



Vaghai-Bilimora Heritage Line

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Why in News

The **Western Railway** has decided to **not stop the services of three trains**, including the **107-year-old narrow gauge heritage train between Vaghai and Bilimora**, in Gujarat permanently.

- Other **two narrow gauge** trains run between **Miyagam, Choranda and Malsar**, and **Choranda junction and Moti Karal**.
- In rail transport, track gauge or track gage is the **spacing of the rails** on a railway track.

Key Points

- **Background:**
The **Ministry of Railways**, previously issued a letter to the Western Railway ordering permanent closure of 11 "**uneconomic branch lines**" and **narrow gauge sections** of the Western Railway, including **three from Gujarat**.

- **About the Vaghai-Billimora Train:**

- It started in 1913, was a remnant of **Gaekwad dynasty** who ruled the **princely state of Baroda**. **Tribal people** from the interior commute by this train regularly. The train covers a distance of **63 kilometres**.
- At the instance of Gaekwad rulers, the British laid railway tracks and it **was operated by Gaekwad Baroda State Railway (GBSR) owned by Sayajirao Gaekwad III**.
 - The **Gaekwad jurisdiction was spread across** parts of Saurashtra, Mehsana in north Gujarat, and Bilimora in South Gujarat.
 - The **founder of the dynasty was Damaji I** who had risen to power by 1740. The **last Gaekwar, Sayaji Rao III**, died in 1939.
- For about 24 years the train **was run by a steam engine**, which was replaced by a diesel engine in 1937.
 - In 1994, the **original steam engine was put on the display at Churchgate Heritage Gallery in Mumbai**.
- This was much before the Western Railway came into existence in 1951 with the merger of the Bombay, Baroda & Central India Railway, the Saurashtra, Rajputana and Jaipur state Railways.
- The 63-km Billimora-Vaghai and the 19-km Choranda-Moti Karal routes are **among those five routes the Indian Railways had proposed to be preserved as "industrial heritage"** in 2018.

Source: IE