Factly Weekly

Compilation

2024

For UPSC CSE Prelims Exam
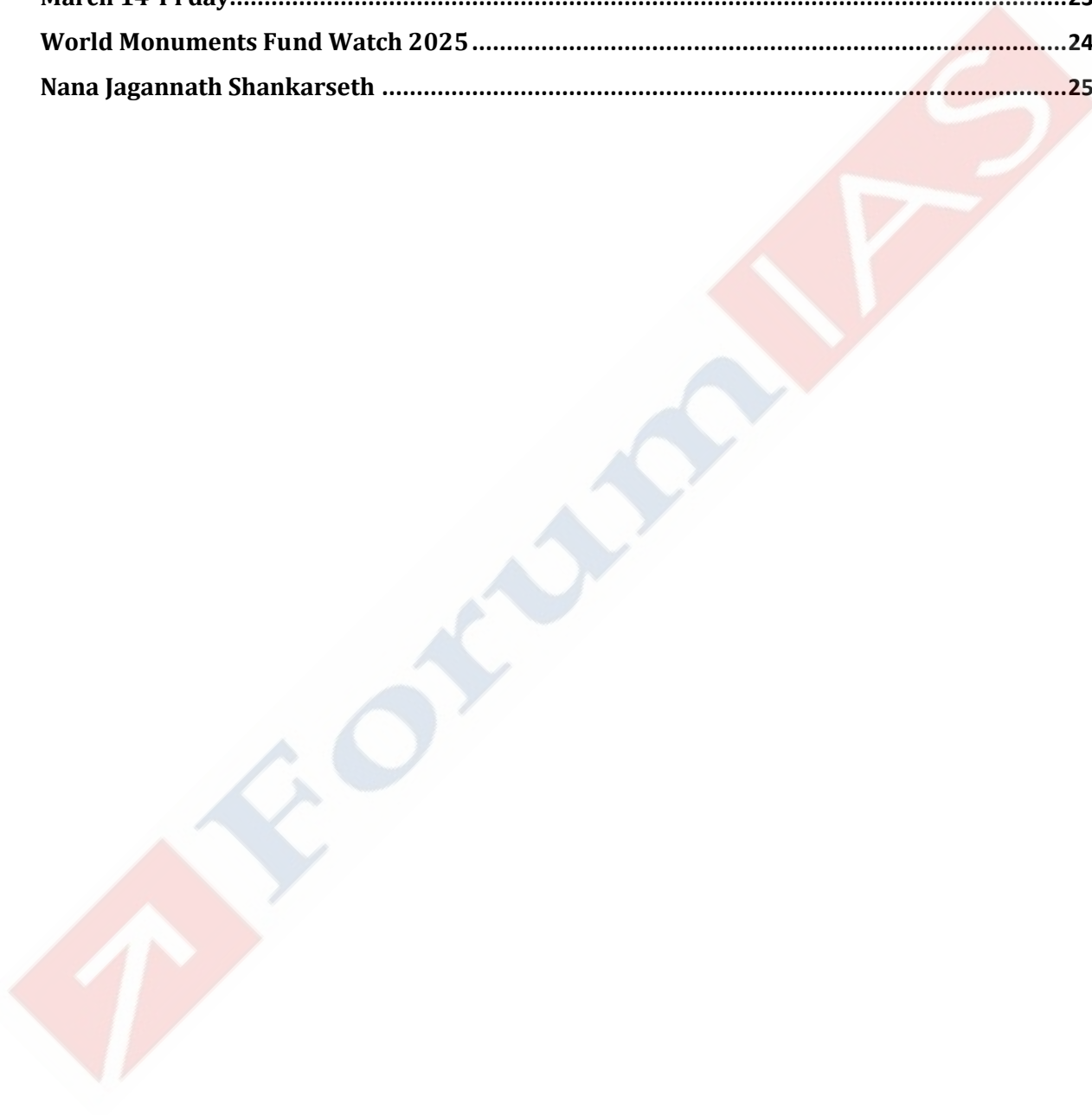
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Subject: Polity and Nation

National Cooperative Database (NCD)

Why in the News?

Union Minister of Cooperation launched the National Cooperative Database (NCD) to foster a cooperative-centric economic model.

About National Cooperative Database (NCD):

राष्ट्रीय सहकारी विकास निगम
NCDC
Assisting Cooperatives. Always!
सहकारिताओं की सहायता में सदैव तत्पर!

Source- NCDC

1. **About:** It is a web-based digital dashboard wherein data of cooperative societies, including national/state federations, have been captured. It has collected or mapped information about 8 lakh cooperatives.

2. It aligns with vision of "Sahakar se Samriddhi".

3. It has been developed in collaboration with State Governments, National Federations, and stakeholders to foster a cooperative-centric economic model.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) rules 2024 notified

Why in the News?

The Home Ministry has recently notified the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) rules, 2024. These rules enable the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the Parliament in 2019.

What is Citizenship Amendment Act (2019): Key provisions?

About– The objective of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 is to modify the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1955. It provides Indian citizenship to particular categories of illegal migrants.

Eligible categories- It proposes that six minorities–Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan won't be considered illegal immigrants if they enter India without proper documents on or before December 31, 2014.

Objective– The main goal is to help non-Muslim migrants from India's neighboring Muslim-majority countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) to obtain citizenship.

Residence requirement reduces– The amendment reduces the period of residency from 11 years to 5 years, for acquiring permanent citizenship through naturalization.

