **60% of the urban population** lives in Class I cities.

Class I Cities in India: According to the Census of India, Class I cities are urban settlements with a population of 1 lakh (100,000) or more.

- **Peri-urban areas** surrounding cities are growing faster (4.15% a year) than the cities (2.9%) themselves.
- These areas are **increasingly becoming urban in nature** but often **remain under rural administration**.
- **Villages with urban features may remain under Gram Panchayats**, resulting in inadequate urban services and infrastructure.
- **Around 52% of statutory towns and 76% of census towns** do not have **master plans** (plans that guide land use, housing and infrastructure development)
- **Article 243Q(2)** gives **State Governments the power to determine and notify which areas** qualify as transitional or smaller urban areas, influencing their urban governance.
- Urban local bodies have weak finances, as municipalities generate only about **1% of India's GDP** in revenue.
- The **16th Finance Commission** has **increased grants to urban local bodies to 45%** to support

their functioning.

Implications:

- Outdated classification criteria lead to **resource misallocation**.
- **Lack of a urbanisation policy** results in fragmented planning and resource allocation
- Most settlements **lack master plans, so housing, infrastructure** and climate decisions have no spatial guide.

Way Forward:

- **Develop a National Urbanisation Policy** to establish shared principles and build coherence across institutions.
- **Use satellite and geospatial data to review settlement status** at fixed intervals, not only during the Census.
- **Enhance municipal revenue through own-source revenue** and formula-based transfers
- **Establish a National Urbanisation Council** to better connect institutions and mechanisms

Mains Question:

Critically examine the limits of India's rural-urban classification and discuss the need for a National Urbanisation Policy. (250 words, 15 marks)

On the Arunachal frontier, silence is not a strategy

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in Focus?

- Reports of **Chinese intrusions** and prolonged face-offs in the **Asaphila, Taksing and Longju** areas of Arunachal Pradesh have raised concerns over border security and the status of the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.

Key Highlights:

- **China has reportedly built roads, bridges and camps in traditional grazing and hunting areas**, restricting Indian patrol access to certain locations.
- **China wants to enforce its claimed 1959 Line** along the border, including in the Eastern Sector.
- **India rejects China's 1959 Line** and **considers the McMahon Line** the basis of the Eastern Sector boundary.
- The **Line of Actual Control separates Indian and Chinese-controlled areas**, but both countries have differing perceptions of its alignment in certain areas.
- **Border agreements:**
  - **1993 Agreement**: Both countries agreed to maintain peace and tranquillity along the LAC.
  - **1996 Agreement**: Both sides agreed to exercise military restraint and work towards a common understanding of the LAC through exchange of maps.
  - **2005 Agreement**: Both sides agreed to consider the actual situation in border areas while settling the boundary dispute.
- **China is allegedly following salami-slicing**- gradually occupying small areas of disputed territory to expand its control without triggering a major war.

Implications:

- Secrecy and inconsistent official statements **weaken public trust and undermine border security**.
- **Lack of transparency may encourage** China's **salami-slicing tactics** and incremental territorial gains.
- **Continued Chinese military presence** along the LAC increases tensions and makes border disengagement difficult.
- **Reliance solely on military-level talks** may limit diplomatic and political pressure on China.

Way Forward:

- Ensure **transparency and public accountability** regarding Chinese transgressions.
- Escalate serious border violations through

diplomatic and political channels, alongside military-level talks.

- Strengthen **border surveillance, infrastructure and patrolling capabilities**

Mains Question:

Examine the challenges of Chinese transgressions along the LAC in the Eastern Sector and suggest how India should respond. (250 words, 15 marks)

How the Supreme Court shaped due process in death penalty cases

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- **World Day Against the Death Penalty (October 10)** has prompted a review of the Supreme Court's safeguards on capital punishment established in 1980.
- Recent judgments like **Manoj v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022)** and **Waris v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2026)** highlight the evolving jurisprudence on capital punishment.

Manoj v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022): The Supreme Court mandated consideration of the convict's mental health, jail conduct and potential for reform before awarding the death penalty.

