

04 Dec 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. No move for e-voting, Rijiju tells Lok Sabha

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Prelims: E-voting

Mains: Critical evaluation of e-voting in India; Challenges and Opportunities

Context:

The Law Minister cleared that there is no proposal to introduce electronic voting in the upcoming general elections.

Details:

- 1. What is E-Voting?
- E-voting is a voting technique that allows voters to cast a secret ballot that is then electronically processed.
- It refers to electronic voting that makes use of the internet, specialised kiosks, scanning technologies, or digital telephone networks to allow people to vote in elections.

2. Need of e-Voting:

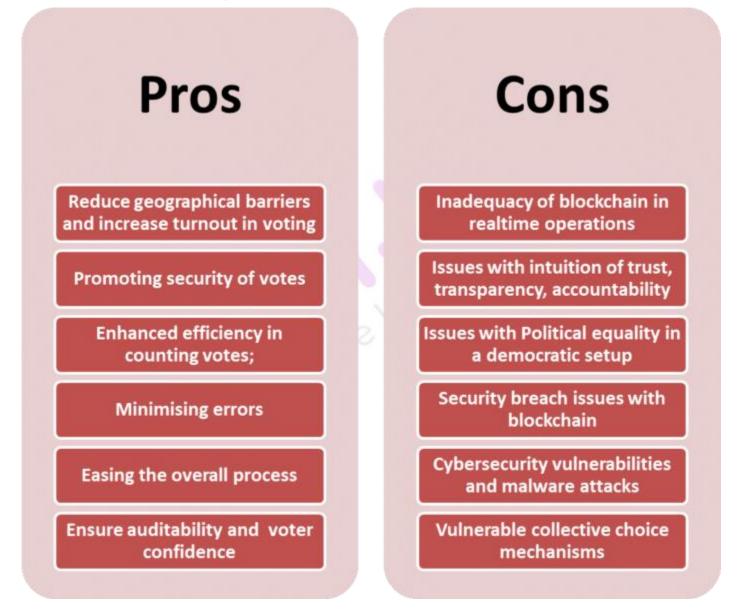
- To eliminate the need for paper in voting. This includes sending out notifications and ballot papers, as well as obtaining the results of those ballot votes.
- Facilitate electronic voting in a fair and transparent way.
- Allow people to vote from wherever they want.
- Postal and other natural impediments that obstruct postal balloting should be eliminated.
- Increase the number of voters who can participate in the voting process remotely.

3. India's position on e-Voting:

• India has reacted positively to the prospect of using blockchain networks in a variety of industries, including electoral systems.



- The Telangana government is one of the most prominent examples, as it plans to undertake an experimental run of e-voting.
- The use of biometric facial recognition technologies (FRT) for voter identity authentication, as well as connecting the voter's phone number and International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) to voter ID for verification in rural voting systems, was advocated in a 2019 'Blockchain Policy Report' (BPR).
- The <u>Election Commission</u> and the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) partnered in 2020 to create a new technology that would allow voters to vote from far distant cities.



4. International Perspective

1. **US:** Third-party applications like Votem and Voatz have aided in polling operations in the United States by offering voters a blockchain framework with biometric identity verification, built-in fingerprint scanners, and face recognition to verify voters.



- 2. **Argentina:** Democracy Earth, a local party start-up in Argentina, developed a blockchain voting system prototype based on an open-source concept.
- 3. **South Korea:** By authorising a pilot of a blockchain-based voting system through the National Election Commission, South Korea intends to investigate blockchain in online voting.

Way Forward

- India should focus on making the <u>EVM</u> safer and more secure, while also learning from other countries' blockchain election experiences and deploying them when we are far better suited as a country.
- In order to adopt e-voting, India must assure technology stability and resource abundance.
- In a democracy, there are two basic factors that assure electoral success: a) voter knowledge and b) infrastructure stability.
- India should be sensible to take gradual efforts to improve our standing in both areas.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Australian wine may land ahead of FTA

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

Prelims: Free trade agreement (FTA)

Mains: India-Australia Free trade agreement (FTA), Significance and Challenges.

Context:

India and Australia are about to seal an early harvest trade deal which could include some market access concessions for Australian wines.

What is FTA?

- A free trade agreement (FTA) or treaty is a multilateral agreement based on international law that establishes a free-trade zone between collaborating countries.
- FTAs are a type of trade agreement in which nations agree to set taxes and charges on imports and exports with the purpose of lowering or removing trade obstacles.