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Exemption from criminal cases- Individuals belonging to specified communities are granted immunity from criminal prosecution under the Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Passport Act of 1920, provided they arrived in India on or before December 31, 2014.

Other Exceptions to the Act include: The provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to two categories-
a. Regions protected by the '**Inner Line Permit**'.
b. Areas covered under the **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution.

Online Process for applying

1. Empowered Committee– The citizenship application process will be conducted online, with an empowered committee overseeing the scrutiny of all applications through district-level committees.

2. Composition of empowered committee– Each state's empowered committee will be chaired by the Director of Census Operations and will comprise officers from the Intelligence Bureau, Post Master General, State or National Informatics Centre, along with a representative each from the Department of Home and Divisional Railway Manager as invitees.

3. The district-level committee will be headed by the Senior Superintendent or Superintendent of Post.

> **Documents required:**
>
> **a.** Birth certificates, rental documents, identification papers, licenses, and educational certificates issued by government authorities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
>
> **b.** To qualify for citizenship under Section 6B of the CAA, applicants must show they entered India before December 31, 2014. They also need to provide documents like a passport copy, visa, Census enumerator slip, PAN card, electricity bill, or insurance policy. These documents must be issued by Indian authorities and remain valid even if expired.
>
> **c.** Applicants must provide an "eligibility certificate" from a respected local community institution confirming their membership in the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian community.

Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) 2024

Why in the News?

The government has recently issued the Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP), 2024. It aims to regulate unethical practices in the pharmaceutical industry.

What are the key provisions of UCPMP 2024?

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Source- The Print

1. Prohibits gifts– The code prohibits pharmaceutical companies, agents, distributors, wholesalers, or retailers from offering or providing gifts that benefit healthcare professionals or their family members personally.

2. Restriction on travelling facilities– The UCPMP 2024 limits providing travel and vacation benefits to healthcare professionals or their families, unless the individual is a speaker at an event.

3. Financial limitations– The code restricts financial benefits or perks from being offered, supplied, or promised to individuals qualified to prescribe or supply drugs by pharmaceutical companies or their representatives.

4. Ban on CME workshops abroad-The code prohibits companies from conducting continued medical education (CME) workshops in foreign countries.

5. Drugs promotion directive:
a. The UCPMP rules require drug promotion to adhere to marketing approval terms. The drugs must not be promoted before approval.
b. Claims of effectiveness of the drug must be backed by current evidence. Terms like 'safe' must not be used without qualification.
c. Additionally, drugs can't be labeled as 'new' if they've been available or promoted in India for over a year.

6. Rules violation & adherence directive:
a. Violations of the code will be handled by Ethics Committees for Pharma Marketing Practices (ECPMP) set up within each association to ensuring accountability.
b. The CEOs of pharmaceutical companies are responsible for following the code and ensuring compliance with UCPMP 2024 regulations.
c. Companies must submit annual self-declarations of adherence to the code, which will be posted on the association's website or the UCPMP portal of the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Subject: International Relations

Yaounde Declaration

Why in the News?

Health ministers from African nations grappling with the heaviest malaria burdens have recently signed the Yaounde Declaration. It aims to eradicate malaria-related fatalities.

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What is Yaounde Declaration?

Figure 1.Source- DownToEarth

About– The health ministers of 11 African countries with the highest burden of malaria signed this declaration. They have committed to take accelerated action to end deaths from the malaria disease.

Signed at– Yaoundé conference (Yaoundé is Cameroon's capital), co-hosted by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the Government of Cameroon.

Participants– Ministers of Health, global malaria partners, funding agencies, scientists, civil society organizations, and other principal malaria stakeholders.

Signatory countries– **Burkina Faso**, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. These countries together accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global malaria burden.

Subject: Indian Economy

SEBI Index Providers Regulations, 2024

Why in the News?

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its latest regulations, has mandated index providers overseeing "significant indices" linked to Indian securities to register with the SEBI. This measure aims to improve transparency in the governance of financial benchmarks indices.

What do the SEBI Index Providers Regulations of 2024 say?

Figure 2.Source- Business Standard

1. The regulations necessitate index providers such as NSE Indices and Asia Index (AIPL) to register with SEBI. Additionally, they must publicly disclose their methodology documents and comply with a code of conduct.

2. Global index providers like MSCI, Nasdaq, and FTSE Russell might be exempted from registration requirements unless their indices are significantly utilized by domestic asset managers.

What are Indices?

1. Indices are statistical tools employed to monitor the performance of a collection of assets or securities within a specific market.

2. Indices are composed of stocks, bonds, commodities, or

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other financial assets, allowing investors to track changes in different sectors or the overall market.

3. Examples– Sensex and Nifty 200 in India, and S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, and NASDAQ Composite in the United States.

Private Placement

Why in the News?

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recently decided to repeal certain circulars that provided relaxation for the allotment of securities through the private placement route.

What is Private Placement?

1. About– It is the sale of stock shares or bonds to selected investors and institutions rather than being offered publicly on the open market.

2. Investors attracted– Private placement programs invite investors like wealthy individuals, banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, and pension funds.

3. Benefit:
a. A benefit of private placement is its minimal regulatory demands.
b. Through private placements, companies can maintain closer investor relationships, negotiate flexible terms, and possibly retain more control over their direction and growth strategies.

Note– Under the Companies Act, 1956, issuing securities to 49 people was seen as private placement. This limit was raised to 200 under the Companies Act, 2013.

