FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY
KERALA'S NO.1 IAS ACADEMY

03
NOVEMBER | 2026

FINDER
FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

Firecrackers: Festivity or fallout?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- On October 12, the **Supreme Court** held a suo motu hearing on air pollution in **Delhi-NCR**, focusing on firecracker restrictions.
- The Bench cautioned against a **blanket ban** on firecrackers, **emphasizing public awareness and voluntary restraint**.

Key Highlights:

- The Supreme Court **raised concerns** about **balancing firecracker use, public health and religious sentiments**.
- The Bench avoided a **blanket ban due to enforcement difficulties** and instead stressed **public awareness and voluntary restraint**.
- **Article 21** protects life and personal liberty, and the Supreme Court has interpreted it to include the **right to a healthy life**.
- This is supported by **Article 48A** (State to protect and improve the environment) and **Article 51A(g)** (every citizen's duty to protect the environment).
- **Article 25** guarantees freedom of religion, but it is subject to public order, morality and health, so the freedom to celebrate cannot harm others' right to clean air.
- The **Rio Declaration, 1992** supports this balance through the **precautionary principle and the polluter-pays principle**.

Precautionary principle: Calls for preventive action by the State against serious environmental risks even when scientific certainty is incomplete.

Polluter-pays principle: Suggests that the polluter bears the cost of pollution.

- **Stockholm Declaration (1972)** recognised the importance of environmental quality for human well-being.
- Countries like **Singapore**, **Ireland**, **United Kingdom**, **Sweden**, and **Germany** have various restrictions on firecracker use.

Implications:

- **Enforcement gaps** make blanket bans difficult to implement.
- **Health risks** from firecrackers affect the **right to a healthy life under Article 21**.
- **Disproportionate restrictions** may affect lawful cultural practices.
- **Weak accountability** lets manufacturers and sellers **evade pollution-related responsibility**.

Way Forward:

- **Balanced regulation** to prevent harm while respecting celebrations.
- **Promote green crackers** through scientific assessment.
- **Enforce emission** and safety standards.
- **Ensure proportionate restrictions**, public awareness and voluntary restraint.

Mains Question:

Examine how environmental protection can be reconciled with religious freedom in the context of firecracker regulation in India. (250 words, 15 marks)

How AI training models could compromise privacy

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

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

Why in Focus?

- The rise of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has highlighted gaps in India's legal framework for data protection.
- The current legal framework in India, particularly the DPDP Act, **is inadequate in safeguarding privacy against the risks** posed by AI training models.

Key Highlights:

- In **2017**, the Supreme Court recognised the **right to privacy** as a fundamental right under the Constitution.
- The **IT Act, 2000** and its **2011 Rules** provided stronger legal protection only to specified **sensitive personal data**, such as financial, health and biometric information.
- The **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act** replaced this framework, with **some provisions effective from 2027**.
- The DPDP Act **does not apply to publicly available data or inferred information** from social media activity.
- The Act **creates no separate category for sensitive personal data**, so passwords, biometrics and health details **get no higher level of protection**.
- It also **exempts certain data processing for research**, which could allow AI training to escape its obligations.
- Hence, **AI models can use personal data from their training**, which can expose people's privacy.
- **Right to be forgotten lets individuals seek deletion of their personal data**, subject to legal exceptions, but it is unclear if it covers AI-inferred information.

Implications:

- **Weaker data protection** reduces safeguards for sensitive information.
- **Privacy risks** arise from AI models **reproducing personal data**.
- **Public data misuse** enables unchecked AI training.
- **Research exemptions** may weaken compliance with the Act.
- **Limited user control** denies users an explicit AI training opt-out.

Way Forward:

- **Stronger safeguards** for sensitive personal data.
- **Expand coverage** to public and inferred data.
- **Clarify exemptions** for AI model training.
- **Enable opt-out rights** for AI training.
- **Introduce interim safeguards** until 2027.

Mains Question:

Critically evaluate whether the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 adequately safeguards the right to privacy in the age of Artificial Intelligence. (250 words, 15 marks)

What is the role of Legislative Councils?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2

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

Why in Focus?

- Elections to 28 **Legislative Council** seats were recently held in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Karnataka.
- The **role and relevance of Legislative Councils have been debated** following these elections and political exchanges.

Key Highlights:

- **Government of India Act, 1935** introduced bicameral legislatures in **six provinces (Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam)** , establishing **Legislative Councils as revising chambers**.
- **Article 168** provides for Legislative Councils in six States: **Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka**.
- **Article 169** empowers **Parliament create or abolish a Legislative Council** by ordinary law (simple majority), after the **State Assembly passes a resolution** by a majority of its total membership and two-thirds of members present and voting.
- **Article 171** limits the strength of a Legislative Council to **one-third of the State Assembly's membership**, subject to a minimum of **40 members**.
- Members are selected through different routes: **one-third by local authorities, one-third by MLAs, one-twelfth by graduates, one-twelfth by teachers**, and the remaining **one-sixth nominated by the Governor**.
- Under **Article 172**, the Council is a **permanent House**. Members serve six-year terms, with one-third retiring every two years.
- Ministers, including the **Chief Minister**, can be **members of the Legislative Council**, just as Union Ministers can be members of the Rajya Sabha.
- There is **no joint sitting to resolve a deadlock, so the Assembly's decision prevails** and the Council can **delay a Bill for a maximum of four months**.