Waris v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2026): The Court kept the conviction for the rape and murder of a child but reduced the death sentence to life imprisonment, as the State gave no proof that the accused could not reform.

Key Highlights:

- **Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)** upheld the death penalty but introduced guidelines for judicial discretion, emphasising human dignity.
- It established the **rarest of rare doctrine**, meaning the **death penalty should be given only in extremely serious cases** where life imprisonment is not sufficient.
- **Section 354(3) of the CrPC**, now **Section 393(3) of the BNSS, 2023**, mandates life imprisonment as the norm, with death sentences only for "special reasons".
- In the cases of **Machhi Singh (1983)** and **Ravji (1995)**, courts focused mainly on the **gravity of the crime**.
- The Supreme Court corrected this approach in **Santosh Kumar Bariyar (2009)** by requiring consideration of the accused's possibility of reformation.
- In **Vasanta Sampat Dupare (2025)** SC held that sentencing without a hearing violates **Articles 14 and 21**.

Article 14: Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws.

Article 21: Protects the right to life and personal liberty, except according to a procedure established by law.

- A study found that **36.1%** of death sentences between 2018 and 2020 were pronounced on the same day as conviction.
- In **2025, trial courts sentenced 128 people to death**, and the **Manoj guidelines** were not followed in 95.18% of assessable cases.

Implications:

- **Flawed investigations and prosecutions** increase the risk of **wrongful convictions**.
- **Inadequate mitigation hearings may lead to death sentences** without considering the accused's **mental health and scope for reform**.
- Procedural lapses undermine **fair trial guarantees** under Articles 14 and 21.
- **Inconsistent application of sentencing safeguards** weakens public confidence in the **criminal justice system**.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen investigations and prosecutions, particularly the quality of **forensic evidence**.
- Ensure strict compliance with the **Manoj guidelines** at the trial court level.

- **Give the accused a fair chance to present evidence** about their mental health and background.
- The State **must prove that the accused cannot be reformed** and is unlikely to become a better person.

Mains Question:

Critically evaluate how far the safeguards laid down from Bachan Singh to Dupare have ensured fair sentencing in death penalty cases in India. (250 words, 15 marks)

In Tehran, a search for the future of West Asian security

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in Focus?

- In October 2026, a **delegation from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan, known as the Mecca Agreement alliance**, visited Iran's capital, Tehran, to discuss regional security.
- The main objective of the Tehran visit was to **prevent further escalation of the West Asia conflict and explore a regional approach to security**.

Key Highlights:

- Iran has **targeted American interests and military installations in the Gulf states** since the strikes began in February 2026.
- **Houthi missile strikes** and the closure of Riyadh's airport have **heightened Saudi Arabia's security concerns** and prompted diplomatic outreach to Iran.
- The limited success of **Saudi-led air campaigns since 2015** and the Houthis' territorial gains have **pushed Riyadh towards negotiations and de-escalation**.
- Iran's delegation was led by **Mohsen Rezaei**, reflecting the growing influence of the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** in Iran's wartime power structure.
- Iran seeks to promote **region-led security arrangements** over **United States (US)-led frameworks** and gain a greater role in West Asian security discussions.
- Iran's ties with the **Houthis** provide potential leverage for de-escalation, while **Pakistan and Türkiye seek to strengthen their regional roles** through the **Mecca Agreement**.

Implications:

- **Competing regional security arrangements may deepen geopolitical divisions** and weaken existing international security frameworks.
- **Reduced reliance on US-led arrangements may create uncertainty over regional security**
- **Iran's growing influence and ties with non-state actors** could complicate regional security efforts.
- Differences among regional powers may **limit the effectiveness of collective security arrangements**.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen **regional dialogue and confidence-building measures** to address security concerns.
- **Promote diplomatic solutions** and avoid further military escalation.
- **Encourage inclusive regional security frameworks** that involve all major stakeholders.
- **Respect national sovereignty and ensure that regional cooperation** does not undermine existing international commitments.

