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DAILY pre PARE
Current affairs summary for prelims

16 January, 2024

Shankaracharyas and Adi Shakaracharya

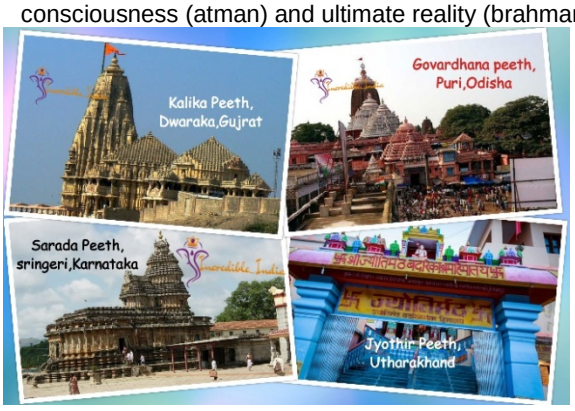
Context: *Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati, the Shankaracharya of the Jyotir Matha Peeth, decided to skip the inauguration of Ram Mandir, citing a lack of adherence to religious scriptures as his reason.*

➢ **Concerns About Temple Consecration:**
- The consecration before the completion of the temple construction is seen as undermining the scriptures.
- Expressing disapproval of the rush, objections have been raised regarding the ongoing consecration process.

➢ **Shankaracharyas:**
- Shankaracharya is a religious title used by heads of four cardinal mathas or peeths.
- Tradition claims these mathas were established by Adi Shankara, dating back to the 8th century.
- Historical evidence for mathas' existence before the 14th century is limited.
- They are considered religious teachers, part of a lineage tracing back to Adi Shankara himself.
- These mathas serve as religious shrines, temples, libraries, and residences, preserving and promoting Shankara's tradition.

➢ **Adi Shankara's Background:**
- Adi Shankara is believed to have been born in Kalady village in Kerala.
- A popular legend involves a crocodile, leading to his mother allowing him to take sanyas (asceticism).
- Adi Shankara was a scholar-monk, challenging philosophical traditions, establishing mathas, and organizing monastic orders.
- He traveled extensively, preaching Advaita Vedanta across India.
- Adi Shankara is identified as the author of numerous works, including commentaries on Upanishads, Brahmasutra, and Bhagavad Gita, although authorship remains disputed.

➢ **Advaita Vedanta Philosophy:**
- Shankara is associated with Advaita Vedanta, a Hindu philosophy emphasizing radical nondualism.
- Advaita Vedanta posits that empirical perceptions are illusory (maya), and brahman is the sole reality, transcending plurality.
- The core of Advaita Vedanta lies in the unity of individual consciousness (atman) and ultimate reality (brahman).



➢ **Legacy of Shankara:**
- Shankara's legacy extends beyond metaphysics and theology.
- His travels are interpreted as a nationalistic project, uniting faith, philosophy, and geography to envision a Hindu India.
- The four cardinal mathas are considered keepers of Hindu faith and traditions.
- The shankaracharyas' refusal to attend the Ayodhya temple inauguration holds significance in this context.

Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum

Context: *The World Economic Forum (WEF) is holding its Annual Meeting from January 15 to 19 in Davos, Switzerland.*

➢ **World Economic Forum (WEF) Overview:**
- The WEF is initiated by German professor Klaus Schwab.
- Founded in 1971 as the European Management Forum, it introduced the concept of "stakeholder capitalism."
- Schwab's vision emphasizes long-term value creation, considering the needs of all stakeholders and society.

➢ **Purpose and Evolution of WEF:**
- Initially focused on European firms catching up with US management practices.
- Expanded focus to global economic and social issues in 1973 due to events like the collapse of Bretton Woods and the Arab-Israeli War.
- Introduced a membership system for the world's leading companies.
- Established partnerships with China's economic development commissions in 1979.

➢ **Annual Meeting at Davos:**
- Davos hosts around 3,000 participants, including investors, business leaders, political figures, economists, celebrities, and journalists.
- The meeting spans up to five days with around 500 sessions addressing global and regional socio-economic issues.
- The WEF is funded largely by partnering corporations, global enterprises with an annual turnover exceeding $5 billion.

