

31 Jan 2023: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



A dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep.

- A.P.J Abdul Kalam



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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****1. General Assembly divided over UN reforms**

Syllabus: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Prelims: About UN General Assembly (UNGA) and UN Security Council (UNSC).

Mains: Significance of the UN reforms and the challenges associated with it.

Context

The UN General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi during his visit to India highlighted the importance of reforms in the [United Nations](#).

Details

- The UN General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi during his visit to India said that the reform of the UN Security Council was a member-driven process that would require the members of the [UN General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) to collaborate and pass a resolution demanding the reforms.
- The process to urge the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) or P5 to accept a proposal coming from the UN General Assembly for reform starts with the passage of a resolution in the UNGA.
 - However, such a resolution has not yet been passed so far as the UNGA has always been very much divided.
 - According to the UNGA President, among the 193 countries in the UNGA, there are five negotiating groups and they have been neutralising each other's demands.
- The UNGA President also claimed that the permanent members (P5) were “historically not enthusiastic” about reforms of the UN system and has argued that the role of the UNGA is as important as the P5 members of the UNSC in ensuring reform of the UN system.
- He added that the system of veto in the UNSC was 77 years old and has become an instrument to block the work of the global body with respect to various issues.
- The UNGA President in October 2022, tried to revive the process of introducing reforms by appointing two negotiators for the programme of reform to look after the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) as co-chairs.

- The appointed negotiators included two Permanent Representatives namely Tareq M.A.M. Albanai of Kuwait and Michal Mlynar of Slovakia.
- The IGN is the team that takes care of the issue of UN reform.

Read more about - [United Nations Security Council Reforms](#)

India's stand on UN reforms

- India has shown dissatisfaction over the delay in implementing reforms of the UNSC.
- The External Affairs Minister of India during the recently held [Voice of the Global South Summit](#) had described the UN as a “frozen 1945-invented mechanism” and had held that a few of the global powers were singularly focused on advancing their own interests rather than focusing on the well-being of the international community.

India's role

- The UNGA President said that India has been playing a crucial role and has contributed a lot to improve the UN systems' response mechanism.
- He further highlighted India's role in stabilising the global order which has been affected by the COVID pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.
- He also said that India has become very active in all the negotiating channels that are currently underway in the UN.

Also read - [RSTV - India's World: UN Reforms: A Wishlist](#)

Nut graf: Acknowledging the fact that the UNSC has become dysfunctional in its current form, the UN General Assembly President has emphasised the importance and the need for reforming UNSC. This observation coming from within the UN is noteworthy and signifies the need for reforms in the decades-old institution.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INDIAN ECONOMY

1. Tasks for India's millet revolution

Syllabus: Indian Agriculture and Food Security.

Mains: Millet cultivation and associated concerns.

Prelims: International Year of Millets.

Context: 2023 is declared as the International Year of Millets.

Details:

- 2023 has been declared the [International Year of Millets](#) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- Special properties of millets are:
 - They are rich in proteins, micronutrients, and antioxidants.
 - They are dietary fibres.
 - Millets are drought resistant and can be grown in semi-arid regions.

Background Details:

- Millets grown in India can be classified into two categories:
 - Major Millets: sorghum, pearl millet, and finger millet.
 - Minor Millets: foxtail, little millet, kodo, proso, and barnyard millet.
- The total cereal offtake in the year 2019-20 through [Public Distribution System \(PDS\)](#), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and Mid-Day Meal was approximately 54 million tonnes. If 20% of rice and wheat is replaced by millet, states would have to procure around 10.8 million tonnes of millet.
- Notably, the total production of nutri-cereals (earlier called coarse cereals) was around 47.7 million tonnes (Mt) in 2019-20. The overall breakdown is as follows:
 - Maize: 28.8 Mt (Maize is a non-millet crop mainly used as feed)
 - Sorghum: 4.8 Mt
 - Pearl millet: 10.4 Mt
 - Finger millet and other millets: 3.7 Mt

Also read: [Government Schemes, Background, Advantages & Types of Millets in India](#)

Associated Concerns:

