

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 95
ANSWERED ON 15.12.2022

**NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE FESTIVAL STATUS FOR BALI JATRA OF
CUTTACK, ODISHA**

*95. DR. SASMIT PATRA:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is considering providing National Maritime Heritage Festival status for Bali Jatra of Cuttack in the State of Odisha;
- (b) whether Government has received letter from the State Government of Odisha in this regard; and
- (c) if so, the details of the status of the proposal?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF CULTURE, TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH
EASTERN REGION
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

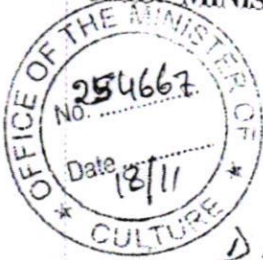
(a) to (c): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (c) IN RESPECT OF
RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 95 FOR REPLY ON 15.12.2022
REGARDING NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE FESTIVAL STATUS FOR BALI
JATRA OF CUTTACK, ODISHA ASKED BY DR. SASMIT PATRA**

(a) No, Sir. There is no such scheme for giving status to any festival as National Maritime Heritage Festival.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) A formal letter dated 12.11.2019 from the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha (**Annexure-I**) was received in the Ministry of Culture with the suggestion to consider the socio cultural importance of 'Bali Jatra' festival of Cuttack, Odisha and to accord it the status of a 'National Maritime Heritage Festival'. The matter was examined in this Ministry and a formal reply was sent to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha from the then Hon'ble Culture Minister on 24.12.2019 (**Annexure-II**) stating that the issue of granting the status of National Festival to any festival did not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Culture. However, taking into consideration the socio cultural importance of Bali Jatra Festival in Odisha, the Government has been providing cultural support through its Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC), Kolkata. Further, under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav a three-day National Dhara event 'Samudramanthan' had been 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 roundtable discussions on the country's maritime history locations, traditions, ship building, navigation, trade and cultural exchange, maritime security and international law. Brief details of the event are at **Annexure-III**.

Annexure-I referred to in reply to part (c) of the Rajya Sabha Starred Question
No. 95 for 15.12.2022NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHALOKA SEVA BHAVAN
BHUBANESWARD.O. No. LM. 31/2019-127/CM
12. 11. 2019

D. Shri Patel ji,

Bali Yatra (also known as Boitabandana) is an ancient festival held in the city of Cuttack in Odisha to commemorate the glorious tradition of Seafaring activities of Odia mariners (Sadhavas). It marks the days when ancient Sadhavas (Odia Sailors) would set sail to distant lands of Bali, as well as Java, Sumatra and Borneo for trade and cultural expansion. They sailed in large vessels called Boitas. This rich legacy is observed through the celebration of Bali Yatra. The festival begins in the month of November on the full-moon day of Kartika (Purnima) and continues for seven to ten days. It is celebrated annually as a large open fair and is considered to be one of the most celebrated festivals of Odisha.

The maritime heritage and overseas trade related achievements of ancient India are evident in Indus Seals. On Eastern seaboard it was Odia Mariners (Sadhavas) who have been the torchbearers of the Indian maritime prowess since ancient times. The footprints of this enterprise are evident in the South Eastern regions particularly in Bali, Java and Sumatra. People of Indian origin in general are known as 'Klings' in the South Eastern countries and this could be indicating of the old association with Kalinga in terms of trade and cultural exchanges. The recalled public memories of this age old maritime trade-centric traditions have taken the form of "Bali Yatra" (The journey to Bali) an annual festival in Odisha.

The tell-take markers of cultural interactions between eastern parts of India, particularly of ancient Kalinga can easily be observed in the customs and traditions of Bali, particularly in language, cuisine, dress, dance forms, rituals etc. In that sense, the "Bali Yatra" of Cuttack and the identical cultural traits in Bali reminds us of this legacy.

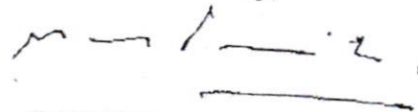
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As India looks to the East to revive the age-old contacts with South East Asia aiming at mutual economic growth of India and the countries in that region, I would be appropriate and timely that Bali Yatra which celebrates the enterprising spirit of the ancient India is recognized at the National Level so that the daring initiatives of our seafaring ancestors are duly recollected and acknowledged.

The Bali Yatra is an integral part of the cultural ethos of Odisha. It is deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of the Odia people. Bali Yatra is the signature festival of Cuttack, the Millennium City. Hence, I would suggest you to kindly consider the social cultural importance of "Bali Yatra" festival and accord it the status of a 'National Maritime Heritage Festival'. And, I am sure that would be a befitting tribute to our heritage and on inspiration for our future.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(NAVEEN PATNAIK)

SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL,
Minister of Tourism & Culture,
Government of India,
New Delhi-110001.

Letter in Eng

ANNEXURE-II

**Annexure-II referred to in reply to part (c) of the Rajya Sabha Starred Question
No. 95 for 15.12.2022**

प्रहलाद सिंह पटेल
Prahlad Singh Patel

संस्कृति एवं पर्यटन राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभार)
भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली
Minister of State for Culture & Tourism (IC)
Government of India, New Delhi

D.O. No. 28-1/2019-ZCC

Hon'ble Shri Chief Minister Ji
Regards,

Please refer to your D.O. letter No. UM-31/2019-127/CM dated 12 November, 2019 wherein you have suggested that 'Bali Yatra Utsav' which is held in Odisha be accorded the status of a National Festival.

The mandate of Ministry of Culture is to protect, preserve and promote various forms of folk art and culture throughout the country. In so far as the issue relating to accord the status of a National Festival to Bali Yatra Utsav is concerned, I would like to inform you that declaring a Festival as a National Festival does not come under the purview of Ministry of Culture.

Regards,

Sd/-
(Prahlad Singh Patel)
24/12

Shri Naveen Patnaik,
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Odisha,
Secretariat, Secretariat Marg,
Bhubaneswar - 751001

ANNEXURE-III

Annexure-III referred to in reply to part (c) of the Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 95 for 15.12.2022

Samudramanthan - a Dhara Event inaugurated in Odisha

A three-day National Dhara event 'Samudramanthan' organised under the aegis of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' in Odisha to focus on the State's glorious seafaring history and create the Vision Document on Maritime Traditions - 2047 was kicked off in Bhubaneswar on 8th November, 2022.

Coinciding with the inauguration of the historic Bali Jatra at nearby Cuttack, the event was organized by the Indian Knowledge System Division of Ministry of Education in association with the Ministry of Culture and SOA. The event included panel and roundtable discussions on the country's maritime history locations, traditions, ship building, navigation, trade and cultural exchange, maritime security and international law held at the Odisha Maritime Museum at Cuttack.

During the inaugural programme, the speakers highlighted India's ancient maritime exploits saying it was the only country after which an ocean had been named. India wielded enormous influence in South East Asia through its trade, culture and geo-politics during the time and that efforts were on to revive the ancient 'stitched ship technology' practised by Indians to build ships centuries ago.

'Samudramanthan' is a part of the Dhara series of events which focus on India's past history and achievements while endeavouring to connect the same with the present and prepare an action plan for the next 25 years. The Dhara events held so far include India's contribution to the field of mathematics, India's calendar system, Astrophysics and Astronomy, Ayurveda and Martial Arts. The program on maritime tradition was planned in Odisha because of the state's glorious tradition in the field.