➢ **Historical Significance and Diplomacy at Davos:**
- Davos has been a location for pivotal international diplomacy.
- Notable meetings include the first ministerial-level talks between North and South Korea and discussions on German reunification.
- In 1992, South African President de Klerk met Nelson Mandela and Zulu prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi at the Annual Meeting, marking a milestone in the country's political transition.
- The WEF played a role in the formation of the G20, starting as a finance ministers' meeting in 1998 and later elevated to a summit in 2008 to address the global economic crisis.

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- **WEF's Global Rankings and Reports:**
  - The WEF regularly publishes global rankings and indices, such as the Global Competitiveness Report and the Global Gender Gap Report.
  - These reports contribute to discussions on global issues and socio-economic challenges.

Self-Driving Autonomous Machines for Protein Landscape Exploration (SAMPLE)

Context: *AI-run lab creates heat-resistant metabolic protein, a breakthrough in robotics-led biotechnology for potential applications in industry and medicine.*

- **SAMPLE Platform Creation:**
  - The SAMPLE platform is a product of the University of Wisconsin–Madison's biochemistry department.
  - Named "Self-Driving Autonomous Machines for Protein Landscape Exploration (SAMPLE)."
- **Protein Engineering Challenges:**
  - Traditional protein engineering methods are known for being slow, demanding, and inefficient.
  - The process involves generating hypotheses, designing and conducting experiments, and interpreting results.
- **Autonomous AI Operation:**
  - The SAMPLE platform operates autonomously using artificial intelligence (AI).
  - It is capable of learning protein sequence-function relationships.
- **Autonomous Protein Engineering:**
  - Functions as a protein engineer without human intervention.
  - Learns how a protein's structure impacts its function and creates new designs based on that knowledge.
- **Robotic Implementation:**
  - Instructs robotic instruments (lab assistants) to build and test new protein designs.
  - Establishes a continuous feedback loop for learning and discovery.
- **Glycoside Hydrolase Experiment:**
  - The focus of the experiment was on creating versions of the glycoside hydrolase protein that can tolerate higher temperatures.
  - After 20 rounds of experimentation over six months, the self-driving lab produced enzyme versions that could function at temperatures at least 12 degrees Celsius higher than the starting proteins.
- **Time and Efficiency Benefits:**
  - The autonomous system significantly speeds up the process of discovering new protein designs.
  - Reduces chances of error and enhances efficiency compared to manual human work.
- **Broader Applications and Challenges:**
  - Applications extend to industries like biofuels and medicine where proteins that withstand heat are valuable.
  - Challenges include the inherent complexity of biological experiments and the need for integrating advanced analytical instruments.

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- **Human Role and Collaboration:**
  - Human researchers still play a critical role in designing initial hypotheses, selecting target functions, and interpreting broader implications of findings.
  - SAMPLE enhances the capabilities of human researchers, allowing them to focus on more creative and complex aspects of protein engineering.
- **Potential for Unknown Protein Functions:**
  - SAMPLE's approach to learning and optimization opens the possibility of discovering proteins with functions currently unknown or considered too complex using traditional methods.
  - Represents a significant advancement in the field of synthetic biology.
- **Contribution to Scientific Discovery:**
  - The SAMPLE platform promises to significantly speed up the process of scientific discovery in protein engineering.
  - Its ability to operate without human intervention contributes to continuous learning in the field.
- **Importance of Human Expertise:**
  - While SAMPLE is an autonomous system, it doesn't replace human researchers.
  - It enhances human capabilities, enabling researchers to focus on more creative and complex aspects of protein engineering.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Donkey Route

Recently, the Delhi Police has arrested nine people, including four Bangladeshi nationals for sending people to European countries on the basis of illegal documents through 'donkey' route.