- Currently, very few states procure millets. Moreover, the stocks of the central pool are also meagre. For instance, the central stocks (May 2022) had 33 Mt of rice and 31 Mt of wheat with only 4 lakh tonnes of nutri-cereals.
- One of the major issues is the decline in the area of millet cultivation. For example, in the last ten years,
 - Sorghum (jowar) production declined
 - Pearl millet (bajra) production stagnated
 - The production of other millets including finger millet (ragi) also stagnated or declined.
- According to the [Indian Council of Agricultural Research \(ICAR\)](#), the area under nutri-cereals has drastically reduced from 41 million hectares in the mid-1980s to around 24 million hectares in 2017-18.
- Another major concern is the low productivity of millets. Though the productivity of jowar and [bajra](#) has improved, it is marginal.
- Moreover, the processing of millets is a time-consuming and laborious task.
- The most difficult evaluation is the measurement of changes in consumption and nutrition.

CASE STUDY OF KOLLI HILLS:

The Kolli hills block in the Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu is a unique geographic and agroecological region in the Eastern Ghats. It is majorly populated by Scheduled Tribes. A project was undertaken in this region with three main objectives:

- Preserve crop diversity in local millet varieties
- Increase millet production and consumption
- Improve farm incomes

There has been a rapid decline in minor millet cultivation in the region, and land use shifted toward more profitable crops like cassava (tapioca), pineapple, coffee, and pepper. A small share of grain was converted into a value-added product and a small quantity was marketed.

The three focus areas of the project were:

1. Improvement of yield was attempted through improved seeds, community seed banks, new agronomic practices, and new technology.
2. Customized post-harvest machinery like small-scale localized mechanical milling was introduced. It was operated by self-help groups.
3. Appropriate training was provided for value addition along with branding and marketing link establishment.

Consequences:

- Net returns from value-added products were 5 to 10 times higher than that of grains.
- The area under cultivation of minor millets and finger millet increased gradually after 2014-15.
- Yields also increased.
- The millet consumption improved in the region.
- The number of private mills has risen.

Conclusion:

- Increasing the production of millets and reversing the decline in the area cultivated requires multiple interventions like scientific inputs, institutional methods, financial help, and in-kind support.
- The central and state governments (like Odisha and Karnataka) are taking several steps like the Millet Mission. These are good steps but the economics of millet cultivation should be taken into account.
- Ensuring supply through PDS would further help in making it profitable.

Also read: [Yojana Magazine Gist for UPSC Exam: January 2023 Issue](#)

***Nut Graf:** The area under millet cultivation in India has declined since the mid-1980s. The International Year of Millets provides India with a unique opportunity to expand the production as well as consumption of millets. However, it should be noted that appropriate infrastructural, institutional, and financial support would be required to reverse the declining trend.*

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. A problem of science at the Padma awards

***Syllabus:** Developments in the field of Science and Technology.*

***Mains:** Concerns associated with awards in the field of 'Science and Engineering'.*

Context: Padma Awards in the field of science.

Details:

- The Indian government started conferring Padma awards in 1955. In the field of 'Science and Engineering', the work of laureates is associated with one of the many fields like mechanical

engineering, materials science, metallurgy, aeronautics, space science, agriculture, plant breeding, mathematics, and theoretical physics.

- Science is based on scientific methods and academic publishing. However, socially it is identified as an activity undertaken by highly trained people whose findings and texts are largely presumed to be of superior knowledge.

Also read: [AIR Spotlight: Padma Awards 2023](#)

Padma Awards in Science:

- Scientific works in all fields are identified by scientific papers. However, plant breeding is an exception, where the work of a plant breeder can be evident either as a paper or in the form of a plant variety (having beneficial properties and/or that are being preserved) that many cultivators adopt.
- Two recipients of Padma Awards in 2023:
 - Cheruvayal K. Raman:
 - He was awarded Padma Shri for conserving more than 50 rice varieties in Wayanad.
 - He is not formally trained as a botanist or scientist. Moreover, he has not published any scientific papers.
 - He is recognized “for conserving plant agro-biodiversity” and for preserving seed varieties that could strengthen [India's food security](#) during the climate crisis.
 - Khader Vali Dudekula:
 - He was conferred Padma Shri in ‘science and engineering’. He popularized the dietary benefits of millets.
 - However, he also prescribed certain other scientifically doubtful elements like homoeopathy, millet consumption to “prevent” or “cure” cancers, diabetes, and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), and encouraged avoiding the consumption of milk, eggs, and non-vegetarian food.
 - He also lacks scientific papers demonstrating the efficacy of the suggested prescriptions.

