

Press Release from
Tourism & Civil Aviation Department,
Government of Sikkim
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A Post-Budget webinar on Tourism, Hospitality, Skills and Sports was organized on 9th March 2026 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, under the theme “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas – Fulfilling Aspirations of People.”

The webinar aimed to strategise an action plan for the implementation of tourism-related announcements made in the Union Budget 2026–27, with a focus on diversifying India’s tourism offerings, strengthening traditional, cultural, and natural assets of the region and promoting balanced development.

The webinar witnessed participation from various Ministries under the Government of India, representatives from the State Governments and Union Territories, along with experts and stakeholders from the Tourism, Hospitality, Skills and Sports sectors.

The webinar was addressed by the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi who emphasized on the importance and impact of tourism related initiatives on livelihood generation, economic prosperity, social upliftment and emergence of potential destination into a globally competitive tourism destination.

In his address, the Hon’ble Prime Minister highlighted several key initiatives aimed at strengthening India’s tourism ecosystem. He announced the establishment of a National Institute of Hospitality which had been conceived to bridge academia, industry and government, thereby strengthening professional capacity and capability in the hospitality sector. He further informed that 10,000 tourist guides will be up-skilled through a 12-week training programme across 20 iconic destinations, in collaboration with the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), with the objective of enhancing service standards and visitor experience.

The Hon’ble Prime Minister also announced the creation of a National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid, which will digitally document India’s cultural, spiritual and heritage sites, enabling better promotion and knowledge sharing of the country’s tourism assets. Emphasizing the importance of sustainable tourism, he further highlighted the development of eco-sustainable tourism trails, including mountain trails, turtle trails and bird-watching trails, aimed at promoting responsible tourism while conserving natural ecosystems.

The discussions during the webinar primarily focused on key tourism-related announcements made in the Union Budget 2026–27, including:

Creation of five tourism destinations in Purvodaya States (Para 89).

Development of Buddhist circuits in the North-East (Para 90).

Development of ecologically sustainable tourism trails (Para 69).

Shri.C. S. Rao, IFS, Additional Chief Secretary represented the Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Sikkim in the webinar. He was accompanied by Ms. Hondala Gyaltzen, Secretary, Shri Neeraj Pradhan, PCE-cum-Secretary, and Smt. Dr. Prerna Chamling, Special Secretary from the Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Sikkim.

Shri. Rao was invited to share his opinion on the proposed Buddhist Circuit in the North-East. In his address Shri. Rao highlighted the rich history and heritage of Buddhism in Sikkim. He strongly emphasized the immense potential of the State of Sikkim as one of the country’s leading Buddhist tourism destinations. He reinforced his observations by highlighting Sikkim’s rich cultural and spiritual heritage, including the presence of some of the oldest monasteries in the region, and provided an overview of the current status of Buddhist tourism in the State.

He further appraised the august gathering of the steadily increasing tourist footfall, including both domestic and international pilgrims visiting Sikkim. He also highlighted the presence of key monasteries and cultural assets that distinguish the State as a prominent Buddhist destination, and noted that the recent budget announcements could further strengthen tourism offerings and connectivity in the region.

He also highlighted the role of the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Government of Sikkim, a dedicated department entrusted with the holistic development, preservation, and promotion of Buddhism in the State. He further underscored the uniqueness of the Sangha Constituency, which exists exclusively in Sikkim.

Elaborating on the Government of Sikkim’s commitment to safeguarding and promoting Buddhist heritage, he referred to initiatives such as the notification of sacred sites, the prohibition of animal slaughter during auspicious occasions, and the continued observance of traditional religious events, including the recently concluded Bhumchu Festival at Tashiding Monastery.

He further proposed that the Buddhist Conclave 2026 be organized in Sikkim, which was positively received by the Ministry. He also suggested the formulation of a Buddhist Heritage Master Plan for NE, by mapping important monasteries and Buddhist circuits, which was duly noted by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER). The proposal was also supported by Shri Abhijeet Halder, Director General, International Buddhist Confederation.

Deliberations were held among the participating Ministries, State Governments, experts, and stakeholders, focusing on coordinated planning and the effective implementation of tourism initiatives announced in the Union Budget. The discussions underscored the importance of enhanced collaboration, convergence of schemes, and alignment of efforts to strengthen India’s tourism ecosystem.

In his remarks, the Hon’ble Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, emphasized the need to ensure optimal utilization and maximum impact of the budgetary allocations announced for the tourism sector. He stated that India possesses immense potential to emerge as a global leader in holistic tourism development, supported by its rich cultural diversity and abundant natural resources.

He further highlighted sports tourism as an emerging avenue, the development of technology-driven experience centres, and the importance of capacity building among tourism stakeholders to unlock the full potential of the Indian tourism sector. He also emphasized the need to promote excellence in hospitality and tourism skills, including the upskilling and reskilling of tour guides.

He also emphasized on the promotion of community-based tourism, the creation of a holistic development and management plan for tourist destinations, and reiterated the importance of establishing the National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid to digitally document and promote tourism assets across the country.

Emphasizing the importance of sustainability in tourism development, he called for greater coherence and synergy among Central Ministries, State Governments and tourism stakeholders, and encouraged all stakeholders to work in close coordination to achieve the vision of the Hon’ble Prime Minister for strengthening and transforming the tourism sector in India.

The webinar concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the Union Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.