

Brazil's Rio Carnival 2023

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In news— Often described as the world's biggest party, Brazil's Rio Carnival 2023 kicked off on February 17.

About the festival-

- It is an annual festival of Brazil, full of colour, music and life.
- While Rio in Brazil certainly seems to have one of the biggest and brightest celebrations, the carnival is not unique to the region.
- **The word Carnival originates from the Portuguese 'Carne Vale', interpreted as 'Farewell to meat'.**
- Though the loud celebrations do not indicate it, the parades and dances are actually one last hurrah full of extravagance and indulgence before a period of abstinence, termed '**Lent**' by Christians.
- This period lasts up to the Easter holiday, the day when it is believed that Jesus Christ rose from the dead after his crucifixion. Lent is normally observed for 40 days.
- The Rio celebration begins just a week before 'Ash Wednesday' and parties begin in December.
- The first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday falls on February 22 this 2023— when the Carnival in Rio ends.
- Many churches hold an Ash Wednesday service, during which the priest or pastor will dip a finger into ashes and mark a cross on each congregant's forehead, saying, 'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
- **The 40-day period for fasting and abstinence is in imitation of the story of Jesus Christ's fasting in the wilderness,** where the devil tempted him many times.
- **Lent also sees Christians give up certain items or activities,** perhaps chocolates or other cravings, as a kind of personal test to resist temptation and reaffirm

their commitment towards spirituality.

- **As per The Economist, the 'carnival' concept has its origins even earlier – beginning with the Pagans in Egypt** to “usher out winter” and welcome Spring.
- With the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great, the idea made its way to Europe and that is when Christian associations were overlaid.
- With the European colonisation of South America, traditions combined to result in the grand celebrations we see today in Brazil.
- Street parties, known as blocos, are another important aspect of this carnival. Then there is the **Samba dance, a mix of Afro-Brazilian traditions**. Many Samba schools pop up around this time for learning the dance.
- Rio is not the only city to have its celebrations, with various Brazilian towns having their own parades. In many Latino Carnivals, one highlight is the crowning of a King Momo, usually “a large gentleman” who leads the carnival parade.
- **It added that around 50 countries celebrate their versions of the festival. In India, Goa also witnesses this festival, which was introduced after the Portuguese arrival.**
- In 2023 too, there were celebrations near the river Mandovi in Panjim. According to the Goa Department of Tourism, in the pre-Christian era, Carnival marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring.
- According to the Goa Department of Tourism, King Momo, or the king of Chaos, is a character derived from the Greek god Momus, the god of satire.
- The court of King Momo in Goa is usually made up of fire eaters, jesters, dancers, a brass band and other revellers on the streets of Panaji, whilst the King encourages people to “Kha, piye aani majja kar (Eat, drink and make merry)”.