4. Types of of private placements– Preferential allotment and qualified institutional placement.

Preferential allotment:

1. About– This method involves a company issuing new shares to a select group of existing shareholders or specific investors, usually at a price lower than the current market price.

2. Purpose– This method is often used when a company aims to reward or retain existing shareholders, like promoters, by offering them the chance to buy more shares.

3. Regulation– Preferential allotment in India is regulated by SEBI regulations and the Companies Act. The company needs permission from its shareholders to proceed with preferential allotment.

Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP):

1. About– QIP is a private placement option for listed companies only. With QIP, a listed company can issue shares or securities to qualified institutional buyers (QIBs), like mutual funds, banks, insurance companies, and foreign institutional investors, without going public.

2. Purpose– Companies use QIP to quickly and efficiently raise capital from institutional investors for various purposes such as expansion, debt reduction, or other corporate needs.

3. Regulation– SEBI has set guidelines for QIP issuances in India.

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Subject: Science & Technology

Mission Divyastra: Agni-V Missile with MIRV Technology

Why in the News?

India recently conducted a test of the Agni-V ballistic missile with MIRV technology. The test was carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of Mission Divyastra.

> **Mission Divyastra**
>
> Mission Divyastra is the first test flight of India's indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with MIRV technology, led by the DRDO.

What are Agni missiles?

About– Agni missiles are long-range ballistic missiles designed for surface-to-surface attacks and capable of carrying nuclear payloads.

First Variant-The first missile in the series, Agni-I, was developed as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) and tested in 1989.

Designated as a special Program:
a. After its success, the Agni missile program became independent from the IGMDP due to its strategic significance.
b. It was designated as a special program in India's defense budget and received sufficient funds for further development.

Agni missiles variants and range

AGNI MISSILE FAMILY

- Agni-I Medium range ballistic missile, 700 – 1200 km range.
- Agni-II intermediate range ballistic missile, 2,000- 2,500 km range.
- Agni-III intermediate range ballistic missile, 3,000 - 5,500 km range.
- Agni-IV intermediate range ballistic missile, 3,200- 3,700 km range.
- Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile, 5,000 km range .
- Agni-VI intercontinental ballistic missile, 10,000 km range (under development)

Figure 3.Source- World-defense

About Agni V missile

About– Agni-V is India's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Range– The range of Agni-V extends beyond 5,000 kilometers and can reach most parts of China.

Propulsion– It's a three-stage missile powered by solid fuel. Using composite motor casing in the second and third stages makes it lighter, improving both its range and payload capacity.

Latest variant with MIRV tech– The missile latest variant features MIRV technology, which was developed over five decades ago and is possessed by only a few countries.

What is MIRV technology?

Full form– MIRV stands for Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle.

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About– It is a missile technology that enables one missile to carry multiple nuclear warheads, each capable of hitting different targets.

Other Countries equipped with this technology– Currently, the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom possess MIRV-equipped missiles. These missiles can be launched from either land-based platforms or submarines at sea.

Graphics processing unit (GPU)

Why in the News?

This article discusses the Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), which has seen a surge in demand as the global community eagerly embraces the latest advancements in AI technology.

What is Graphics Processing Unit (GPU)?

1. About– It is a computer chip that rapidly calculates mathematical operations to display graphics and images. Similar to a central processing unit (CPU), a GPU is a chip component found in computing devices.

2. Purpose– GPUs serve purposes in both professional and personal computing. Initially, they were designed for rendering 2D and 3D images, animations, and videos, but now they have a wider use.

3. Applications- Creative content creation, video editing, high-performance computing (HPC), and artificial intelligence (AI).

4. Key difference between CPU and GPU:
a. One key difference is that the GPU is designed to accelerate and manage graphics tasks, displaying graphics content on devices such as PCs or smartphones.
b. A regular modern CPU has around 8 to 16 "cores," each handling tasks one by one. In contrast, GPUs have thousands of smaller cores that work simultaneously, or "in parallel," for swift processing.

INFAAR 2019-22 Report: First national report on AMR surveillance in India's fisheries, livestock sectors

Why in the News?

The **Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO) of the United Nations and the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** released surveillance data of the Indian Network for Fishery and Animal Antimicrobial Resistance (INFAAR) for 2019-22.

INFAAR 2019-22 Report is the first national report on AMR surveillance in India's fisheries and livestock sectors.

What is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)?

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is the resistance of microorganisms (bacteria, virus, parasites and fungi) to an antimicrobial agent (antibiotics, fungicides, antiviral agents and parasiticides), to which they were first sensitive.

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> **About INFAAR (Indian Network for Fishery and Animal Antimicrobial Resistance)**
>
> **1.** INFAAR is a laboratory network established by ICAR.
>
> **2.** It receives technical assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
>
> **3.** It is dedicated to conducting AMR surveillance in the fisheries and livestock sectors.

What are the key findings of the report?

Data collection:
a. The (INFAAR) collected data from 2019-2022, covering 3 aquaculture systems (freshwater, brackish-water and marine) and major food-producing animals.
b. Resistance was profiled for Staphylococcus aureus, coagulase-negative Staphylococcus species (CONS), Escherichia coli, Aeromonas species Vibrio parahaemolyticus and Vibrio sp.