India and FTAs:

- Some of the major agreements that have had a significant influence on India's foreign trade are the India-ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement, the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), the Indo Malaysia CECA (IMCECA), the India Singapore CECA (ISCECA), and the Japan India CEPA (JICEPA).
- India and the UAE began talks on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2021.
- Furthermore, India is attempting to expedite its FTA discussions with nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, the European Union, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates.



Significance of FTA for India:

- In principle, an FTA leads to both trading partners agreeing to lower or abolish tariffs and trade obstacles for mutual benefit.
- In Asia, India has the most number of free trade agreements (FTAs) in place or in the works.
- India's exports have benefited from its FTA with SAFTA. Strategically, FTAs have aided India's global competitiveness and growth.

Challenges:

- 1. India's experience with major free trade agreements has not been positive. Free trade agreements with Korea and the <u>ASEAN</u> have benefited other countries' economies more.
- 2. In the case of the treaty with Japan, bilateral trade has either decreased or remained unchanged after the first year of implementation, and the trade imbalance with that nation has increased significantly.
- 3. Because certain markets are smaller, the impact of numerous FTAs reveals that India has always underperformed, with imports always exceeding exports.
- 4. Domestic firms were hit the worst in some situations since the FTA reduced the cost of imports.
- 5. Exporters are discouraged from adopting preferred routes by complex origin laws, a lack of information on FTAs, increased compliance costs, and administrative delays.
- 6. Despite having strong pharma, IT, ITeS, and education sectors, India's agriculture and industrial sectors, particularly MSMEs, are nonetheless vulnerable when compared to those of the nations with whom it is negotiating free trade agreements.

Way Forward

- India needs to remove or lessen the barriers that exporters experience, and ensure that free trade agreements (FTAs) are focused on making doing business easier and growing trade prospects for exporters.
- The focus should be on reducing the costs of compliance associated with obtaining advantages under FTAs.
- India should integrate the <u>production linked incentive (PLI)</u> plan to the 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat' project to protect itself from the negative effects of free trade agreements.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. India revokes PepsiCo's potato patent

Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Prelims: Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights' Authority (PPV&FRA)

Mains: Violation of Intellectual Property Rights and Farmers Rights



Context:

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights' Authority (PPV&FRA) revoked PepsiCo India's potato patent.

Background:

- PepsiCo India sparked outrage when it filed a lawsuit against nine Gujarati farmers for allegedly infringing on patent rights by producing a registered potato variety.
- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights' Authority has now withdrawn the company's registration of the potato variety.
- This decision is a watershed moment for India's farmers.
- It should also prohibit any other seed or food firm in India from infringing on the lawfully guaranteed seed freedoms of Indian farmers.

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001

- Using a sui generis approach, the Indian government adopted "The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001."
- The legislation acknowledges the contributions of both commercial plant breeders and farmers in plant breeding activities.
- It also focuses on the need to implement <u>TRIPS</u> in a way that supports the specific socio-economic interests of all stakeholders.

Farmers' Rights under PPV&FR Act, 2001

- A farmer who has evolved or developed a new variety has the same rights to registration and protection as a breeder of a variety;
- A farmer's variety can also be registered as an extant variety;
- A farmer can save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share, or sell his farm produce, including seed, protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001.
- Section 39 (2) of the Act of 2001 also includes a provision for compensation to farmers in the event of a variety's failure to perform.
- Farmers are not required to pay any fees in any proceedings before the Authority, Registrar, Tribunal, or High Court under the Act.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. COP27, in Egypt, must focus on food systems

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.



Prelims: United Nations Climate Change Conference

Mains: Challenges of and Solutions for Climate change and Hunger.

Context:

This article discusses the challenges of climate crisis and hunger in the light of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (<u>COP26</u>) held in Glasgow.

Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people suffering from chronic hunger from 130 million to 270 million.
- According to the <u>United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)</u>, a 2°C increase in average global temperature from pre-industrial levels will result in an additional 189 million people becoming hungry.
- The 2030 objective to eradicate global hunger and malnutrition in all forms faces significant challenges, including the climate crisis and hunger, which are intricately intertwined.

Challenges of Climate Crisis and Hunger

- Food insecurity is forced to rely on humanitarian help due to a lack of social protection mechanisms such as food security nets.
- Climate change will continue to have a negative influence on agriculture, fisheries, and livestock. Those who rely on subsistence farming are particularly vulnerable.
- The poor and vulnerable are still the ones that suffer the most. People in low-income nations bear the brunt of the consequences, although contributing the least to greenhouse gas emissions.
- According to the <u>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)</u>, the climate crisis will have an influence on food production and livelihoods, as well as threaten nutrition through multi-breadbasket failures.

