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CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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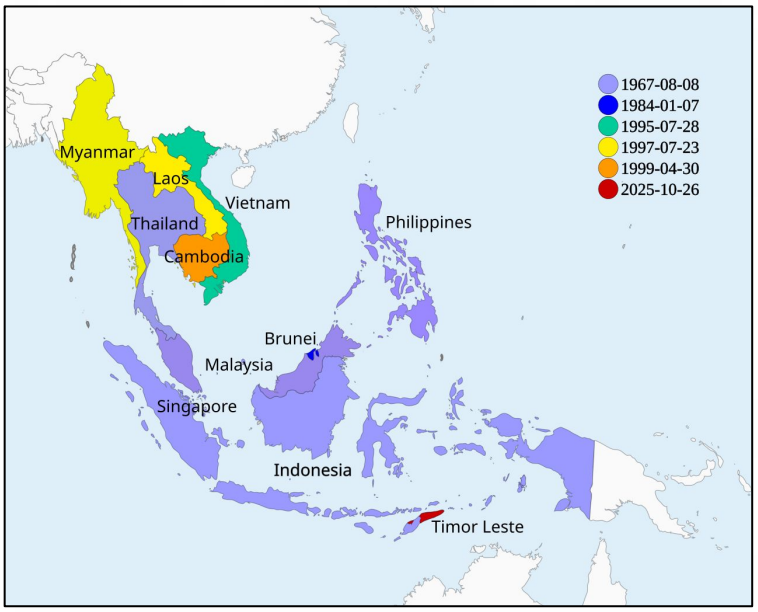
ASEAN Meet & Act East Policy

CONTEXT: PM Modi going for ASEAN meet

ASEAN Meet & Act East Policy

ASEAN

- 8 August 1967: Bangkok Declaration
  - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand
- 11 Members
  - Brunei, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Timor Leste
- One Vision, One Identity, One Community
- $13 tn GDP: 6.5% of global GDP
- institutional mechanism
  - ASEAN Summit
  - ASEAN Coordinating Council
  - ASEAN Secretariat: Jakarta
  - ASEAN Regional Forum
  - Decision-making



Significance of ASEAN

- **Geopolitical**
  - Indo-Pacific powers & resources
- **Geostrategic**
  - **Strategic Location**
    - Regional Stability
  - **Defence Cooperation**
    - BrahMos
    - ADMM+
  - **Maritime Security**
    - 2026: ASEAN–India Year of Maritime Cooperation
    - China's overtures
    - ~50% of India's trade
  - **Connectivity**
    - IMT Trilateral Highway
    - Multi-modal Kaladan project





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Significance of ASEAN

- **Geoeconomic**
  - Trade
    - Bilateral trade $128 bn in 2025–26
    - ASEAN-India Business Council
  - Market
  - FDI
  - Energy
  - Financial assistance to ASEAN
- **Cultural**
  - Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at Nalanda University
  - Delhi Dialogue, 2009: annual Track 1.5 forum



Challenges

- **Geoeconomic**
  - **Trade**
    - Deficit
    - RCEP
    - Nature of Engagement
  - Implementation of Joint Projects
  - Data sovereignty
- **Geostrategic**
  - **Myanmar Turbulence**
    - 2021 military coup
  - **Economic dependence on China**
  - **Indo-Pacific Strategy divergences**
    - Vietnam, Philippines vs Cambodia

Suggestions for India ASEAN

- **Strategic**
  - QUAD+
  - India-ASEAN Indo-Pacific Security Forum
  - Both an economic opportunity & geopolitical necessity in balancing Asian power dynamics
- **Economic**
  - Revise ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement
    - Sector-specific agreements in pharma, RE
    - Co-Develop
  - Leverage China+1
  - Fast-Track Connectivity Projects
  - Co-Manufacturing
    - Supply Chain Resilience

Act East Policy

Act East Policy

- Launched in 2014
- Dynamic, structured
- Multidimensional engagement
- Recalibrated global supply chains and weakening multilateral frameworks
- ASEAN's internal fissures
- Non-traditional security issues