1. Resistance pattern in fisheries sector:
a. Isolates of Staphylococcus aureus exhibited high resistance against penicillin across all systems.
b. Freshwater fish displayed significant resistance to ciprofloxacin (54.8%), while marine samples showed higher resistance to cefotaxime (54.1%).
c. Significant resistance was also observed in shrimp samples against ampicillin.

2. Resistance pattern in livestock sector:
a. E. coli and Staphylococcus isolates from various livestock were tested for antimicrobial resistance profiles. Increased resistance, especially in E. coli and Staphylococci, was noted in the livestock sector.
b. Isolates from poultry showed higher resistance rates to various antibiotics compared to those from other food animals.

Subject: Environment

Blue Leaders Alliance

Why in the news?

The Blue Leaders High-Level Event on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction was held in Belgium on March 7, 2024.

About Blue Leaders

1. **About:** It is an alliance of countries calling for urgent action to save the global ocean in the face of the climate crisis, overfishing, pollution, and other threats.

2. **Members:** There are 24 member countries of blue Leaders. Belgium, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain are some of the key members of this alliance.

Note: India is not the member of this alliance.

3. **Goals:** The Blue Leaders are committed to two major goals:

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a) Securing a new international target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean through a network of highly and fully protected marine areas by 2030.

b) The rapid and successful conclusion of a new High Seas Treaty that provides for establishment of fully and highly protected marine areas in the high seas and strengthens management of human activities outside protected areas.

Golden langurs

Why in the news?

The latest survey of the primate has revealed that there are an estimated 7,396 golden langurs in India.

About Golden langurs

Source-Wikipedia

Aspect	Details
Description	It is an Old World monkey found in a small region of Western Assam, India and in the neighbouring foothills of the Black Mountains of Bhutan
Characteristics	1) They are most easily recognized by the colour of their fur, after which they are named. 2) They are highly dependent on trees, living in the upper canopy of forests. They are also known as leaf monkeys.
Habitat	It is endemic to western Assam, India, and southern Bhutan. Their habitat is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks: the foothills of Bhutan (North), Manas river (East), Sankosh river (West), and Brahmaputra river (South).
Population distribution	The northern extended population, which encompasses the western part of the Manas Biosphere Reserve. It extends from the Sankosh River to the Manas river up to the India-Bhutan border.
Protection status	IUCN List of Threatened Species: Endangered Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : Schedule I
Threats	1) Restricted Habitat-Their habitat is restricted by natural boundaries, further increasing the threat of extinction. 2) Habitat Fragmentation-Their habitat in Assam has fragmented drastically, especially

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	after a thrust on rural electrification and massive deforestation. 3) Inbreeding-Obstructions such as wires, and gaps in the forest due to felling, have increased the threat of inbreeding among golden langurs.

Fifth mass coral bleaching event

Why in the news?

The Great Barrier Reef is experiencing its fifth mass coral bleaching event in eight years.

About Coral bleaching

1. About: When corals are stressed by changes in conditions such as temperature, light, or nutrients, they expel the symbiotic algae living in their tissues, causing them to turn completely white. This is called coral bleaching.

2. Causes: Change in ocean temperature caused by climate change, run-off and pollution storm, overexposure to sunlight, extreme low tides cause coral bleaching.

3. **Impact on wildlife:** Coral reefs support some of the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet:

i) Coral reefs are vital ecosystems supporting diverse marine life, including sea turtles, fish, crabs, and more.

ii) They offer shelter, breeding grounds, and protection, crucial for many species' survival. Reef collapse threatens this biodiversity, risking extinction for at-risk species.

4. Impact on Humans: It threatens livelihoods, food security, and safety.

i) Reefs act as natural barriers, protecting coastal communities from waves and storm surges. Without them, costly and less effective seawalls become necessary, harming the environment.

ii) Bleaching exacerbates overfishing by disrupting the food web and depriving species of vital habitats for spawning. This impacts those reliant on marine resources for income and sustenance.

iii) Reef tourism is a multi-billion-dollar industry faces jeopardy as bleached reefs deter visitors and impact local economies and jobs.

Global Methane Tracker 2024

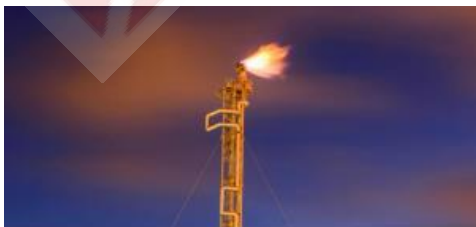**Why in the News?**

According to the **International Energy Agency's (IEA)** Global Methane Tracker 2024, methane emissions from fuel usage in 2023 nearly reached their highest level ever, totaling 120 million tonnes (Mt).

Figure 4.Source-DownToEarth

About Global methane Tracker

1. It is an annual report released by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

2. It uses the latest data on methane emissions from the energy sector and includes new scientific studies, measurements, and satellite data.

What are the Key findings of the Global Methane Tracker 2024?

1. Record-high methane emissions:
a. In 2023, methane emissions from fuel use were nearly the highest ever, reaching 120 million tonnes (Mt). This represents a slight increase compared to 2022.
b. Out of the 120 Mt of methane released into the atmosphere, approximately 80 million tons came from only 10 countries.

2. Top emitters– The United States tops the list in methane emissions from oil and gas operations, with Russia following closely. Meanwhile, China leads in emissions from coal operations.

3. Additional emission– Bioenergy, produced from plant and animal waste, resulted in an additional 10 million tons of emissions.

