

Captain Rahul Bali Calls for Positioning Odisha as a Global Tourism and Film Production Hub at National CEO Conclave 2026

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Acclaimed Film Producer, Cultural Diplomat and Indian Army Veteran Captain Rahul Bali delivered a powerful keynote address at the prestigious 2nd National CEO Conclave 2026 held in Bhubaneswar, where he outlined a transformative vision for positioning Odisha as a leading global destination for tourism, culture, film production and the creative economy.



Captain Rahul Bali & Dr. Madan Mohan Sethi

The conclave organised by Interview Times, brought together dignitaries like Honourable Member of Parliament Shri R.N. Behera, CEO of Startup Odisha Sh. S.R. Pradhan IAS, Consul General of India in Auckland Dr. Madan Mohan Sethi, Padma Shri Dr. Ashok Mahapatra, CEO of TPCODL Sh. Gajanan S. Kale and Chairman Kiri Industries Sh. Manish Kiri as well as distinguished policymakers, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, diplomats, academicians and business executives from across India to deliberate on Odisha's growth trajectory and its vision for becoming a developed and globally competitive state.

Addressing the gathering, Captain Rahul Bali presented his keynote titled **"Celebrating Odisha – Building a Global Destination Through Culture, Art & Tourism"**, highlighting how

Odisha's extraordinary cultural heritage, spiritual traditions, artistic excellence, natural beauty and tourism assets can be strategically leveraged to drive economic growth, investment and international visibility.

Captain Bali commended the Government of Odisha under the leadership of **Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Mohan Charan Majhi** for its commitment towards accelerating economic development, infrastructure creation, tourism promotion and investment attraction.

He also lauded the efforts of Dr. Dibyajit Sahu in making the National CEO Conclave Odisha a distinguished platform for showcasing Odisha's potential to national and global audiences.

"The National CEO Conclave is a visionary initiative that brings together government, industry and thought leaders to collectively shape the future of Odisha. Such platforms play a vital role in showcasing the state's immense potential and positioning Odisha as a destination for investment, innovation, tourism and cultural excellence," said **Captain Rahul Bali**.

During his keynote address, Captain Bali emphasized that Odisha possesses all the ingredients required to emerge as one of Asia's most compelling tourism destinations. He said, *"Odisha is one of India's greatest untold stories. The state already possesses world-class heritage, spirituality, culture, art, nature and authentic experiences. The opportunity lies in creating greater visibility, stronger storytelling and impactful global positioning."*

Drawing on his international experience in filmmaking and destination promotion, Captain Rahul Bali highlighted how cinema has become one of the world's most effective tools for tourism marketing. Citing global examples and his landmark Indo-Vietnam feature film *Love in Vietnam*, he explained how films, festivals and the creative economy—including media, arts and cultural experiences—can boost tourism, attract investment, generate employment and strengthen a destination's global brand. *"Culture is no longer merely a heritage asset to be preserved. It is economic capital that can create jobs, generate tourism revenues, attract investment and build a strong global identity."*

Captain Rahul Bali further advocated the need to position Odisha as a preferred destination for domestic and international film productions by promoting filmmaker-friendly policies, streamlined permissions and stronger engagement with the global film industry.

He proposed a long-term vision that includes a Global Film Odisha Mission, an internationally recognized Odisha International Film Festival, enhanced destination branding initiatives under an Experience Odisha Campaign and a greater integration of culture, tourism and creative industries into the state's economic development strategy.

His keynote received an enthusiastic response from visionary business leaders, policymakers and delegates who appreciated the practical roadmap presented by him for leveraging Odisha's cultural and tourism strengths as engines of economic transformation around the core theme of **"Viksit Odisha 2030"** and nation-building.

Meeting with Chief Secretary of Odisha

Following his keynote address, Captain Rahul Bali held a meaningful interaction with the Chief Secretary of Odisha, Ms. Anu Garg, IAS, in the presence of the Honourable Consul General of India in Auckland, New Zealand, Dr. Madan Mohan Sethi.

During the interaction, Captain Rahul Bali shared his vision of positioning Odisha as a premier destination for domestic and international film productions, highlighting the role of cinema in promoting tourism and destination branding. He discussed showcasing Odisha's rich heritage, culture and natural beauty through films and expressed his interest in exploring the state as a location for one of his forthcoming film projects in collaboration with the film industry.

Ms. Anu Garg appreciated the potential of film-led destination promotion and welcomed the exchange of ideas on how the creative industries can contribute to tourism development, investment attraction and economic growth. The discussion reflected a shared interest in exploring opportunities that could further strengthen Odisha's positioning as an attractive destination for filmmaking, tourism and cultural engagement.

The presence of Dr. Madan Mohan Sethi, Honourable Consul General of India in Auckland, added an international perspective to the discussions and underscored the growing importance of cultural diplomacy, tourism promotion and creative collaborations in strengthening India's global outreach.

A Vision for Odisha's Global Future

Concluding his address, Captain Rahul Bali expressed confidence that Odisha is uniquely positioned to emerge as one

of India's leading destinations for tourism, culture, film production and investment.

"Tourism is not built by monuments alone. It is built through stories, experiences, festivals, films and emotional connections. Odisha has all the ingredients necessary to become a globally admired destination. With visionary leadership, strategic collaboration and effective storytelling, the state can create a powerful model of sustainable and inclusive growth," said **Bali**.

The keynote and subsequent discussions reinforced the growing recognition of culture, tourism and creative industries as important pillars of economic development and highlighted the significant opportunities that lie ahead for Odisha in the years to come.

About Captain Rahul Bali

Captain Rahul Bali is an Indian Army Veteran, Film Producer, Entrepreneur, Festival Curator and Cultural Diplomat. He is the Producer of Love in Vietnam and the upcoming international feature film SILAA, and has played a significant role in strengthening cultural, tourism and economic ties between India and several countries through cinema, festivals and international collaborations.

