Water scarcity in Indian cities

Why in news?

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According to a recent official estimate, 22 of the country's 32 major cities are plagued with acute water shortage.

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What are the inference of the estimates?

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- There is a rising water crisis in a large part of the national capital region and most of the Indian cities are perpetually water starved.
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- Recent studies also ranked Chennai and Delhi at the top of the 27 most vulnerable Asian cities in terms of low per-day water availability Mumbai and Kolkata follow close.
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- Apart from mega cities, many fast-growing small and medium cities such as Jamshedpur, Kanpur, Dhanbad, Meerut, Faridabad, Visakhapatnam, Madurai and Hyderabad also figure in this list.
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- The demand-supply gap in most of these cities ranges from 30 per cent to as much as 70 per cent.
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What are the reasons of water scarcity?

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- The water mismanagement had plagued water supply systems in most Indian cities.
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- Administration gaps, and huge distribution losses also results in water shortage.
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- Traditional sources of water, such as rivers and ponds have turned fully or partly dysfunctional due to neglect.
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- Rivers in the vicinity of cities are degrading due to silting and unchecked inflow of untreated waste, and have been devoured by ever-expanding human habitations.
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- Groundwaterwhich meets over 45 per cent of the total water demand of most cities, is also turning scarce.
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- The quality of underground waterhas been vitiated by the leaching of toxic pollutants from landfill sites.
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- Neither private builders nor civic authorities appear serious about implementing rain water harvesting.
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What needs to be done?

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- Water scarcity can be averted with advance planning and better coordination among different agencies.
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- Rainwater harvesting and recycling of used water are among the leading options to alleviate water scarcity in cities.
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- It is vital also to strictly regulate groundwater use by restricting its withdrawal and putting a price on it.
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- Every city with large building and official establishments need to mandate rainwater harvesting systems in place.
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- The compliance of the rain water harvesting mandate must also be checked.
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Source: Business Standard

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