4. Emission Trends– Although studies indicate that emissions are declining in certain areas, the overall emissions remain excessively high to achieve the world's climate objectives.

5. Actions needed:
a. The world must reduce methane emissions from fossil fuels by 75% by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement target of limiting warming to 1.5°C.
b. The IEA estimated that this goal would require about $170 billion in spending. This is less than 5 percent of the income generated by the fossil fuel industry in 2023.

Note- Methane contributes to about 30% of the global temperature increase since the preindustrial era. The energy sector, covering oil, natural gas, coal, and bioenergy, makes up more than one-third of human-caused methane emissions.

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in the News?

Recently, a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking relief from demarcating Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and removing encroachments.

About Pobitora wildlife Sanctury

Aspect	Details
Location	1. It is located on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River in Morigaon district, Assam. 2. It covers 38.85 km² area providing grassland and wetland habitat for the Indian rhinoceros. 3. The Sanctuary consists of the Rajamayong Reserve Forest and Pobitora Reserve Forest.
Status	It attained the status of a wildlife Sanctuary in 1987.

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Special Feature	1. It is known for holding the highest density of Greater One Horned Rhinoceros in the country. 2. Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary also known as "Mini Kaziranga" due to its comparable landscape and notable population of the one-horned rhinoceros.
Vegetation	It has grassland vegetation consists of at least 15 grass species.
Flora	Pabitora Wildlife sanctury comprised of wet savannah, featuring a variety of vegetation such as Arundo donax, Erianthus ravennae, Phragmites karka, Imperata cylindrica, and Saccharum spp.
Fauna	1. The wildlife sanctuary is home to endangered one-horned rhinoceros and the other mammals such as Leopard, Leopard cat, Fishing cat, Jungle cat, Feral Buffalo, Wild pigs, Chinese pangolins, etc.

Subject: Schemes & Programmes

IndiaAI Mission

Why in the News?

The Union Cabinet recently approved the IndiaAI Mission with a budget of Rs 10,372 crore for the next five years. This initiative includes funding for private companies to establish AI computing capacity in the country.

What is IndiaAI Mission?

Background– During the **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit** in 2023 held in New Delhi, the Prime Minister of India declared India's intention to initiate an artificial intelligence (AI) mission.

Aim– The mission aims to create a comprehensive ecosystem, drive AI innovation, and encourage AI use across sectors. It prioritizes skill development and socio-economic change, in line with the vision of 'Making AI in India' and 'Making AI Work for India'.

Nodal Ministry– Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

Implementing Agency: 'IndiaAI' Independent Business Division (IBD) under Digital India Corporation (DIC)

What are the key components of the mission?

1. IndiaAI Compute Capacity-The objective is to develop an AI compute infrastructure comprising 10,000 or more Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) via partnerships between the public and private sectors. Additionally, an AI marketplace will be developed to provide AI as a service and pre-trained models to AI innovators. **Note**– The AI compute infrastructure will be implemented through a public-private partnership with 50% viability gap funding. If compute prices decrease, the private entity must increase compute capacity within the same budget to meet growing demand

2. IndiaAI Innovation Centre– The Center will create and use its own Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific foundational models in critical sectors.

3. IndiaAI Datasets Platform– It will simplify access to high-quality, non-personal datasets for AI innovation. It aims to offer Indian startups and researchers a single platform for easy access to non-personal datasets.

4. IndiaAI Application Development Initiative– This initiative will promote AI applications in critical sectors by addressing problem statements obtained from Central Ministries, State Departments, and other sources.

5. IndiaAI FutureSkills– It aims to reduce barriers to entry into AI programs and will expand AI courses at undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D. levels. Additionally, Data and AI Labs will be established in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across India to offer basic level courses.

6. IndiaAI Startup Financing– This pillar aims to help and speed up deep-tech AI startups, offering them easier access to funding for futuristic AI projects.

7. Safe & Trusted AI– This pillar will support the execution of responsible AI projects, which involves creating indigenous tools and frameworks.

UNNATI 2024- Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme 2024

What is the News?

Recently, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade proposed Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024 (UNNATI – 2024).

About Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024 (UNNATI – 2024)

Aspect	Details
Description	i) Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024 (UNNATI – 2024) is for the development of Industries and generation of employment in the states of North East Region. ii) It is a central sector scheme.
Objective	To generate gainful employment, leading to the overall socio-economic development.
Concerned Ministry	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Funding	Rs.10,037 crore
Duration	10 years from the date of notification along with 8 years for committed liabilities
Features	i) Commencement of Production or operation: All eligible Industrial Units to commence their production or operation within 4 years from the grant of registration. ii) Districts are categorized in two zones: Zone A (Industrially Advanced Districts) & Zone B (Industrially Backward Districts) iii) Earmarking of funds: 60% of the outlay of Part A has been earmarked to 8 NE states and 40% on First-In-First-Out (FIFO) basis. iv) All new Industrial units and Expanding units would be eligible for the respective incentives.
Benefits	i) It will create productive economic activity in the manufacturing and service sectors. ii) It is anticipated that direct employment opportunities for about 83,000 individuals will be generated during the scheme period, with additional indirect employment.

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KIRTI Programme

Why in the News?

Recently, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports inaugurated the unique Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme.