Solutions to Tackle Twin Problem of Climate Crisis and Hunger

- 1. Adaptation And Resilience:
- Food security necessitates adaptation and resilience-building for poor and vulnerable populations.
- However, the focus has been on lowering emissions and meeting associated objectives, as they are critical for millions of people's livelihoods and food security.



Adaptation And Resilience: Key Focus Areas

- Scaling up action and support, including finance, capacity-building, and technology transfer
- Enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience.
- Reduce vulnerability to climate change in line with the best available science.
- Considering the priorities and needs of developing country parties.

2. Adaptation Finance

- The present climate financing and stakeholder base are insufficient to respond to the worsening effects of climate change.
- The COP26 called for multilateral development banks, other financial institutions, and the private sector to increase fund mobilisation in order to deliver resources required to implement climate programmes, notably for adaptation.



Adaptation Finance: Key Focus Areas

- Creating Resilient Livelihoods And Food Security Solutions
- Adaptation Of Climate-resilient Food Crops, Such As Millets, For Nutritional Security
- Enabling Women's Control And Ownership Of Production Processes And Assets
- Increased Value Addition And Local Solutions.
- Promoting A Resilient Agriculture Sector By Creating Sustainable Opportunities, Access To Finance.
- Building Capacity And Knowledge Of Civil Society And Governments
- Addressing The Link Between Food Security And Climate Risk.

3. Fixing Broken Food Systems

- Land and crops are destroyed, livestock is killed, fisheries are depleted, and transportation to markets is shut off as a result of the climate crisis.
- This has an influence on food production, diversity, accessibility, and safety. Food systems, on the other hand, have an environmental impact and are a cause of climate change.
- COP26 followed the groundbreaking UN Food Systems Summit, which served as a wake-up call that the world's food systems are unfair, resulting in 811 million people going to bed hungry.
- Agnes Kalibata, the UN Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, has called for unprecedented attention on food systems, including food and agriculture, by ensuring that COP27 has a particular focus on this.



Fixing Broken Food Systems : Key Focus Areas

- Reimagining food systems through the prism of climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Making food systems resilient to climate change and pandemics
- Strong cooperation and partnership between governments, citizens, civil society organisations, and the private sector.
- Balancing growth and sustainability, mitigating climate change, ensuring healthy, safe, quality, and affordable food.
- Maintaining biodiversity to offer attractive income and work environment to smallholders and youth.

Lessons for India:

- India can play a significant role in ensuring food security by implementing climate resilience policies at the national and state levels.
- Climate change consequences, response choices, and adaptation needs must all be better understood via adaptation strategies at the global, regional, and local levels.
- With possible help from the Adaptation Fund, the World Food Programme (WFP) and India's Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry intend to build a best practice model on adaptation and mitigation.

2. Corridors of death

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Prelims: Mitigation Measures to prevent man-animal conflicts.

Mains: Elephant deaths and country's attempts to prevent man-animal conflicts.

Context:

The deaths of five elephants in the country as a result of railway collisions have once again highlighted the country's attempts to prevent <u>man-animal conflicts</u>.

Details:

Importance of the Elephant:



- The forest ecosystems are built by elephants. Many ecologists believe that without elephants, forests would perish.
- Elephants are responsible for the seed dissemination of 30% of gigantic tree species and 40% of tall tree species in tropical forests.
- They are known as nature's 'gardener' and they play an important role in creating the landscape, pollination, seed germination, and boosting the fertility of forest soil with dung heaps.

Read more about the <u>Asian elephant</u> in the link.

Effective Solutions to Prevent Elephant Deaths:

- Large-scale methods include hanging solar-powered fences, as proposed in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and growing citronella and lemongrass to repel elephants, as done in Golaghat district, Assam.
- Authorities should make sure there are no unlawful electric fences or barbed wire fences, which might be replaced with solar-powered fences.
- The involvement of local communities is critical. The importance of elephants in biodiversity protection must be emphasised, especially to individuals who live along elephant corridors.
- Proposals for elevated wildlife crossings, eco-bridges, and underpasses for the safe passage of animals should be expedited by the Environment Ministry and the Ministry of Railways.
- Measures such as a periodic evaluation of elephant passage identification, increased sensitization programmes for railway workers, standardisation of track signs, and 'honey bee' sound-emitting devices near all known elephant routes should all be expedited by the authorities.
- Mitigation Measures
 Built mitigation, such as underpasses or tunnels.
 Preventive mitigation, such as patrolling and clearing escape routes.
 Identifying Mortality hotspots.
 Increase linear infrastructure.
 Install monitoring systems.
 Limiting train operations after sunset

Conclusion:

The state governments concerned and the Central government must identify long-term solutions to the problem of man-animal conflicts. The effectiveness of mitigating measures and the impact of linear projects will determine the future of sustainable biodiversity in India.