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ASEAN Meet & Act East Policy

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- 4 original pillars: Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, Capacity-building

Achievements of the Act East

Strategic

- Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships
- Participation in ASEAN platforms
- Collaboration on maritime security, cyber governance, counter-terrorism, disaster relief

Economic

- Trade volume with ASEAN
- Diversification of exports
- Newer sectors: semiconductors
- Cross-border payments
- ASEAN-India Funds
- Connectivity: Progress on IMT

Cultural & Soft Power

- Restoration of heritage sites
- Religious diplomacy
- Mekong-Ganga Dhamma Yatra, Bali Jatra celebrations
- Cultural exchanges

Education & Human Resources

- IIT campuses in Malaysia and Thailand
- Vocational training centres and AYUSH programs
- Scholarships, Collaborations

Challenges in Implementing Act East

Geopolitical

- US-China
- Weaponization of economic interdependence
- Political instability

Economic

- Trade deficit with ASEAN
- RCEP
- Tariff/non-tariff barriers
- Underutilization of economic complementarities
- Connectivity

Institutional & Implementation

- Implementation deficit
- Need of a dedicated institutional mechanism
- Asymmetrical engagement
- Unresolved bilateral issues

Way Forward

Political Will

- Institutionalize coordination
- Dedicated inter-ministerial coordination unit
- Strategic, country-specific roadmaps
- Reciprocity and mutual benefit

Trade and Investment Frameworks

- Trade facilitation infrastructure
- Investment & JVs
- Branding and marketing

P2P Connectivity

- India-ASEAN Youth Fellowships
- Social media campaigns, documentaries, podcasts
- India-ASEAN Centres of Excellence
- Tourism infra
- Liberalize visa policies



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ASEAN Meet & Act East Policy

CONTEXT: PM Modi going for ASEAN meet

Collaborating on Challenges

- CC, health security, food/energy resilience, cybersecurity
- Joint task forces, tabletop exercises, co-develop

ASEAN Centrality and Rules-Based Order

- ASEAN-led mechanisms
- Support ASEAN Community Vision 2045
- Avoid zero-sum strategies

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. India's engagement with ASEAN is central to its Act East Policy and its vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Discuss the significance of India-ASEAN relations, examine the challenges in deepening this partnership, and suggest measures to strengthen the ties.



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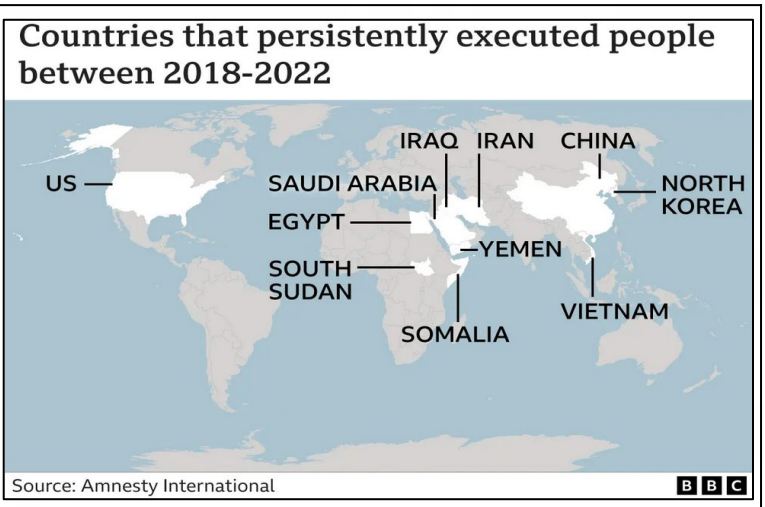
UN Resolution on Death Penalty