About KIRTI programme

Source: Zeenews

Aspect	Details
Description	i) KIRTI is part of the flagship Central Sector Scheme called Khelo India. ii) It is scouting and training programme to build a culture of sports and also create a cradle of talent that can win India medals at global competitions.
Aim	Scout talent among school-goers between the age of 9 and 18 years
Objective	i) To hunt talent from every nook and corner of the country ii) To use sports as a tool to curb addiction towards drugs and other gadgetry distractions
Concerned Ministry	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
Features	i) KIRTI aims to conduct 20 lakh assessments across the country throughout the year to identify talent through notified Talent Assessment Centres. ii) KIRTI is launched across 50 centres in India. Fifty thousand applicants are being assessed in the first phase across 10 sports, including athletics, boxing, wrestling, hockey, football and wrestling. iii) KIRTI's athlete-centric programme is conspicuous by its transparent selection methodology based on Information Technology. iv) Data analytics based on Artificial Intelligence is being used to predict the sporting acumen in an aspiring athlete.

PM-SURAJ portal

Why in the News?

The Prime Minister recently launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) portal.

About the PM-SURAJ portal

Nodal ministry– Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

1. This portal will provide credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society.

2. The portal will serve as a one stop point for individuals from marginalized communities to easily apply for and track the status of various loan and credit programs they are eligible for.

3. Credit support will be offered nationwide to eligible individuals through banks, **Non-Banking Financial Company**-Micro Finance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs), and other organizations.

4. Through this initiative, the Prime Minister approved credit support for one lakh entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections.

NFECS and NECCE program launched

Why in the News?

Figure 5.Source- The Indian Express

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (NECCE) for children aged three to six years.

Additionally, they have launched a National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation (NFECS) for children from birth to three years.

About NFECS and NECCE

Aspect	NFECS (National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation)	NECCE (National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education)
Age Group	Children from birth to three years	children from age three to six
Aim	Empower caregivers and Anganwadi Workers for early stimulation and learning to support children's optimal development.	Improve early childhood care and education at Anganwadi Centres. It aligns with the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022 (NCF-FS).
Developmental domains covered	Physical, thinking, language, social-emotional, cultural/aesthetic, good habits	Physical, thinking, language, social-emotional, cultural/aesthetic, good habits
Methodology	Attentive care, early learning opportunities	Lesson plans based on skills, fun learning, readiness for primary school
Activities	36 month-wise age-based activities	Weekly plan with 36 weeks of learning, 8 weeks of review, and 4 weeks of introduction
Special Attention	It emphasizes serve and return, caregiver actions: love, talk, play, and positive guidance	Screening, inclusion and referrals of Divyang children in every activity

Note- Both documents are created by the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) and will be incorporated into the Poshan Tracker. NIPCCD will conduct training sessions for Anganwadi workers on the new Curriculum and Framework.

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Subject: Reports & Indices

India was the top arms importer in 2019-2023: SIPRI

Why in the News?

According to the latest data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the world's leading arms importer for the period 2019-2023. India's arms imports saw a 4.7% increase compared to the period from 2014 to 2018.

What are the key findings?

1. Russia remains India's top supplier– Russia is still India's main arms supplier, making up 36% of imports. However, it's the first time since 1960-1964 that Russia's deliveries comprised less than half of India's arms imports in a five-year period.

Note– After Russia, France (33%) stands as India's second-largest arms supplier, while the US (13%) ranks as the third-largest provider of weapons to India.

2. Asia and the Middle East are the leading importers– In 2019-2023, nine of the top ten arms importers, including India, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, were from Asia, Oceania, or the Middle East.

3. Increase in European arms imports
a. The report shows a notable 94% rise in European arms imports from 2014-2018 to 2019-2023 which is likely due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.
b. In 2019-2023, European countries imported over half of their arms, 55%, from the U.S., which increased from 35% in 2014-2018.

4. U.S. and France top arms exports– The United States, the biggest arms supplier globally, experienced a 17% increase in exports from 2014-2018 to 2019-2023. Meanwhile, France became the world's second-largest arms supplier, with exports growing by 47%.

Subject: Art & Culture

Kochrab Ashram

What is the News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the redeveloped Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat to mark the 94th anniversary of the Dandi March.

About Kochrab Ashram

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Source: The Print

1. About:

i) Kochrab ashram is located in Kochrab village, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

ii) It is the first ashram established by Mahatma Gandhi upon his return to India from South Africa in 1915.

iii) It is also called as Satyagraha Ashram based on his ideas of achieving India's independence from British rule through peaceful methods.

2. History:
i) Upon returning to India from South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi initiated his association with Ahmedabad.

ii) In 1915, he settled in Ahmedabad emphasizing that as a Gujarati, he could best serve the country through the Gujarati language.

iii) On May 20, 1915, Gandhi took up residence in a bungalow located in Kochrab village later renamed it as Satyagraha Ashram.

iii) The bungalow was generously provided by Jeevanlal Desai who was a fellow lawyer and colleague of Gandhi.

iv) Mahatma Gandhi based himself here for about one-and-a-half years before moving to the new campus of Sabarmati Ashram.

3. **Appearance:** It is a colonial-style building with a white-washed façade.

4. **Significance:** The ashram holds a historical significance:

i) The ashram also served as the starting point for Gandhi's advocacy of khadi, equality for the poor, Hindi as the national language, self-reliance, and independence.