Associated Concerns and Way Ahead:

- Sometimes the claims of such award winners undermine important, time-sensitive dietary and medical interventions.
- There is a threat of overlooking the possible side-effects of ‘traditional’ medicine and delay of tested treatments.
- If scientific papers exist, then through clinical trials, errant practitioners can be held accountable.
- Certain products whose consumption might be denied like milk, egg, and non-vegetarian food are actually cheap and good sources of minerals and proteins.

- There is apprehension that alternative systems can compromise the trust in scientifically tested medicines.
- Certain claims about the therapeutic benefits of millets against cancer require scrutiny.
- It is suggested by the author that plant breeders should be rewarded under the category of 'agriculture and seeds' as opposed to 'science and engineering' so as to indicate that their success is not absolutely scientific.
- It is also recommended by the author that conferring Padma Awards in the field of 'Science and Engineering' should be adequately and scientifically validated. This would help in insulating the purpose of science and public healthcare from arbitrary claims.

Also read: [National Science Day 2022: Themes and Awardees](#)

***Nut Graf:** The Padma Awards in the field of 'Science and Engineering' in the past few years have been accused of showing no adherence to scientific approaches. It is suggested that before conferring awards in this field, the government should scientifically validate all claims in order to ensure trust and insulate public healthcare from untested cures and solutions.*

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. In 2022, trial courts imposed most death sentences in 20 years

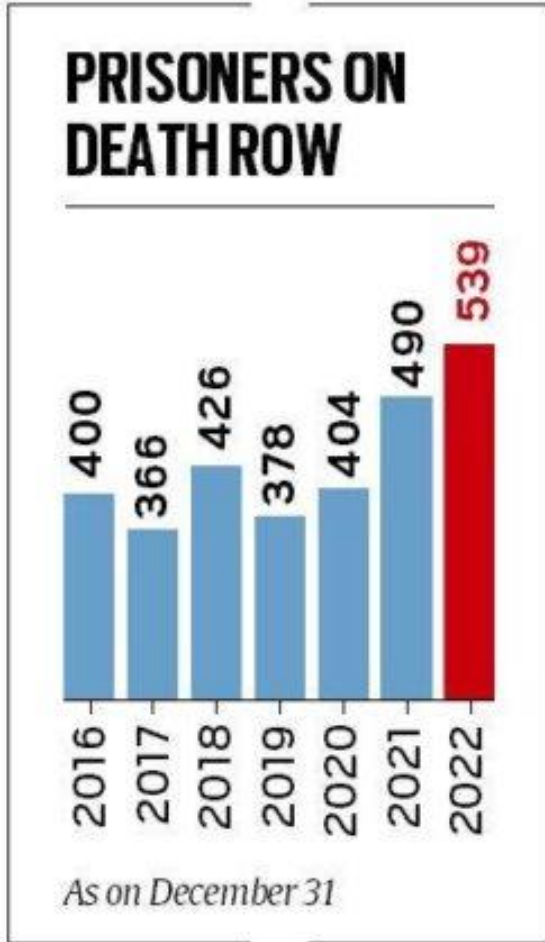
***Syllabus:** Judiciary and government policies and interventions.*

***Mains:** Statistics of death sentences in India.*

***Prelims:** Annual Statistics Report 2022.*

Details:

- According to the Annual Statistics Report 2022, by the end of 2022, there were around 539 prisoners on death row in India. This is the highest since 2016.

