

8. Short News

1. Desert Cyclone II Exercise (Defense Cooperation)

The second edition of the joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' between India and the UAE concluded at Al-Hamra Training City, Abu Dhabi.

Operational Focus- The two-week drill (Dec 18–30, 2025) focused on sub-conventional operations and joint peacekeeping under a United Nations mandate.

Key Drills- Troops practiced urban combat fundamentals, building clearance, IED awareness, casualty evacuation, and heliborne operations to enhance interoperability between the two forces.

2. All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2026 (Environment)

Launch Details- The 5th cycle of the tiger census begins its first phase in Tamil Nadu on January 5, 2026. It is conducted every four years by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

Methodology- The estimation uses a mix of sign surveys, line transects, genetic sampling, and camera trapping to monitor not just tigers but also co-predators (leopards, dholes) and prey base (gaur, deer).

Significance- India hosts nearly 75% of the global tiger population (3,682 tigers as per 2022 data), making this exercise critical for global conservation.

3. Thorium & Nuclear Energy Shift (Science)

Strategic Partnership- US-based Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE) has partnered with NTPC Ltd to deploy ANEEL (Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life) fuel in India.

The Technology- This fuel blends Thorium with HALEU (High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium), allowing it to be used in India's existing Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).

India has vast reserves of Thorium in monazite sands (Kerala, Odisha). Since Thorium is fertile (needs neutrons to become fissile Uranium-233), this technology bridges the gap to India's long-term energy security.

4. Sangita Kalanidhi Award (Art & Culture)

Recipient- The prestigious award was conferred upon violinist R.K. Shriramkumar by the Madras Music Academy.

Prestige- Instituted in 1942, it is regarded as the "Nobel Prize of Carnatic Music." Since 2005, winners also receive the MS Subbulakshmi Award.

Legacy- M.S. Subbulakshmi, associated with this legacy, was the first Indian musician to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award and the Bharat Ratna.

5. Ban on Nimesulide Formulations (Health)

The Ban- The Health Ministry has prohibited the manufacture, sale, and distribution of oral Nimesulide formulations exceeding 100 mg under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Reasoning- Nimesulide is a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID). Higher doses have been linked to severe liver toxicity (hepatotoxicity), and safer alternatives are readily available.

6. Land Stack Initiative (Digital Governance)

Launch- Rolled out in pilot locations (Chandigarh and Tamil Nadu) under the Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).

Features- It is a GIS-based digital platform (modeled after systems in Singapore and the UK) that provides integrated access to land records.

Impact- It aims to reduce property fraud, prevent the purchase of non-compliant land, and improve **transparency** in land administration.

7. Banks as Sponsors in NPS (Economy)

Regulatory Change- The **PFRDA** has permitted banks to independently sponsor Pension Funds under the National Pension System (NPS).

Conditions- Banks must meet strict eligibility criteria regarding net worth, market capitalization, and capital adequacy aligned with RBI norms.

Investment Structure- NPS funds are invested in four asset classes- Equity (max 75%), Corporate Bonds, Government Securities, and Alternate Assets (max 5%).

8. Rise of Secondary Pollutants (Environment)

CREA Findings- A recent analysis shows that secondary pollutants now account for nearly one-third of Delhi's annual PM2.5 load.

Definition- Unlike primary pollutants (emitted directly), secondary pollutants form in the atmosphere through chemical reactions between precursors like SO₂ and NO_x (e.g., Sulphates, Nitrates, and Ozone).

Challenge- Because they form over time and distance, they are harder to regulate than direct emissions.

