

Regarding need to nominate the festival of 'Balijatra' observed in Odisha in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO- laid

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Balijatra, which translates to "Voyage to Bali," is a festival that commemorates Kalinga's rich maritime heritage and its ancient trade links with Southeast Asian countries, including Bali, Java, Sumatra, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Held on the banks of the Mahanadi River during the auspicious month of Kartika, the festival showcases a vibrant amalgamation of cultural practices, traditional crafts, folk performances, and rituals that have been preserved and celebrated for centuries. This festival is not only a reflection of Odisha's glorious past but also serves as a living tradition, connecting people across generations through shared cultural expressions. From the symbolic floating of miniature boats ("boita bandana") to the display of traditional crafts and cuisines, Balijatra exemplifies the intangible cultural heritage that deserves global recognition and preservation. The inclusion of Balijatra in UNESCO's Representative List will promote culture diversity, enhance tourism, preserve heritage and encourage community participation. Given the cultural and historical importance of Balijatra, I request the Government to take the necessary steps to nominate this festival for UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The support of the Ministry of Culture will be instrumental in achieving this recognition and bringing global attention to one of India's most cherished traditions.