

Special Issue

April (Week 2)

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All about Gujarat's Madhavpur Mela

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *In his radio address programme Mann ki Baat last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had talked about Gujarat's Madhavpur Mela, highlighting its links to Northeast India and terming this "deep bond between India's east and west" part of our "heritage".*

What is the Madhavpur Mela?

- The **Mela is a religio-cultural fair** taking place every year in Madhavpur, a village on the Porbandar coast, also known as Madhavpur Ghed.
- The village has temples of Madhavraji, or Lord Krishna, and his consort Rukmini, believed to have been built in the 15th century.
- It is also known for its sandy sea beach, the turquoise waters of the Arabian Sea, a sea turtle hatchery and the Osho Ashram
- The fair begins on Ram Navami, Lord Rama's birth anniversary falling on the ninth day of the month of Chaitra in the Hindu calendar, and culminates on Tryodashi, the 13th day of the month.

Mythology behind the fair

- The fair celebrates the marriage of Lord Krishna with Rukmini around 4,000 years ago, as per Hindu mythology.
- According to mythology, Lord Krishna had established his kingdom in Dwarka near Porbandar. Rukmini, daughter of King Bhimak of the present-day Arunachal Pradesh, wanted to marry Krishna, while her brother wanted to marry her off to Shishupal, Krishna's cousin. Therefore, Krishna abducted Rukmini, brought her to Gujarat and tied the knot with her at Madhavpur village.
- Today, to mark the wedding, marriage rituals go on for five days. They culminate with the idols of Lord Krishna and Rukmini being taken out in a procession through Madhavpur for 'samaiya', a ritual to welcome the bridegroom back home with his bride.

Significance and scaling-up of the fair

- Gujarat is famous for its cultural fairs, such as the Tarnetar fair in Surendranagar and the livestock fair of Vautha in Dholka.
- Most of these fairs are held in monsoon and winter. The Madhavpur Mela, though unique as it is held in summer — the sea breeze in the coastal village saves it from the worst of the blistering heat – was till five years ago just one of the hundreds of fairs held in the state.
- But in 2018, the state government, in collaboration with the Centre, took over its organisation, with an aim to highlight cultural connections of the Northeast with the western part of the country.
- The government invited Governors and Chief Ministers of Northeastern states to the fair, along with art troupes from the region. A handicraft exhibition is also organised here, and the government presents the fair as an annual effort to integrate the culture of the Northeast with that of the west.
- Till five years ago, the Mela was organised jointly by the Madhavpur village panchayat and the local temple administration on a 23-bigha plot known as 'Mela nu Medan', near Madhavraji temple. But in 2018, the state took on rent farmers' plots around the temple for a larger revelry.
- This year, the government has taken on lease 41 bigha private land for creating parking lots, a helipad where five helicopters can land at a time, a stage for politicians to address the gathering, exhibition ground, etc.
- The government has also hired 100 public transport buses to ferry people of Porbandar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts to Madhavpur free of cost.



Fair's economy

- Earlier, the Madhavpur village panchayat would earn around Rs10 lakh to Rs15 lakh per year by auctioning off space for stalls on the Mela nu Medan. Visitors would mostly be people from villages surrounding Madhavpur.
- But since the government took over, the village panchayat's revenue has increased manifold. In 2022, the government leased land from farmers for some days and gave it to the village panchayat for auction.
- The panchayat generated Rs35 lakh by auctioning off 98 plots for various rides and stalls. Locals selling food items and soft drinks also do swift business.
- However, farmers whose land is taken on lease lose their standing summer crops. The low-lying coastal plain known as Ghed, which includes Madhavpur, remains flooded during monsoon. Therefore, only winter and summer crops are possible in Madhavpur.
- When visited the fair ground, alfalfa crops could be seen on one portion of the fair ground. The state compensates farmers for this crop loss.
- While the compensation rate for this year has not been fixed, sources said the figure of 2018, which was Rs 12,000 per bigha, is likely to be used as the template.

Role of the panchayat

- Since the government took over the task of organising and managing the fair, the panchayat's role is becoming irrelevant. At the inauguration of the ongoing fair on April 10, no one from the panchayat was given a seat on the dais.
- "The panchayat is getting more revenue, but people of Madhavpur are not happy because the religious-cultural fair has been turned into a fair of politics with little regard to traditions," complained Bhanu Bhuva, incumbent sarpanch of Madhavpur.
- Arvind Raiyani, Gujarat's Minister of State for Transport and Tourism, disagreed. "This is a place of heritage value, requiring the government's intervention for its development. Of course it has to be done by taking the village panchayat along, and we are doing that. We had sent invites to everyone but people are not turning up due to differences in ideologies," Raiyani claimed, adding the government's objective was to make the fair a national event and highlight the importance of the Madhavraji temple.