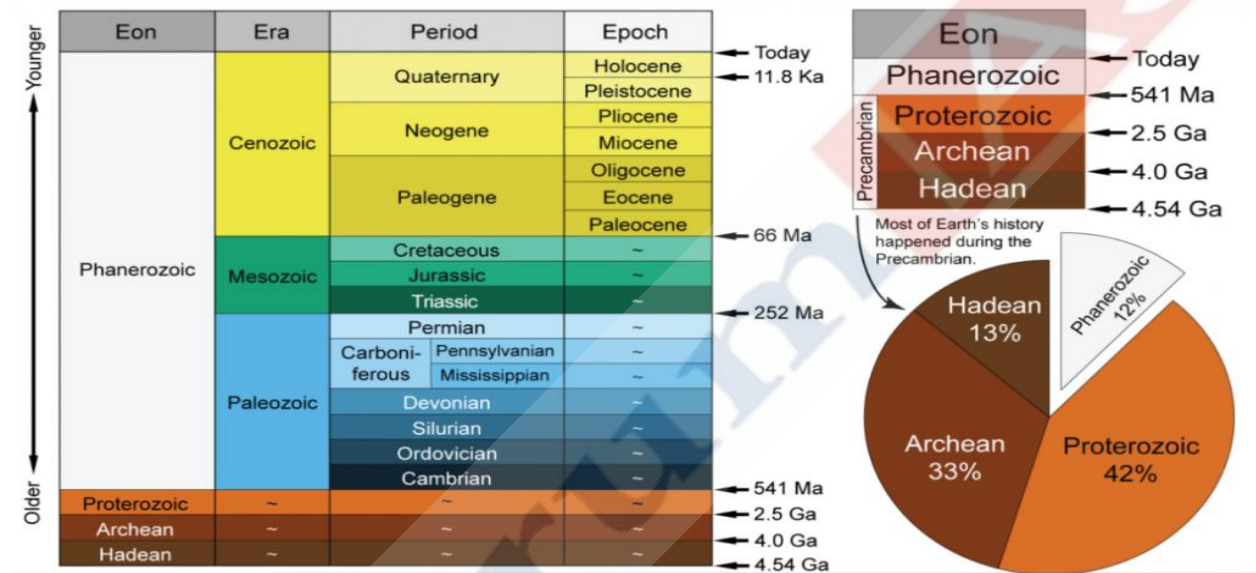ii) It also served as a communal living space promoting self-improvement and community service.

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Subject: Geography & Places in news

Anthropocene epoch declaration rejected

Why in the News?

Recently, a committee of 18 scientists have voted against the proposal to declare the start of the Anthropocene or Human Epoch in the geological time scale.

What is Geological time scale (GTS)?

Source- earthhome.org

1. About:
a. Scientists have designed it to measure the history of planet Earth.
b. GTS organizes Earth's history into different sections like aeons, eras, periods, epochs, and ages. It begins with Earth's formation and arranges them from longest to shortest durations.

2. Chronostratigraphic classification– The GTS is based on chronostratigraphic classification.
Note– Stratigraphy is the branch of geology that focuses on studying rock layers, while chronostratigraphy specifically examines how these layers relate to the measurement of geological time.

3. Present Geological time scale– We currently live in the Phanerozoic aeon, within the Cenozoic era, the Quaternary period, the Holocene epoch, and the Meghalayan age.

Why the proposal of Human epoch?

1. Holocene epoch: The Holocene epoch started 11,700 years ago, at the end of the Last Glacial Period (LGP). All recorded human history falls within this epoch.
Note- During the Last Glacial Period (LGP), about 25% of Earth's land was under glaciers, sea levels were up to 400 feet lower, and temperatures dropped to 8 degrees celsius on average.

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2. Anthropocene proposal– The Anthropocene concept suggests that human activities have changed the Earth so much that a new geological epoch has started.

What is Anthropocene epoch?

1. Term coined-The term Anthropocene was coined in 2000 by Dutch meteorologist Paul Crutzen and American botanist Eugene Stoermer.

2. Starting of Anthropocene epoch:
a. The Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), consisting of 37 researchers, started discussions in 2009 to determine the beginning of the epoch. After several years of discussion, they settled on 1952 as the starting point.
b. The period after World War II is seen as the "Great Acceleration" during which, there was a surge in human population, fossil fuel consumption, nuclear testing fallout, widespread use of nitrogen-based fertilizers, and increased prevalence of plastics.
c. The AWG submitted its proposal to the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 2023. The Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS), a body of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, voted on the proposal, and rejected it.

Why the scientists rejected this proposal ?

1. Contention on starting date– The proposal identified 1952 as the beginning of the Anthropocene, citing the global plutonium fallout from nuclear weapons tests. Opponents contend that human impact began earlier, including activities like farming, and cannot be confined to a single date.

2- Epoch definition standards– The IUGS committee found that adding an Anthropocene epoch and ending the Holocene didn't match the usual standards for defining epochs using chronostratigraphy.

Sela Tunnel

Why in the News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the strategically significant Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

About Sela Tunnel

Figure 6.Source- Tripoto

Location– The tunnel is situated at an altitude of 13,700 feet in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, on the Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang road connecting Tezpur (Assam) to Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh).

Built by– Border Road Organisation.

Project details:
a. It is world's longest twin tunnel built at an altitude of above 13,000 feet.
b. It consists of two tunnels-

Tunnel 1, a single tube tunnel spanning 980

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meters

Tunnel 2, a twin tube tunnel covering 1555 meters. Tunnel 2 has one tube for traffic and another for emergencies.

c. The tunnel was constructed using the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM).

What is its Significance?