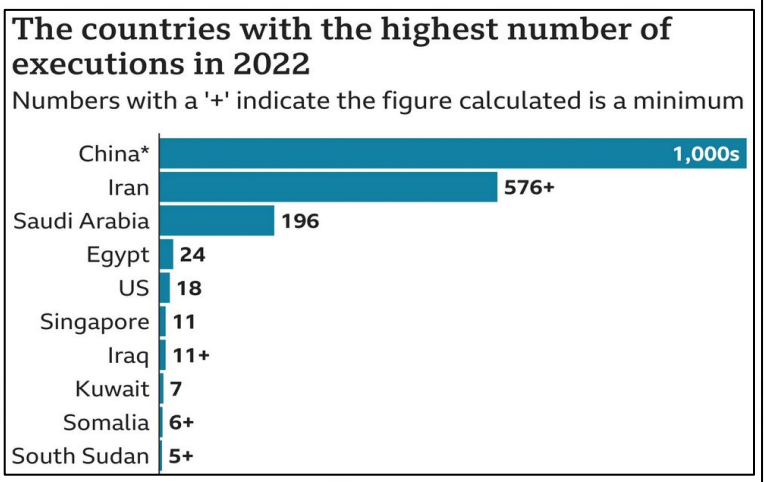
CONTEXT: India voted against UN resolution

Death Penalty Status in India

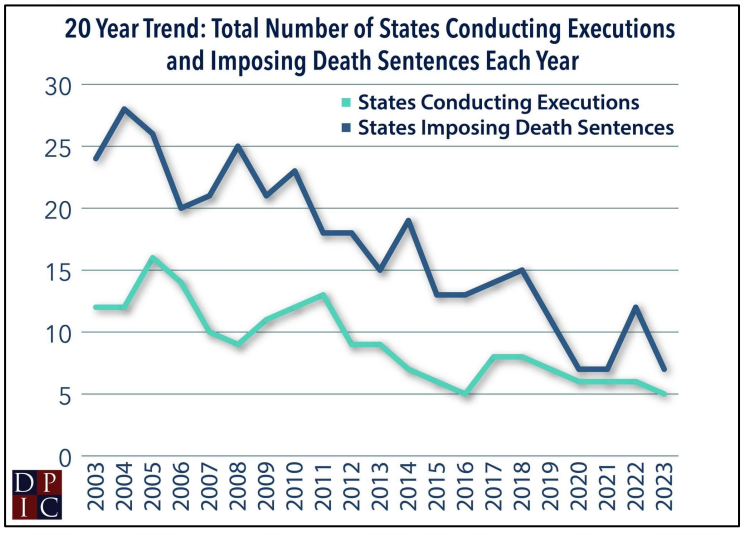
Annual statistics report on death penalties in India, 2026

- Death Row Convicts: 574
  - Average time spent on death row before acquittal >5 years
- Supreme Court Restraint
  - Not confirmed a single death sentence in last 3 years
  - 2025: acquitted 10
- Trial Court Enthusiasm
  - Sessions Courts awarded 128 in 2025
  - HCs confirm only ~8%
  - Procedural Violation: Guidelines in ***Manoj vs. State of MP, 2022***
    - Psychological evaluations
    - Prison conduct reports





World View



Arguments against

- Reformative justice
- Anti-thesis of one's right to life
- Immanuel Kant
- Albert Camus
- Section 354(3) of CrPC
- Judicial fallibility, irreversibility
- Deterrence
- Moral High ground
- International Human Rights Standards