All about colour blindness

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Supreme Court has directed the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) not to exclude candidates suffering from colour blindness from its courses on film making and editing and asked it to make changes to its curriculum instead.*

What is colour blindness?

- Colour blindness, also known as colour deficiency, is the inability to see colours in the normal way. Colour blind individuals often cannot distinguish between certain colours — usually greens and reds, and sometimes blues as well.
- Two types of cells in the retina detect light — the "rods", which distinguish between light and dark, and the "cones" that detect colour. There are three types of cones that see colour — red, green, and blue — and our brains use the information from these cells to perceive colour.



- Colour blindness can be the result of the absence of one or more of these cone cells, or their failure to work properly. In a situation where all three cone cells are present but one of them is malfunctioning, mild colour blindness may occur.
- Colour blindness may be of different kinds and degrees. Mildly colour blind people often see all colours properly only when the light is good; there are others who cannot tell one colour apart from the another no matter how good the light is.
- In the most severe kind of colour blindness, vision is black-and-white, that is, everything appears as a shade of grey. This is not very common.

Clarity usually not affected

- Color blindness generally affects both eyes, and the condition remains roughly the same for as long as the individual is alive.
- Unless the color blindness is of the most severe kind, the sharpness or clarity of vision is not affected. Many people are so mildly colour blind that they do not even realise that they have the condition.
- Colour blindness cannot as yet be treated or reversed. However, it can be corrected to some extent by wearing special contact lenses or colour filter glasses. There is some research that suggests gene replacement therapy can help modify the condition.

Detecting the condition

- In the case of a child, parents can notice the deficiency for the first time when the child is beginning to learn colours. The child may have difficulty in seeing colours or in recognising the brightness of colours in ways that would be considered 'normal'.
- The child may also show an inability to distinguish between shades of the same or similar colours. Parents and teachers often notice the child cannot tell between red and green, and blue and yellow.

What causes colour blindness

- Most colour blind people are born with the condition (congenital colour blindness), but some can develop it later in life. Congenital colour vision deficiencies are usually passed on genetically.
- A problem with colour vision that arises later in life could be the result of disease, trauma, or ingested toxins. If colour blindness arises out of disease, one eye may be affected differently from the other, and the difficulty could worsen over time.
- Medical conditions that may increase the risk of getting colour blindness include glaucoma, diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, alcoholism, leukaemia, and sickle-cell anaemia.

Who is at risk?

- Men suffer from a higher incidence of colour blindness than women. Around the world, every tenth male is estimated to have some form of colour deficiency.
- Men of Northern European descent are considered to be especially vulnerable.



With regard to India, the Supreme Court in the FTII case quoted from the report of the expert committee: "...Estimated 8% of male population and less than 1% female population have red and green colour deficiency being the most common form of colour-blindness."

What you can or cannot do

Colour blindness impairs in some ways the ability to do certain kinds of jobs, such as being a pilot or joining the armed forces. However, whether you can or cannot do these jobs often depends on the severity of the colour blindness, and the rules in place in different jurisdictions.

In June 2020, India's Ministry of Road Transport and Highways amended the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 to enable citizens with mild to medium colour blindness to obtain a driver's licence. The decision was taken after the Ministry received representations that colour blind citizens are not able to get a driver's licence because restrictions specified in the requirements in the declaration about physical fitness (Form I) or the Medical certificate (Form IA) make it difficult, a government release said.

The release noted that medical experts had recommended that mild to medium colour blind citizens should be allowed to drive, and that restrictions should be put only on the severely colour blind citizens. "This is also allowed in other parts of the world," the release said.

The no-confidence vote in Pakistan

(Source: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ArticleView>)

The story so far: For the fourth time in a week, Pakistan will awake to the possibility of a new Prime Minister being chosen by the National Assembly, after surprise moves by now-ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan and his party the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), ensured delay after delay in the process of the no-confidence motion against him. The election of the new PM originally scheduled for April 3, then stipulated under a Supreme Court order to have been held on April 9, is now due to be taken up on Monday. According to state-run media, the National Assembly Secretariat has accepted nomination papers of Shehbaz Sharif, the joint Opposition candidate of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and that of Shah Mahmood Qureshi, PTI Vice Chairman and Mr. Khan's Foreign Minister, to be voted on Monday at 2 p.m.