Implications:

- **Councils have been abolished and revived with changes in government**, as in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Creation and abolition of councils have been driven by political considerations** rather than institutional need.
- **Limited legislative powers weaken the Council's role** as an effective revising chamber.
- **Councils risk becoming mere ornaments** in the six States where they exist.

Way Forward:

- **Implement the Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommendation** to set up a **Council of Local Governments** in every State, a forum where the State government and local bodies discuss and resolve issues.
- **Reform electoral constituencies** by **removing separate graduates' and teachers' constituencies**, given rising literacy rates.
- **Strengthen local governance** by using Councils to protect and promote the interests of local bodies.
- **Institutional accountability** should be ensured, and Councils that **fail to function may be considered for abolition**.

Mains Question:

Examine the role and relevance of Legislative Councils in India's State legislatures and discuss reforms needed to make them effective. (250 words, 15 marks)

How are enumerators being trained for Census 2027?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

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

Why in Focus?

- Door-to-door enumeration for the second phase of **Census 2027** begins in **Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Punjab** on December 1, 2026.
- Field trainers are **preparing enumerators to handle sensitive questions**, including India's **first caste enumeration since Independence**.

Key Highlights:

- The **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** notified **40 questions** for the Population Enumeration phase, including **13 new questions** not part of the 2011 Census questionnaire.
- New questions cover **parents' names, religion and place of birth**, along with details of **Aadhaar, mobile number, voter ID and driving licence**.
- About 34 lakh enumerators, **mostly government school teachers, will be deployed**, with private teachers and institutions also permitted.
- This will be India's **first digital Census**, with enumerators recording information through a **mobile application**.
- The training follows a **pyramid structure**: National Trainers train **Master Trainers, who train Field Trainers, who then train enumerators and supervisors**
- The **PRAMAN framework** is integrated into training at all levels, and enumerators and supervisors take a **Seva Bhav pledge**.

PRAMAN Framework: A framework for improving household interaction through Pehchaan (Identity), Rishta (Rapport), Anurodh (Request), Madad (Assistance), Aankada Shuddhata (Data Accuracy) and Nishtha (Commitment).

- **Question 10(C) asks for caste**: SC/ST choose from a drop-down, while **others type it manually, with no separate OBC column**.
- Respondents can **also select "Does not want to declare Caste" or "No Caste"**.
- **Question 37** seeks the Aadhaar number, if available and that answering this question is **optional**.

Implications:

- **Sensitive information** on religion, caste, fertility and migration **requires careful handling**.
- **Expansion of the enumerator pool** to private teachers and institutional members **may affect the uniformity and quality of data collection**.
- **Privacy concerns** may **arise from collecting parents' details** and identification information such as Aadhaar.

Way Forward:

- **Practical training** should include **mandatory hands-on practice with the mobile application**.
- **Uniform instructions** should be issued to trainers on sensitive questions, including Aadhaar.
- **Data confidentiality** must be clearly **communicated to respondents** to build public trust.
- **Specialised training** should equip **enumerators to handle caste, religion and disability questions** accurately and sensitively.
- **Voluntary disclosure** must be ensured by **clearly communicating that optional questions** are not mandatory.

Mains Question:

Examine the significance of the first digital Census and caste enumeration for policy-making in India, and discuss the challenges in ensuring accurate and trustworthy data. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

Low-energy-Kraken-Heracles (LKH)

- **Why in News**: Astronomers identified an ancient dwarf galaxy, **LKH**, that merged with the **Milky Way about 11.8 billion years ago**.
- **LKH** is a dwarf galaxy that merged with the Milky Way approximately **11.8 billion years ago**, during its early formation.
- Astronomers **identified it by studying 39 globular clusters** using data from the **Hubble Space Telescope** (by NASA & European Space Agency) and the **Gaia mission** (by ESA).
- It had a mass of approximately **500 million solar masses**, representing a significant share of the young Milky Way's mass.
- It merged about **1.8 billion years before the Gaia-Sausage-Enceladus (GSE) merger**, another major dwarf galaxy merger with the Milky Way.
- A **dwarf galaxy is a small galaxy with a few million to a few billion stars** (compared with about 100-400 billion in the Milky Way), usually bound to a larger galaxy.
- A **globular cluster is a tightly bound, roughly spherical group of very old stars**, orbiting the halo of a galaxy.

Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO)

- **Why in News**: The Government plans to establish **FRROs in all State capitals by 2027**.
- The **Foreigners Regional Registration Office** functions under the **Bureau of Immigration**, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- It registers foreign nationals staying in India for more than **180 days**, under the **Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1992**.
- It provides visa-related services, including **visa extension, conversion, endorsement, residential permits and exit permits**.
- It also handles registration and other services for **Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders**.
- In districts without an FRRO, the **Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO)**, usually the district Superintendent of Police, performs similar functions.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory

- **Why in News**: The **UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been in focus for its investigations** into alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in the region.
- The **Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory** was established on **27 May 2021** through **UN Human Rights Council Resolution S-30/1**.
- Unlike earlier UN fact-finding missions, it has an **open-ended mandate**, which continues unless revoked by the **UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**.
- It investigates alleged violations of **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** and **International Human Rights Law (IHRL)** in Israel and the **Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)**, including East Jerusalem.
- Its mandate includes investigating the **root causes of recurring tensions**, including discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial and religious identity.
- **Justice Srinivasan Muralidhar**, former Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court, was appointed Chairperson of the Commission in **November 2025**.

Green Crackers

- **Why in news**: The **Supreme Court permitted the use of green crackers for two days in Delhi-NCR**
- **Green crackers** are eco-friendly fireworks developed by the **CSIR–National Environmental Engineering**

Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) to reduce air pollution.

- They were developed following the **Supreme Court's intervention in 2017** to address the environmental and health impacts of conventional firecrackers.
- Three types of green crackers have been developed: **SWAS (Safe Water Releasable), STAR (Safe Thermite Cracker) and SAFAL (Safe Minimal Aluminium)**.
- They reduce pollution through **smaller shells, elimination of ash, reduced raw materials and dust-suppressing additives**, while minimising toxic metals.
- Green crackers contain reduced aluminium and sulphur, lowering **PM, SO_2 and NO_2 emissions by at least 30%** compared to conventional firecrackers.

Places in News

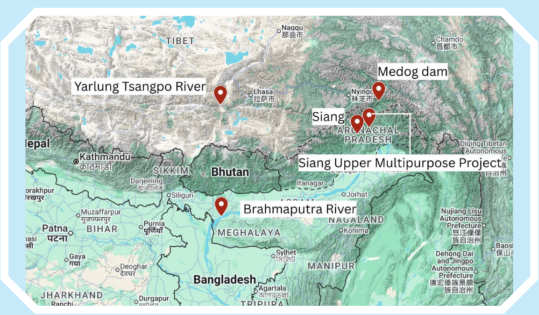
Indonesia

- **Why in news:**Indonesia has been in the news for recurring **forest and peatland fires**, particularly in Sumatra and Kalimantan, causing severe transboundary smoke haze.
- Indonesia is the world's largest **archipelagic country**, comprising more than **17,000 islands**, and lies across the **Equator in Southeast Asia**.
- Its capital is **Jakarta**, while **Nusantara**, located in East Kalimantan on Borneo Island, is being developed as the new capital.
- Indonesia is situated between the **Indian and Pacific Oceans**, giving it strategic importance in Indo-Pacific maritime trade.
- It shares land borders with **Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste**.
- Major islands include **Sumatra, Java, Borneo (Kalimantan), Sulawesi and New Guinea (Papua)**.
- Indonesia lies within the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, making it **highly vulnerable to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis**.



Upper Siang Hydropower Project

- **Why in news:** The **Upper Siang Hydropower Project** in Arunachal Pradesh has been in the news **amid concerns over its environmental and social impacts**.
- The project is a proposed **11,200 MW hydropower project** on the **Siang River** in **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- It is being developed by **NHPC Limited** and is planned as a major component of India's strategy to harness the hydropower potential of the Siang basin.
- The project aims to generate electricity, regulate river flows and help address concerns over possible upstream water diversion projects by China on the **Yarlung Tsangpo River**.
- The **Siang River**, known as the **Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet**, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh and becomes the **Brahmaputra** after joining the Dibang and Lohit rivers.
- The project has raised concerns among local communities regarding **large-scale displacement, submergence of villages, biodiversity loss and impacts on indigenous livelihoods**.



Apure

- **Why in news**: Apure was in the news due to a **Venezuelan Army attack on a camp of the Colombian guerrilla group**, the National Liberation Army.
- **Apure** is a state in **southwestern Venezuela**, located in the **Llanos (tropical grasslands)** region.
- It shares borders with **Colombia** to the west and south, and other Venezuelan states including Táchira, Barinas and Guárico.
- The **Apure River**, a major tributary of the **Orinoco River**, flows through the region.
- The region is characterised by **extensive tropical grasslands, wetlands and seasonal flooding**, supporting cattle ranching and rich biodiversity.