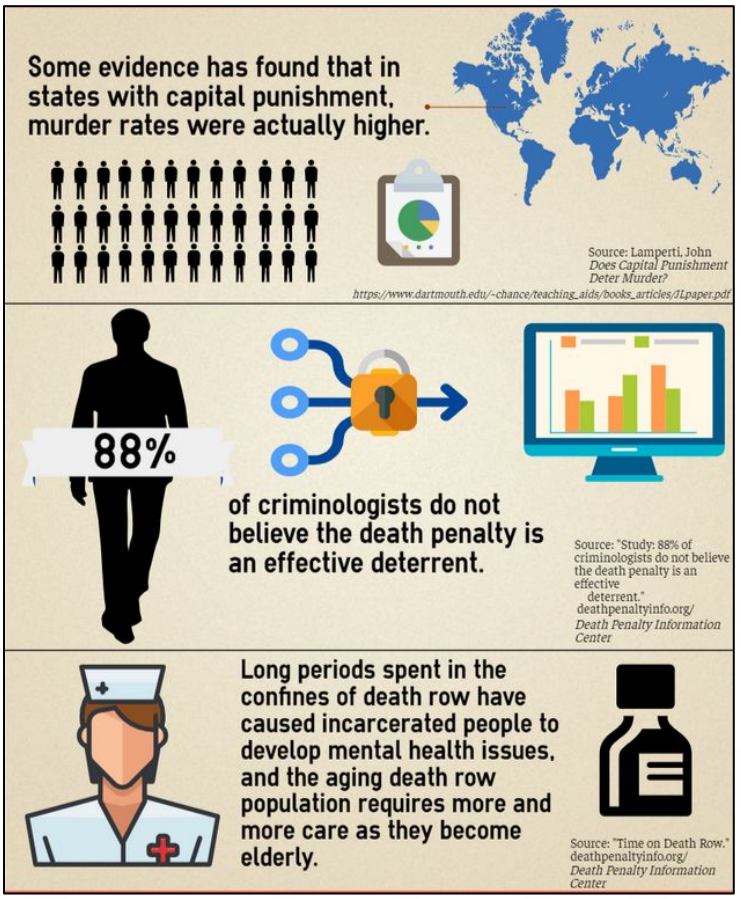
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UN Resolution on Death Penalty

CONTEXT: India voted against UN resolution

Arguments against

- Cost Considerations
- LCI 262nd Report, 2015: Except terrorism and related offences



Judicial Take

- **Jagmohan Singh vs. State of Uttar Pradesh, 1973**
  - valid, not violative of Articles 14, 19 and 21
  - Procedure established by law - circumstances, nature of crime
- **Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab, 1980**
  - overruled Rajendra Prasad
  - as an alternative punishment for murder is not unreasonable
  - Principle of 'rarest of rare cases'.
  - mitigating & aggravating factors
- **Machhi Singh vs. State of Punjab, 1983** – 5 categories
  - Manner of Commission of murder
  - Motive – depravity and meanness
  - Anti-social or socially abhorrent nature of the crime
  - Magnitude of the Crime
  - Personality of victim
- **Shatrughan Chauhan v. Union of India (2014)**
  - undue, inordinate delay in execution amounts to torture
    - Ground for commutation
  - Executing mentally ill unconstitutional

Death Penalty

Arguments in favor

- Retributive Justice
  - Principle of lex talionis
  - Crimes of extreme brutality
    - Punishment proportional to the suffering caused
  - "moral closure"
- Deterrence Theory
- Taxpayer Burden



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UN Resolution on Death Penalty

CONTEXT: India voted against UN resolution

- Public Wil
  - Survey after 2012 Delhi rape case
  - Preventing Vigilantism

Suggestions

- Certainty a better deterrent than severity
- 262nd LCI Report
- Standardizing Sentencing
  - Sentencing Council like UK
- Life without Remission
- Self-Executing Commutation
  - "time-bound" if a mercy petition is not decided

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Examine the arguments for abolishing the death penalty in India, and discuss how the judiciary has approached its application over the years.



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Mains Value Addition

Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page Number :** 05

Report: Increase in govt health spending as out-of-pocket expenditure declines

Healthcare Expenditure Data

- NHP 2017 target: 2.5% of GDP by 2025
- National Health Accounts Estimates for 2023-24
  - Total expenditure — govt spending + insurance payments + OoP — 3.3% in 2023-24
    i. 3.8% in 2021–22
  - Total Expenditure breakdown
    i. 2023-24
      1. Govt 43.5%
      2. OoP 42.7%

    ii. Before the pandemic
      1. Govt 41.4%
      2. OoP 47.1%
  - Private health insurance 10.2% of totol
    i. 7% in 2019-20
  - Social Security spending (e.g. AB) 11%
    i. 9.3% in 2019-20
  - 2x in private hospitals
    i. Private hospitals 31.8% of expenditure

