

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-343
ANSWERED ON-06/02/2025

RECOGNITION OF BALI JATRA AS A NATIONAL FAIR

343. SHRI DEBASHISH SAMANTARAY
DR. SASMIT PATRA

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether any steps have been taken to confer the status of a National Maritime Heritage Festival to Odisha's Bali Jatra festival, recognizing its historical significance in celebrating ancient maritime trade and cultural heritage;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, including the timeline and criteria considered for granting such status; and
- (c) if not, whether Government will consider initiating such steps to promote Bali Jatra as a symbol of India's maritime legacy and enhance its visibility at a national and international level?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM

(SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

(a) to (c) Bali Jatra is a festival that commemorates the maritime trade and cultural exchange between Odisha and Southeast Asian countries, particularly Bali. The festival is celebrated annually in Cuttack, Odisha, and attracts million of visitors. The term Bali Jatra literally means 'Voyage to Bali'. Every year Kartika Purnima marks the day that the seafaring traders departed for the Indonesian islands. For this festival, people of Odisha gather in large numbers in colourful attire to celebrate their glorious maritime history. The celebration features grand fairs, elaborate rides, food and dance. Indian women perform 'Boita Bandana', they make boats of paper or banana leaf (sholapith) with lighted lamps inside and float them down the Mahanadi as a part of the celebrations. The Bali Jatra celebrates the ingenuity and skill of those expert sailors who made Kalinga, one of the most prosperous empires of its time.

The festival is organized by Department of Culture and Tourism, Govt. of Odisha. Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC), Kolkata, an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture, participates in this event by way of providing cultural troupes during the Jatra for organizing cultural programmes, the details of which are as under:

Year	Name of the programme	Date	Venue	Art form presented
2022-23	BaliJatra Cuttack Utsav – 2022	8 to 16 Nov, 2022	Cuttack	Bihu, Nagara, Kuchipudi, Purulia Chhau, & Jhumar Dance
2023-24	BaliJatra Cuttack Utsav – 2023	27 Nov to 4 Dec, 2023	Cuttack	Purulia Chhau, Paika, Contemporary Dance & Odissi
2024-25	BaliJatra Cuttack Utsav – 2024	15 to 22 Nov, 2024	Cuttack	Bihu, Kathak, Purulia Chhau& Ruff/ Dogri

Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a three-day National Dhara event 'Samudramanathan' was organized at the Odisha Maritime Museum at Cuttack to focus on the State's glorious seafaring history, coinciding with the inauguration of the historic Bali Jatra. The event included panel and round-table discussions on the country's maritime history locations, traditions, ship building, navigation, trade and cultural exchange, maritime security and international law.

The Jatra facilitates cultural exchange between Odisha and other States, promoting cross-cultural understanding. The Jatra also provides a platform for traditional Odia artists, craftsmen and musicians to showcase their skills which help to revive and promote Odia Culture.