1. All weather connectivity– It is the highest tunnel in the country. It provides all-weather connectivity to Tawang via the Sela Pass, as well as to other nearby areas along the border with China near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

2. Travel time reduction– The tunnel will reduce the travel time from Tezpur to Tawang by over an hour. Travellers can avoid the risky snow-covered Sela top, which sits at 13,700 feet altitude.

Darien Gap

Why in the News?

Illegal immigration to the US has in recent weeks moved its focus south to the Darien Gap.

About Darien Gap

Figure 7.Source: Down to Earth

1. The Darien Gap is a stretch of densely forested jungle across northern Colombia and southern Panama.

2. It is roughly 60 miles (97 kilometres) across. The terrain is muddy, wet and unstable.

3. It has become a major route for global human migration despite of no paved roads exist in the Darien Gap.

4. The Darién Gap is home to the Embera-Wounaan and Guna indigenous peoples. It was also inhabited by the Cueva people, who became extinct after the Spanish invasion of Panama in 1535.

5. Maize, cassava, plantains, and bananas are staple crops grown by local farmers in the region.

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Subject: Defence Exercise

Sea Defenders-2024

Why in the News?

The United States Coast Guard's (USCG) Bertholf ship reached Port Blair ahead of the 'Sea Defenders-2024' joint exercise.

What is Sea Defenders-2024?

Figure 8.Source- Zee Business

1. About– It is a joint exercise between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG).

2. Location– It is scheduled to take place on March 9-10 near Port Blair's coast of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

3. Focus of the Joint Exercise: Maritime piracy and other threats, simulated drone attacks on merchant ships, joint search and rescue at sea, firefighting, pollution response, and counter-drug operations.

4. Emergency preparedness-The event will also include a simulated medical evacuation to improve preparedness in emergency situations

Subject: Miscellaneous

March 14-Pi day

Why in the News?

March 14 is celebrated worldwide as Pi Day, commemorating the well-known approximation (3.14) of the mathematical constant Pi. On Pi Day, mathematicians raise awareness about their field through lectures, museum exhibits, and pie-eating contests

Why March 14?

1. The value of Pi is approximately 3.14 or expressed as the fraction 22/7.

2. When the date is written in the month/day format (3/14), it corresponds to the first three digits of this mathematical constant.

History of its celebration

1. Physicist Larry Shaw marked the first Pi Day celebration in 1988 at the San Francisco Exploratorium.

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2. In 2009, The U.S. House of Representatives designates March 14 (3/14) as National Pi Day.

3. In 2019, UNESCO's 40th General Conference officially recognized Pi Day as the International Day of Mathematics.

What is Pi (π)?

1. Pi, often denoted by the Greek letter π, is a well-known mathematical constant.

2. It signifies the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, which remains constant regardless of the circle's size.

3. Pi is an irrational number, meaning it has an infinite decimal expansion without any repeating pattern.

Discovery of Pi

1. Pi has been known for nearly 4,000 years and was discovered by the ancient Babylonians and ancient Egyptians.

2. Greek mathematician Archimedes of Syracuse (287 B.C. to 212 B.C.) was among the earliest to calculate pi.

3. The mathematical constant pi is represented by the symbol 'π,' which was created by British mathematician William Jones in 1706.

Applications: Pi finds utility in a broad array of mathematical and scientific computations, encompassing fields such as geometry, trigonometry, calculus, and beyond.

World Monuments Fund Watch 2025

Why in the News?

Conservationists plan to propose the Kazhuveli watershed region in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu, for nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.

About World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme

1. About: World Monuments Fund is a private, international, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites around the world through fieldwork, advocacy, grantmaking, education, and training

It is a nomination-based programme that connects local heritage preservation to global awareness and action.

2. **Origin:** It was launched in 1996. It is a biennial program.

3. Significance: It provides a critical platform to raise awareness of and support for heritage places of global significance that are facing pressures relating to the most important global issues of our time. The issue ranges from climate change and under representation to recovery from crisis and beyond.

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Nana Jagannath Shankarseth

Why in the News?

The Maharashtra government recently requested the Ministry of Railways to rename Mumbai Central station after Nana Jagannath Shankarseth.

Who was Nana Jagannath Shankarseth?

Figure 9.Source- The Indian Express

About:
a. He was often called the "architect" of Mumbai (previously Bombay) and was recognized as a social reformer, educator, and philanthropist.
b. He provided invaluable contributions, both ideologically and financially, across numerous sectors, establishing a robust foundation for the city.

Birth– He was born (February 10, 1803) in a wealthy Brahmin family in Murbad,Thane district ,Maharashtra.

Inspired by– He was deeply influenced by the renowned merchant and philanthropist Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy.

Political journey– He was the first Indian to be appointed to the Legislative Council of Bombay.

What are Shankarseth's main contributions?

Education:

1. Shankarseth was dedicated to expanding education in Bombay and donated his family's land for educational purposes.

2. He established the Native School of Bombay, later known as the Bombay Native Institution and then the Board of Education. Eventually, it became the renowned Elphinstone College.

Museum, Temples:

1. Shankarseth was one of the wealthy donors who supported the development of the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Byculla, which was designed by a renowned architect from London.

2. The Bhawani Shankar Temple near Nana Chowk was built by Shankarseth in honor of his late mother, Bhawanibai Murkute.

Railways:

1. The first train journey in India took place on April 16, 1853, between Boribunder and Thane, covering a 34-km route managed by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company.

2. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Nana Shankarseth were part of the committee overseeing the project.

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