Govt Initiatives to Increase Healthcare Expenditure

- AB-PMJAY
  - Free health insurance up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for EWS
  - >23 crore individuals
- NHM
  - Primary, secondary, tertiary healthcare
- PMSSY
  - Regional healthcare disparities: New AIIMS institutes
  - Upgrading govt medical colleges
- AB Health Infrastructure Mission
  - Critical healthcare infrastructure, pandemic preparedness
  - Integrated public health labs in all districts
- AB Digital Mission
  - Unified digital health ecosystem, EHRs, telemedicine services
- Affordable Medicines & Diagnostics
  - PMBJP and AMRIT pharmacies



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Rice Economy

SYLLABUS : Prelims: Economic and Social Development
Newspaper: The Hindu **Page Number :** Text & Context

Prelims Pointers

Status of Rice Production and export

- Major producers
  - India, China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Japan, Sri Lanka, Egypt
- State wise (2024-25)
  - UP (13.8%), Telangana (11.6%), WB (10.6%), Punjab (9.5%), Chhatis (7%)
- Export: India largest (20 MMT in 2024–25)
  - Destinations: Saudi, Iran, Iraq, Benin, UAE

Rice Crop

- Staple diet in tropical and sub-tropical
- Growth Conditions
  - 8°N to 30°N latitude
  - Sea level to 2,500 m
- Variety of soils: silts, loams, gravels
  - Best in impermeable subsoil with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5
  - Tolerate Acidic + alkaline soils
- Abundant rainfall (100-150cm)
  - Semi-aquatic plant requiring standing water (10–15 cm) for three-quarters of its growing season
  - High humidity, temp
- Cropping Seasons in India
  - 3 distinct based on the region
  - Aman (Winter rice): Sown in June–July; harvested in Nov–Dec
  - Aus (Autumn rice): Sown in May–June; harvested in Sep–Oct
  - Boro (Summer rice): Between November and May, in areas that remain moist during winter

Export paradox

India's rice export has two distinct segments with non-Basmati rice accounting for more than twice the export volume of Basmati but generating only marginally higher aggregate export value

Indicator	Basmati rice	Non-Basmati rice
Exports, 2025–26	6.52 million tonne	15.04 million tonne
Export value	₹50,138 crore / $5.67 bn	₹51,892 crore / $5.86 bn
Approx. value/ tonne	₹76,900 / $870	₹34,600 / $388
Major production areas	Punjab, Haryana, western U.P., J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi	Widely cultivated across India; major rice-producing States include U.P., Telangana, West Bengal, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, M.P., Bihar, A.P., and Tamil Nadu
Market character	Premium, aromatic, high-value	Staple and price-sensitive
Virtual-water dimension	Footprint varies with location, irrigation source, and technology	Large export volume implies potentially large aggregate virtual-water transfer
Groundwater dimension	Critical concern in groundwater-dependent rice-growing regions, particularly where intensive rice cultivation places additional pressure on already-stressed aquifers	
GHG dimension	Pronounced particularly in production systems characterised by continuous flooding, inefficient or excessive nitrogen fertilizer use, energy-intensive irrigation, and open-field residue burning, which can increase both resource use and greenhouse gas emissions	
Policy priority	Increase value while improving water and carbon efficiency	Reduce resource intensity and improve value per unit of water



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RERA Review

SYLLABUS : Prelims: Indian Polity and Governance
Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page Number :** 06

Prelims Pointers

Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), 2016

- Protect interests of homebuyers and promote fair practices
  - Largest Investment Sector
    - >77% of total assets of an average Indian household
  - Accountability
    - Builders and developers accountable