Why didn't the vote for the new PM take place over the weekend?

Despite very specific stipulations by the Supreme Court on convening the Assembly no-confidence motion vote against Khan no later than 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, the Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser first allowed a lengthy debate on the "foreign conspiracy" allegations levelled by Mr. Khan. In a national address on April 3, Mr. Khan alleged that there was a "regime change operation" underway against him at the behest of the United States. He even named U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu for threatening Pakistan's



Ambassador to the U.S. with consequences for Pakistan if Mr. Khan was allowed to win the confidence vote. In the Assembly, Mr. Qureshi claimed that U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan also called Pakistan National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf, to tell him to stop Mr. Khan from visiting Russia on February 24.

The U.S. has categorically denied the claims. As the day wore on, with no end to the lengthy speeches, it seemed the PTI government would not allow the vote, and rumours went rife through Pakistan's capital, including one that Mr. Khan was dismissing the Army Chief, and another that the Army was gathering forces to take Mr. Khan out forcibly.

Neither proved true however, and minutes before the Supreme Court-laid midnight deadline, the Speaker announced the no-confidence vote. In all, 174 votes were cast against Mr. Khan, two more than the majority mark in the 342-seat Assembly. Speaker Asad Qaider then stepped down, and it wasn't until Sunday that nominations could be called for and scrutinised by the Assembly secretariat.

Does the Opposition have the numbers?

Not since former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's assassination have the two main Opposition parties, which have ruled Pakistan at different times — the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) — formed a government together. After 2008, when the party leaders Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari fell apart, they attempted to form the Pakistan Democracy Movement (PDM) with a number of other parties, but Mr. Zardari soon walked out of that. This time around, the PPP and the PML-N are joined in the effort to oust Mr. Khan with religious parties as well as more secular and regional parties from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Greeting the Assembly after the no-confidence vote, Mr. Zardari's son Bilawal Bhutto took a dig at Mr. Khan's promise of a "Naya Pakistan", which often translated into rejecting and criticising Pakistan's older and more established leaders. "Welcome back to Purana (Old) Pakistan," he said. In a new government under Shehbaz Sharif, all eyes will be on whether Mr. Bhutto will be in the cabinet, with some even speculating a stint in the Foreign Office, even as the new Prime Minister deals with the mammoth challenges, of managing such a massive coalition of parties.

How has Imran Khan reacted to the defeat?

Mr. Khan, who had walked out of the Assembly with his party members before the confidence vote on Saturday, surfaced for party meetings on Sunday. In a tweet, he indicated that he planned to return to the streets to protest what he still maintains is a "foreign conspiracy of regime change". "Pakistan became an independent state in 1947; but the freedom struggle begins again today," Mr. Khan wrote.

Meanwhile PTI senior leader and former Information Minister Fawad Chaudhary indicated that the entire party would resign from the Assembly on Monday, and it remains to be seen if that threat is carried out. The new government elected would, in the absence of any other legal and political hurdles, remain in office for more than a year, with the current Assembly set to be dissolved on or before August 13, 2023, and general elections held by October 2023.

What other challenges would Shehbaz Sharif, if elected, face?

In a strange coincidence, Mr. Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Sharif, who is in the running as the next Chief Minister of Punjab, are also due to appear before a special court for indictment on Monday, the same day he expects to be elected in the National Assembly.

Mr. Sharif and his son have rejected the allegations in the case that was brought against them by federal authorities in 2019 for "money laundering" — an amount totalling PKR 14 billion (\$75 million). Mr. Shehbaz Sharif called the "money laundering case" registered in the U.K. a political conspiracy by Mr. Khan. Both he and his son had been arrested in the case, and are now out on bail. Significantly, within hours of Mr. Khan losing the vote, the chief investigating officer in the case went on leave, anticipating a "certain transfer" if the government were to change. While the case itself may not pose much of a problem for Mr. Sharif, there are a number of other challenges any new government must face in terms of stemming the losses in the Pakistani economy, dealing with the situation in Afghanistan, terrorism domestically, and rebuilding ties with countries like India and the U.S., which have been in a state of disrepair during Mr. Khan's tenure.