

8. Short News

1. NPS Vatsalya Scheme

A pension scheme designed specifically for minors to build long-term financial security.

Launch- Announced in Budget 2024-25; launched in September 2024.

Ministry- Ministry of Finance.

Regulator- PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority).

Objective- Start saving early for children; converts to a regular NPS account when they turn 18.

Key Features

Eligibility- All Indian citizens (including NRI/OCI) below 18 years.

Operation- Opened in minor's name, operated by parent/guardian.

Contribution

- Minimum- ₹250 (initially & annually).
- Maximum- No limit.

Withdrawal (Before 18)

- Allowed after 3 years.
- Up to 25% of guardian's contribution.
- Reasons- Education, medical treatment, specified disabilities.
- Frequency- Max 2 times before age 18.

Upon Turning 18 (KYC Mandatory)-

- Continue in NPS Vatsalya (until age 21).
- Shift to regular NPS Tier I.
- Exit
 - 80% lump sum withdrawal permitted.
 - 20% must be used for pension (annuity).
 - Full withdrawal allowed if corpus is ≤ ₹8 lakh.

2. Bannerghatta National Park (BNP)

Supreme Court committee (CEC) recommends restoring the larger 2016 Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) limits.

Location- Near Bengaluru, Karnataka. Part of the Eastern Ghats-Deccan Plateau transition zone.

Terrain- Anekal Hills (ancient granite sheets).

History- Reserve Forest (1970) → National Park (1974).

Biodiversity

- Fauna- Elephants, leopards, sloth bears.
- Flora- Dry deciduous and scrub forests.

Significance- Acts as a "green lung" and ecological buffer for Bengaluru; vital wildlife corridor.

Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) Issue

- 2016- Proposed ~100 sq km buffer.
- 2020- Reduced significantly, allowing construction near the park.
- Implication of Restoration- New housing/commercial projects will face strict scrutiny; commercial activities restricted.

3. Senkaku Islands

Tension between Japan and China regarding Coast Guard intrusion.

Location- East China Sea (Northeast of Taiwan, West of Okinawa).

Status- Uninhabited group of islands.

Controlled By- Japan (Administered as part of Okinawa Prefecture).

Claimed By

- China (calls them *Diaoyu*)
- Taiwan (calls them *Diaoyutai*)

Significance

- Close to shipping lanes.

- b. Rich fishing grounds.
- c. Potential hydrocarbon (oil/gas) reserves.

History- Japan took control in 1895 (First Sino-Japanese War).

4. NIRANTAR

Full Form- National Institute for Research and Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience.

Purpose- A platform to coordinate all institutions under the Environment Ministry (MoEFCC).

Goal- Stronger research, policy-making, and "Whole-of-Government" approach to climate action.

4 Thematic Verticals

1. **Forest & Biodiversity-** Sustainable use of bio-resources.
2. **Himalayan Ecology-** Glacier retreat, mountain ecosystems.
3. **Coastal & Marine-** Managing coastal zones.
4. **Climate Change-** Impact assessment and monitoring.

5. BHASHINI Samudaye

An initiative to build India's Language AI ecosystem.

Parent Mission- Mission BHASHINI (National Language Translation Mission).

Ministry- MeitY (Ministry of Electronics & IT).

Goal- Break language barriers; enable digital services in Indian languages.

Key Components

BhashaDaan- A crowdsourcing initiative where citizens contribute voice/text to train AI.

DOST (Dataset Onboarding Supporting Team)- To add high-quality datasets to the AI repository.

Features- Real-time translation (Voice-to-Voice, Text-to-Text) for government services like e-Swaraj.

6. Golden Jackal

Probe ordered into a killing at Delhi Zoo.

Scientific Name- *Canis aureus*.

Habitat- Valleys, wetlands, agriculture fields (rare in high altitudes). Widespread in India (Himalayas to Western Ghats).

Behavior

- a. Nocturnal (active at night) near humans.
- b. Monogamous (mate for life).
- c. Omnivorous- Eats small animals, fruit, and carrion (dead animals).

Ecological Role (Keystone Species)

- a. Scavenger- Cleans environment.
- b. Pest Control- Eats rodents.

Conservation Status

- a. IUCN- Least Concern (LC).
- b. Wildlife Protection Act- Schedule I (Highest Protection).

7. Nipah Virus

Nature- Zoonotic virus (animal to human).

Host (Carrier)- Fruit Bats (Flying Foxes).

Transmission

- a. Bat → Human (via fruit/date palm sap).
- b. Pig → Human.
- c. Human → Human (direct contact).

Symptoms- Fever, respiratory distress, convulsions (seizures).

Fatality- High (40-75%).

Treatment- No vaccine or specific cure; only supportive care and isolation.

Recent Cases- Suspected in West Bengal; recent outbreaks in Kerala.