Provisions

- **State-Level Regulatory Authorities + mandate**
  - Database of RE projects; on website
  - Interest of promoters, buyers, agents
  - Development of sustainable and affordable housing
  - Advice to govt & ensure compliance
- **RE Appellate Tribunal**
- **Mandatory Registration**: Plot size > 500 sq. mt or 8 apartments
- **Escrow Deposits:** 70% of funds collected from buyers for construction
- **Liability:** repair structural defects for 5 years
- **Cap on Advance Payments:** 10%
- **Carpet Area:** charge

Status of Home Buyers and Builders under IBC

- **Classification as Financial Creditors**
  - Money advanced = financial debt
  - Right to Initiate Insolvency Proceedings
    - **Condition**: jointly file an application for initiation of corporate insolvency; >100 homebuyers or >10% in the same RE project
- **Position in Liquidation Stage: Unsecured financial creditors**
  - After the dues of insolvency process costs, secured creditors, workmen, and employees



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India Egypt: Potential Trade Pact

SYLLABUS : Prelims: Current Events of National and International Importance
Newspaper: The Hindu / The Indian Express **Page Number :** 13

Prelims Pointers

Egypt significance

- Historical
  - Ashoka's edicts: relations with Egypt under Ptolemy-II
  - Friendship Treaty in 1955
  - Founding members of NAM
- **Investments in infra**
  - Metro projects in Cairo and Alexandria
  - New administrative capital in Cairo
  - >50 Indian companies
- **Geo-strategic location**
  - Most populous country in WA
  - 12% of global trade through Suez Canal
  - Gateway to both Europe and Africa
- **Defence**
  - Big weapons consumer
  - discussed "co-manufacturing"
  - LCA Tejas, missiles like Akash, DRDO's Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon, radars
- **China** building presence



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Strait of Bab - el - Mandeb

SYLLABUS : Prelims: Current Events of National and International Importance
Newspaper: The Hindu **Page Number :** 01

Prelims Pointers

Strait of Bab el-Mandeb

- "Gate of Tears" in Arabic
  - Large number of shipwrecks
  - narrow channel
  - strong currents
  - pirates
- Link between IO & Mediterranean Sea via Red Sea & Suez Canal
- 30 KM wide
  - Divided into 2 channels by Yemeni island of Perim
  - Eastern channel: Alexander's Strait
  - Western: Dact-el-Mayun Channel
- Shipping link
  - Between Europe and Asia
  - Middle Easte oil bound for Europe and North America
  - ~12% of global merchandise trade
  - ~5% of global oil, petroleum flows



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Daily Quiz

Q1. With reference to rice cultivation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Uttar Pradesh is the largest producer of rice in India, while India is the world's largest rice exporter.
2. Aus rice is sown later than Aman rice but harvested earlier.
3. Boro rice is cultivated between winter and summer in areas retaining moisture during winter.

How many of the statements given above is/are Not correct?

a) Only One
b) Only Two
c) All three
d) None

Answer: a

Q2. With reference to the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), 2016, consider the following statements:

1. Mandatory registration applies only when a project exceeds both the prescribed land area and apartment-count thresholds.
2. Promoters must deposit 70% of funds collected from homebuyers in an escrow account for construction purposes.
3. State-level Regulatory Authorities maintain real estate project databases and advise governments on regulatory matters.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b

Q3. The Suez Canal connects which of the following water bodies?

a) Mediterranean Sea and Arabian Sea
b) Red Sea and Persian Gulf
c) Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea
d) Black Sea and Red Sea

Answer: c

Q4. With reference to the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb, consider the following statements:

1. It provides a maritime link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea via the Red Sea and Suez Canal.
2. The Yemeni island of Perim divides the strait into the eastern Dact-el-Mayun Channel and the western Alexander's Strait.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a

Q5. With reference to Supreme Court judgments on capital punishment, consider the following statements:

1. Jagmohan Singh upheld the constitutional validity of capital punishment.
2. Bachan Singh established the 'rarest of rare' principle for awarding the death penalty.
3. Shatrughan Chauhan recognised undue delay in execution as a ground for commutation.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d





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