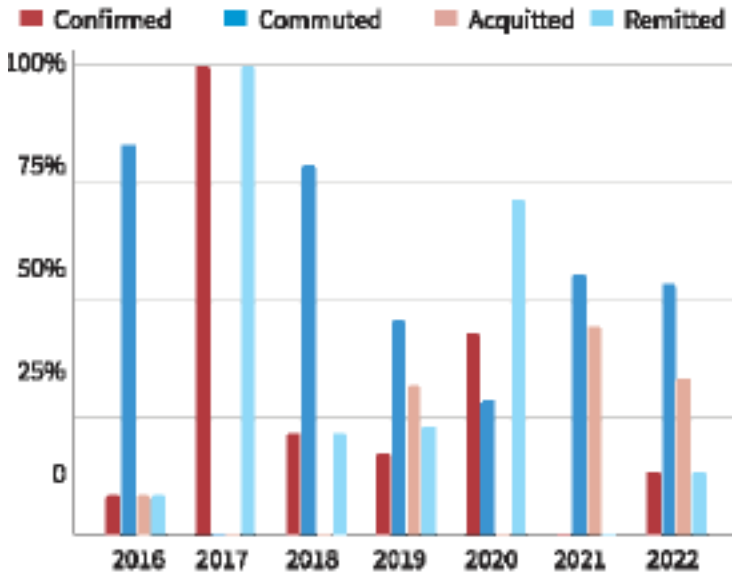


Source: *The Indian Express*

- The reason for the peak is that the trial courts imposed 165 death sentences in 2022, which was the highest in two decades.
- The increase can be attributed to a special ruling of the Ahmedabad serial blasts case of 2008 that left around 56 people dead and more than 200 injured. The court in February 2022 awarded the [death penalty](#) to 38 convicts and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment until death.
- The highest among all the states is Gujarat which imposed 51 death penalties in 2022. It should be noted that the average number of death sentences imposed between 2016 and 2021 was 2.5.
- Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand also registered a significant rise in death sentences imposed by trial courts in 2022.
- However, in September 2022, the three-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court referred the matter of meaningful opportunity to those guilty of capital punishment to a five-judge bench.
- It is suggested that the court might look beyond the reports and involve psychologists and behavioural experts considering mental history, childhood experience, upbringing, social and cultural factors, etc. This might decrease the number of death penalties by the trial courts in the future.

- Another major factor for the increase in death row prisoners was the low disposal rate of death penalty cases by the appellate courts. Notably, the number of cases confirmed by the High Courts was very low in most years.
- In 11 cases heard by the Supreme Court that involved 15 prisoners, 5 were acquitted of all charges; the death sentences for 8 were commuted to life imprisonment; and 2 death penalty verdicts were confirmed.

Figure: Death penalty cases handled by Supreme Court



Source: *The Hindu*

[Read about the case against the death penalty for the UPSC exam.](#)

***Nut Graf:** The trial courts imposed the largest number of death sentences in 2022 when compared to the last twenty years. However, it is speculated that capital punishment will be imposed in the future by considering aspects like mental health, and social and cultural factors of the accused.*

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Aero India: BEL to showcase state-of-the-art products

- Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL) is expected to showcase its state-of-the-art products and systems across various domains at the Aero India 2023 which will be held at Air Force Station in Yelahanka, Bengaluru.
- The products and systems developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL), which is a PSU under the Ministry of Defence, will be displayed including advanced Air Defence and Surveillance systems, C4I Systems, AI-based Products, Non-Defence and Diversification Products, Radar Systems, Communication Systems, Homeland Security and Cyber Security systems, Missile Systems, and EO & Laser-based Product among others.
 - Various products and systems under the broad spectrum “Air Defence & Surveillance” will include Hexacopter, Tethered UAV, Swarm of UAVs, Robotic Surveillance, Shallow Water Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and D4 Anti-drone Systems.
 - The “Homeland Security and Cyber Security” domain will include Smart City solutions, Homeland Security solutions, Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System, Naval Airfield Integrated Security System, and Integrated Perimeter Surveillance System.
- Further, BEL will also showcase its Research & Development capabilities through its new products and technologies.

2. Plan in place to eradicate invasive plant species from Kerala’s wildlife habitat

- The Nodal Centre for Biological Invasions (NCBI) at the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) has formulated a plan to eradicate an invasive plant species named “*Senna spectabilis*” that poses a significant threat to the wildlife habitat.
- Based on an experimental study conducted at the Periyar Tiger Reserve, the NCBI has recommended a plan that envisages landscape-level management of the tree.
- The two main factors considered while developing the management protocol were:
 - Fast nature of the spread of the invasive plant in natural forests
 - Restoration of natural forests based on landscape
- The management plan formulated by the NCBI says that there should not be an attempt to kill the trees before a detailed reforestation programme and the invasive species must only be removed using a threefold approach for large trees, large saplings, and small saplings namely:
 - The large trees must be debarked from breast height downwards (1.3 m above ground level), including the collar part of the tree.
 - As the trees start to dry up, their soil seed bank will become active and a large number of plantlets will sprout. The larger saplings can be uprooted using specially designed weed pullers.
 - The third is the removal of small plantlets mechanically.

