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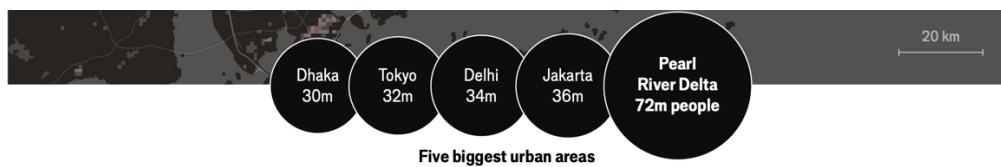
 The World Ahead | Mapping 2026

## Eight trends to watch, explained with maps

*From urbanisation in China to the flow of gold from Sudan*

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Nov 12th 2025 | 7 min read



### What is the world's biggest city?

To an alien gazing down from space, ignoring political boundaries and just mapping contiguous areas of high population density, the answer would be clear: the Pearl River Delta, a chain of southern Chinese cities that have fused into one vast sprawl. Its population is projected to reach 73m people in 2026, just as a regional high-speed railway network, to bind it together, is due to be completed.

*Sources: Worldpop; The Economist*

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