Also read: Project RE-HAB

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Recast this apples-and-oranges ranking method

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

Prelims: National Institute Ranking Framework

Mains: Critical Evaluation of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) Ranking in India.

Context:

This article critically evaluates the ranking of State-run Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

What is NIRF?

- The <u>National Institute Ranking Framework</u>, or NIRF, is the government's first attempt to rate the country's higher education institutions (HEIs).
- While participation in the NIRF was initially voluntary, it became mandatory in 2018 for all government-run educational institutions.

Why did the Union government decide to rank HEIs?

- The origins of the NIRF concept may be traced back to worldwide rankings.
- The union government and government-run higher education institutions were dissatisfied with their rankings in the QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.
- To address this, India opted to follow China's example. When China faced the same dilemma around two decades ago, they replied by creating their own university rating system. The Shanghai Rankings, created by Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 2003, arose from this.

Critical Evaluation of NIRF Ranking:

1. Deficiencies in the focus

- The financial condition of state-sponsored higher education institutions is a well-kept secret, with wage and pension commitments barely kept under check.
- As a result, comparing such organisations to centrally sponsored institutions is pointless.
- On economic indicators, nobody does a cost-benefit analysis of state vs centrally sponsored HEIs.

2. Structural Issues:

• Given the challenges that State HEIs encounter on a daily basis, the NIRF appears to have focused solely on institutional strength while entirely ignoring the concerns.



- It prevents state universities and colleges from competing on an equal footing with their statesponsored equivalents.
- Due to a lack of resources and scepticism on the part of governments, such institutions are unable to compete with centrally financed and strategically placed HEIs.

3. Struggle of State HEIs

- Artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchains, smart boards, portable computing devices, and other new technologies are proving difficult for state HEIs to embrace.
- They also struggle to adapt to various types of educational software/hardware in order to stay current with the <u>New Education Policy</u>.

Conclusion:

- It is time for the NIRF to devise a framework for evaluating institutions' production and performance in light of their limits and resources.
- It is critical for policymakers to refocus resource allocation techniques toward state-run higher education institutions.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Implement panel's anti-pollution steps: SC to Centre, Delhi Govt.

Context:

The Supreme Court approved the measures taken by the Centre's <u>Air Quality Commission</u> to create an 'Enforcement Task Force' and flying squads in Delhi NCR.

Flying Squad:

- The Flying Squad is a small standby squad of people who have been organised to respond rapidly in the event of an emergency.
- It was established to take disciplinary action against offenders.
- The flying squads would report directly to the commission's 'Enforcement Task Force.'

2. Poshan Tracker data under wraps

Context:

The government has spent crores of rupees on its Poshan or Nutrition Tracker programme, but it is yet to make the data public.

Poshan Tracker

- Poshan Tracker is a management tool that gives a 360-degree view of an Anganwadi Centre's (AWC) operations, service delivery by Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), and comprehensive beneficiary management for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children.
- Simultaneously, the mobile application digitises and automates the physical registers used by AWWs, allowing them to increase their job quality.



3. Longest migration route of lesser florican from Rajasthan tracked

Context:

A Lesser Florican is a small and thin bustard-like bird that lives in tall grasses. Sypheotides indicus is the scientific name for Lesser Floricans. During the monsoon season, the endangered bird may be seen in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and other areas.

Lesser Floricans:

- A Lesser Florican is a small and thin bustard-like bird that lives in tall grasses.
- Sypheotides indicus is the scientific name for Lesser Floricans.
- During the monsoon season, the endangered bird may be seen in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and other areas.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species classifies the bird as "endangered."

4. MGNREGA seeks ₹25,000 crore more

Context:

The Centre has sought additional funding for the <u>MGNREGA</u> scheme as part of the supplementary demand for grants submitted to Parliament.

Supplementary Grants:

- Article 115 of the Indian Constitution specifies it, along with Additional and Excess Grants.
- When grants authorised by Parliament fall short of the needed expenditure, an estimate for Supplementary or Additional funds is provided to Parliament.
- Before the conclusion of the financial year, these grants are presented to Parliament and approved.

5. Tharoor moves Bill for permanent HC Benches

Context:

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor introduced a private member's bill in the Lok Sabha proposing the establishment of a High Court Bench in the state capitals.

Background:

- "Establishment of permanent benches of high courts at state capitals Bill" aims to provide for the establishment of permanent Benches of the High Courts in State Capitals.
- It will be formed where the High Court's major seat or a permanent bench is located somewhere other than the State Capital, and for cases related to it.