For more information on invasive species and *Senna spectabilis*, refer to the following article:

UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated 02 Nov 2022

3. Centre to roll out process to set up 16th Finance Commission soon

- The Union Government is expected to initiate the process of establishing the 16th Finance Commission.
- The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that is tasked with recommending the revenue-sharing model between the Union and the States and their distribution among the States.
 - As per the Indian Constitution, a [Finance Commission](#) is to be set up every five years.
- The 15th Finance Commission was established in November 2017 with a mandate to make recommendations for the five-year period from 2020-21 and its mandate was extended by a year till 2025-26, breaking the cycle.
 - The last time a Finance Commission was granted a six-year time frame was for the 9th Finance Commission which was set up in 1987.
- The Union Finance Ministry will usually notify the terms of reference for the Finance Commission and the Commission is usually given close to two years to deliberate on its terms of reference, consult States and frame its recommendations.
- Experts believe that a key new challenge for the 16th Finance Commission would be the co-existence of the [GST Council](#) which is another permanent constitutional body.
 - Experts feel that GST Council's decisions on tax rate changes could alter the revenue calculations made by the Finance Commission for sharing fiscal resources.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which statements is/are true regarding the National Commission for Women? (Level – Easy)

1. It is a constitutional body established in 1992.
2. It is an advisory body to the Government of India.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up as a **statutory body** in 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The NCW is an advisory body to the government of India and it advises the government on all policy matters affecting women.

Q2. Identify the correct statements: (Level – Moderate)

1. The Indus Water Treaty was signed in 1960.
2. India gets only 20% of the total water from the Indus system under the treaty.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed in 1960 by the then-Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the then-Pakistani President Ayub Khan.
 - The treaty was brokered by the World Bank.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, As per the treaty, India got control over the three eastern rivers namely - Ravi, Beas and Sutlej and Pakistan got control over the three western rivers namely - Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.
 - According to this treaty, India gets only 20% of the water from the Indus River System whereas Pakistan gets the rest 80%.

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are not true? (Level – Moderate)

1. The one-child policy of China was an anti-natal policy that started just after its independence.
2. The one-child policy came to an end in 2015-16.
3. China has seen a reduction in its population for 2 consecutive decades.

Options:

- a. 1 and 2
- b. 2 and 3
- c. 1 and 3
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The one-child policy was a program in China that limited most Chinese families to one child each and was implemented nationwide by the Chinese government in **1980**.
 - The creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was declared in **1949**.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The one-child policy came to an end in 2015-16.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, China's population shrank in 2022 for the **first time in over six decades**.

Q4. Which statements are correct regarding invasive alien species? (Level – Easy)

1. They refer to the endemic species that undergo uncontrolled growth, becoming the dominant species of the ecosystem.
2. They can endanger the biodiversity of the area they spread in.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, Invasive alien species are those plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are **non-native to an ecosystem** and become the dominant species of that ecosystem due to uncontrolled growth,
- **Statement 2 is correct**, Invasive alien species can have adverse impacts on the native biodiversity, causing decline or even extinction of native species, and negatively affecting ecosystems.

Q5. With reference to 'Water Credit', consider the following statements: (Level – Difficult) PYQ 2021

1. It puts microfinance tools to work in the water and sanitation sector.
2. It is a global initiative launched under the aegis of the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

3. It aims to enable poor people to meet their water needs without depending on subsidies.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2
- b. 2 and 3
- c. 1 and 3
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Water Credit is a powerful solution and the first to put microfinance tools to work in the water and sanitation sector.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, It is a global initiative launched by **Water.org**.
 - Water.org is a global non-profit organization working to bring water and sanitation to the world.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, Water Credit helps bring small loans to those who need access to affordable financing and expert resources to make household water and toilet solutions a reality.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Instances of the President's delay in commuting death sentences have come under public debate as denial of justice. Should there be a time limit specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS II - Social Justice)
2. Building a forward-looking world requires a comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council. Elaborate.(250 words; 15 marks) (GS II - International Relations)