

Baliyatra

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In news— In his address to the Indian diaspora in Bali on the sidelines of the G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the annual Baliyatra on the banks of the Mahanadi in Cuttack, which celebrates the ancient trade relations between India and Indonesia.

What is Baliyatra ?

- **Baliyatra, literally 'voyage to Bali', is one of the country's largest open-air fairs,** which is organised every year to **commemorate the 2,000-year-old maritime and cultural links between ancient Kalinga (today's Odisha) and Bali and other South and Southeast Asian regions** like Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma (Myanmar) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- The origins of the festival, which **begins on Kartik Purnima** (full moon night in the month of Kartik) can be traced back more than 1,000 years.
- The Bay of Bengal region had several ports, and sadhavas (traders) traditionally began their voyage across the sea on this auspicious day, when the winds were favourable for the boats, **known as boita, to sail.**
- According to historians, **popular items of trade between Kalinga and Southeast Asia included pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, silk, camphor, gold, and jewellery.**
- Even today, thousands of people across Odisha sail decorative miniature boats made of banana stems, paper, or thermocol to celebrate boita bandana, or the worshipping of the boats.
- The festival is organised by the Cuttack district administration and Cuttack Municipal Corporation in association with several other government agencies.
- Besides the cultural and historical aspects, Baliyatra has an important commercial dimension.

- It has also found a place in the Guinness World Records for achieving an impressive feat of origami, the creation of beautiful paper sculptures.