Permanent Bench: The creation of permanent Benches would mean that judges will sit there on a permanent basis ending inconvenience to them, advocates and litigants.

What is a Private Member's Bill?



A member of parliament (MP) who is not a minister is a private member. Know more about private member's bill in the linked article.

6. Shutterbug leads to a pretty find in Sikkim

Context:

A new butterfly species was discovered in Sikkim.

Chocolate-bordered Flitter

- A new butterfly species called Chocolate-bordered Flitter was discovered by chance via photos.
- The physical appearance of the species differs slightly and the internal structures of the males also differ slightly.

G. Tidbits

1. Delhi ranks number one globally in CCTV coverage: CM

- Delhi has surpassed cities such as London, Washington, and Paris in terms of CCTV coverage, and now ranks first in the world.
- CCTV coverage had increased women's safety.
- It had considerably aided the police force in the investigation of a number of crimes, with occurrences captured on CCTV cameras assisting in the capture of perpetrators.

2. Afghan trucks can carry Indian aid via Pakistan

- As India stepped up efforts to send humanitarian aid to Afghanistan "without conditionalities", Pakistan announced that it would allow Indian aid to pass through on Afghan trucks.
- In addition to the humanitarian assistance in Kabul, the EU planned to reopen a "minimal presence" in Afghanistan, deploying a limited number of EU foreign officials and security personnel.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With respect to the word 'Democratic' mentioned in the Preamble, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. Democratic polity stipulated in the Preamble is based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty.
- 2. Independence of Judiciary can be considered as the manifestation of the democratic character of the Indian polity.
- 3. The term used in the Preamble embraces political democracy and not social and economic democracy.

Options:-

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only



d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

Explanation:

- As stated in the Preamble, a democratic government is founded on the notion of popular sovereignty, or the people's possession of supreme authority. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- The democratic nature of the Indian polity is manifested through universal adult franchise, periodic elections, rule of law, judiciary independence, and the lack of discrimination on certain grounds. Hence Statement 2 is correct.
- In the Preamble, the term "democratic" is used in a broad meaning, encompassing not just political democracy but also social and economic democracy. **Hence Statement 3 is not correct.**

Q2. Which of the following words were added to the Preamble by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act?

- 1. Integrity
- 2. Liberty
- 3. Secular
- 4. Socialist

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 2, 3 and 4 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: c

Explanation:

- India's status was altered from "sovereign democratic republic" to "sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic" with the 42nd Amendment. It also modified the phrase "national unity" to "national unity and integrity."
- During the Emergency, the administration led by Indira Gandhi adopted the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, formally known as The Constitution Amendment Act, 1976.
- The 42nd Constitutional Amendment introduced the phrases socialist, secular, and integrity to the Preamble.
- Hence only terms 1, 3 and 4 are correct.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Private Member's Bill:



- 1. A member of the ruling dispensation who is not a minister or that of the opposition can be said to be a 'Private Member'.
- 2. No private member's Bill has been passed by Parliament since 1970.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A private member of parliament (MP) is a member of parliament who is not a minister. Private Member's Bills are bills introduced by private members of Parliament.
- Hence Statement 1 is correct.
- So far, 14 such Bills have been enacted by Parliament, six of them were passed in 1956.
- According to PRS Legislative Research, no Private Member's Bill has been enacted by Parliament since 1970.
- Hence Statement 2 is correct.

Q4. With respect to Lesser florican, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It is endemic to the Indian Subcontinent.
- 2. The bird is listed as "critically endangered" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Lesser Florican is a small and thin bustard-like bird that lives in tall grasses.
- Sypheotides indicus is the scientific name for Lesser Floricans.
- During the monsoon season, the endangered bird may be seen in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and other areas. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**



• The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species classifies the bird as "Endangered." **Hence Statement 2 is not correct.**

Q5. Consider the following statements:

- 1. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) helps in promoting financial inclusion in the country.
- 2. NPCI has launched RuPay, a card payment scheme.

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: c

Explanation:

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is a government-owned corporation that manages retail payment and settlement systems and promotes financial inclusion in India.
- It is the result of a collaboration between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- NPCI has launched RuPay which is an Indian-developed payment system that is tailored to the expectations and needs of Indian consumers, banks, and merchants.
- Hence both statements are correct.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. MGNREGA remains crucial for integrated resource management and livelihood generation. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Governance]
- 2. Elephant deaths due to train collisions and electric fences are avoidable with effective policy and implementation. Suggest such policies. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Biodiversity]