

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-30
ANSWERED ON- 29/01/2026

NATIONAL FESTIVAL STATUS TO CUTTACK BALI YATRA

30. SHRI DEBASHISH SAMANTARAY:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has received a proposal to accord National festival status to Cuttack Bali Yatra in Odisha;
- (b) the cultural and historical significance attached to Bali Yatra in the context of India's maritime heritage;
- (c) whether any expert committee has examined the proposal;
- (d) the financial assistance provided by the Central Government for Bali Yatra during the last five years; and
- (e) the timeline by when a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
(SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

- (a) Yes, Sir. A formal letter was received in the Ministry of Culture in 2019 from the then Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha with the suggestion to consider the socio cultural importance of 'Bali Yatra' festival of Cuttack, Odisha and to accord it the status of a 'National Maritime Heritage Festival'.

There is no such scheme in the Ministry of Culture for granting the status of National Festival to any festival/event. However, taking into consideration, the socio cultural importance of Bali Yatra Festival in Odisha, the Government has been providing cultural support through its Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC), Kolkata (an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture). Further, under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a three-day National Dhara event 'Samudramanthan' 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 Yatra. 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 Yatra facilitates cultural exchange between Odisha and other States, promoting cross-cultural understanding. The Yatra also provides a platform for traditional Odia artists, craftsmen and musicians to showcase their skills which help to revive and promote Odia Culture.

- (b) Bali Yatra 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 Yatra 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 Yatra celebrates the ingenuity and skill of those expert sailors who made Kalinga, one of the most prosperous empires of its time.

(c) No such committee has been constituted to examine the proposal.

(d) No financial assistance is provided by Ministry of Culture for organization of Bali Yatra as the festival is organized by Department of Culture and Tourism, Govt. of Odisha. EZCC, Kolkata, participates every year in this event by way of providing cultural troupes during the Yatra for organizing cultural programmes, the details of which are as under:

Year	Name of the programme	Date	Venue	Art form presented
2022-23	Bali Yatra Cuttack Utsav – 2022	8 to 16 Nov, 2022	Cuttack	Bihu, Nagara, Kuchipudi, Purulia Chhau, & Jhumar Dance
2023-24	Bali Yatra Cuttack Utsav – 2023	27 Nov to 4 Dec, 2023	Cuttack	Purulia Chhau, Paika, Contemporary Dance & Odissi
2024-25	Bali Yatra Cuttack Utsav – 2024	15 to 22 Nov, 2024	Cuttack	Bihu, Kathak, Purulia Chhau & Ruff/ Dogri
2025-26	Bali Yatra Cuttack Utsav – 2025	5 to 13 Nov, 2025	Cuttack	Kathak, Bengali Folk Dance & Manipuri Dance

(e) Does not arise, in view of the reply given in part (b) above.