About Donkey Route:

- The "Donkey" route **also known as donkey flight**, is an **illegal immigration technique** used for unauthorised entry into foreign countries like the **United States**, **Canada** and the **United Kingdom**.
- The term Dunki" is the Punjabi pronunciation of a donkey, which means "**hopping from one place to another".**
- It begins in **Nicaragua**, where travelers cross through different Central American states.
- The most popular Donkey Route from India to the US involves first reaching a Latin American countries like **Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana, Brazil** and **Venezuela**.
- It is a **contemporary issue** related to illegal immigration and **human trafficking**.
- Illegal migration can lead to clashes between Indian citizens and migrants, **resulting in loss of life and property.**

NACIN

Today, the Prime Minister of India will inaugurate the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) institute at Sri Satyasai district in Andhra Pradesh.

About NACIN:

- NACIN (National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics) is a **civil service training institute** that is part of the Government of India.
- It was established in **1955** and is responsible for training officer trainees of the Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Indirect Taxes).
- It also **provides in-service training for all officers** and **cadres** under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- It is under the administrative control of the Central Board of Excise & Customs (**CBEC**), Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- It has its **headquarter in Faridabad** and **16 Zonal Campuses across India**.

Multidimentional Poverty

Recently, the Niti Aayog has reported as many as 24.82 crore people moved out of multidimensional poverty in nine years to 2022-23, with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh registering the largest decline.

Multidimentional Poverty:

- Multidimensional poverty is a concept that considers the various deprivations that poor people experience in their daily lives.
- These deprivations can include **poor health**, **lack of education** and **poor living standards.**
- The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is based on the idea that poverty is multidimensional, not unidimensional.
- The MPI considers data from **109 countries**.

NITI Ayog:

- The NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) is a **policy think tank** that provides advice to the Indian government on policy issues.
- It was **established in 2015** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to **replace the Planning Commission of India.**

Silverline Butterfly

Recently, a new species of Silverline Butterfly has been identified in the biodiversity hotspots in India's Western Ghats.

About Silverline Butterfly:

- The Conjoined Silverline (**Cigaritis conjuncta**) is a newly discovered butterfly species with distinctive markings on its wings.
- It was first spotted in **2008** but came under extensive research in **2021**.
- It was discovered in **Karnataka's Western Ghats** by a team of scientists from the **National Centre for Biological Sciences** (NCBS-TIFR) in **Bengaluru**, in collaboration with researchers from the **Indian Foundation for Butterflies Trust**.
- It has been found at two sites-**Iruppu Falls** and **Honey Valley**.
- On the upperside of this butterfly, nearly **half of the top wing is black** and there's a shiny blue colour on the lower wings.
- There's an **orange patch** with two **black spots** on the lower wings.

Place in News

Argentina

Recently the Ministry of Mines, Government of India has achieved a significant milestone with the signing of an agreement between Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) and Argentina's State-owned CAMYEN.

Argentina

(Capital: Buenos Aires)

Location: Argentina is a **second-largest country** in South America, located in the southern part of the continent.

Boundaries:

Argentina shares its border with **Uruguay** and the **Atlantic Ocean** (East), **Brazil** (Northeast), **Andes Mountains** (West), **Chile** (South and west), **Bolivia** and **Paraguay** (North) and **The Drake Passage** in South.

Physical Features:

- **Aconcagua is the highest mountain** in the Andes mountain range, located in **Mendoza Province, Argentina.**
- **Laguna del Carbon** is a **salt lake** in Corpen Aike Department, Santa Cruz Province, Argentina.
- **Parana** is a river basin that covers parts of northeastern Argentina, eastern Paraguay and northern Uruguay.
- The **Pampas** extend from the Atlantic coast to the Andean foothills and include the Argentine provinces of **Buenos Aires, La Pampa, Santa Fe, Entre Rios and Cordoba**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which scheme was recently launched by the Karnataka Government to provide financial aid to unemployed graduates and diploma holders? **- Yuva Nidhi scheme**
- In which city of India did the International Camel Festival recently take place? **- Bikaner, Rajasthan**
- Ganga Sagar Mela, India's second-largest fair after Kumbh Mela, is celebrated in which state of India? **- West Bengal**
- Which bank of India has introduced the Green Rupee Term Deposit? **- State Bank of India (SBI)**
- Which ministry is responsible for the PM-eBus Sewa scheme? **- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**