Mains Question:

Examine the emerging regional security arrangements in West Asia and discuss their implications for regional stability. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

India–Bangladesh Ganga Water Sharing Treaty (1996)

- **Why in News?:** The **1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty** is set to expire in **December 2026**, prompting India and Bangladesh to prepare for renewal talks.
- The treaty was signed on **12 December 1996** for **30 years**, governing the sharing of Ganga waters between India and Bangladesh during the dry season.
- Water is shared at the **Farakka Barrage** through a **10-day schedule from January to May**, based on **average river flows** recorded between 1949 and 1988.
- If water flow falls below **50,000 cusecs**, both countries **must hold immediate consultations**.
- A **Joint Committee with equal representation** from both countries monitors daily water flows at **Farakka and Hardinge Bridge**, submits annual reports and addresses implementation issues.

APAAR ID (Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry)

- **Why in News? :** The **Orissa High Court** directed education authorities to **include an option allowing parents to refuse consent** for generating students' APAAR IDs.
- APAAR was introduced by the **Ministry of Education** under the **One Nation, One Student ID** initiative, aligned with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- It provides every student with a **unique, permanent 12-digit identification number**, covering their academic journey from school to higher education.
- The ID creates a **lifelong digital record** of academic achievements, including degrees, scholarships, awards and academic credits.
- Linked with **Aadhaar and DigiLocker**, APAAR facilitates digital access to certificates and seamless credit transfer between institutions under the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** framework.



Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)

- **Why in News?:** The **GGA**, launched at **COP26 (Glasgow, 2021)**, is expected to feature prominently at the upcoming **UNFCCC COP31 (Türkiye, November 2026)**.
- The GGA was established under the **Paris Agreement (Article 7.1)** to **enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability** to climate change.
- It provides a **global framework for assessing progress in climate adaptation** across areas such as **water, food, health, ecosystems, infrastructure and livelihoods**.
- The **UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience**, adopted at COP28 (2023), provides a **framework for achieving the GGA** through specific thematic and dimensional targets.
- Developing countries have called for stronger **adaptation finance, technology transfer and capacity-building** to implement adaptation measures.

Places in News

Qeshm Island

- **Why in News?:** Qeshm Island was recently targeted in **US airstrikes** amid escalating tensions with Iran over the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- Located in **Hormozgan Province, southern Iran**, Qeshm is the **largest**

island in the Persian Gulf, situated near the Iranian port city of **Bandar Abbas**.

- It lies along the **Strait of Hormuz**, which connects the Persian Gulf with the **Gulf of Oman** and the Arabian Sea.
- The island hosts important **Iranian naval and surveillance infrastructure** and provides a vantage point for monitoring maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Qeshm is known for its **UNESCO Global Geopark**, salt caves, distinctive geological formations and **Hara mangrove forests**, which support rich coastal biodiversity.



Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

- **Why in News?:** A special task force comprising the Erode district administration sealed 21 unauthorised resorts operating in the buffer zone of the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve
- Located in **Erode district, Tamil Nadu**, it lies at the junction of the **Eastern and Western Ghats** within the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**.
- It forms an important wildlife corridor, contiguous with **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Biligiri Rangaswamy (BR) Tiger Reserve**.
- The **Bhavani, Moyar and Noyyal** are the major rivers flowing through the region.
- It supports diverse vegetation, including **dry thorn, mixed deciduous, semi-evergreen and riparian forests**
- It is home to wildlife such as **tigers, elephants, leopards and gaurs**, along with tribal communities like the **Irula and Kurumba**.



Species In News

Japanese Euhadra Snails (Euhadra quaesita)

- **Why in News?:** A study found that a **gene influences whether Japanese Euhadra snails develop left- or right-coiling shells**.
- **Euhadra** is a genus of land snails native to **Japan**, commonly found in forests and other terrestrial habitats.
- These snails belong to the family **Bradybaenidae** and are **known for variations in the direction of their shell coiling**.
- Shell coiling can be **left-handed (sinistral)** or **right-handed (dextral)**, a feature known as **chirality**.
- Researchers found that variations in the **myosin gene** influence shell-coiling direction during early development.
- The study highlighted a **maternal effect**, where the mother's genes, not the offspring's, determine handedness.

