



Employment News

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Tourism and the Architecture of Growth

Tourism is a major source of employment in India, generating jobs not only in hotels and travel services but also in transport, handicrafts, and related sectors. It supports livelihoods across regions, including less-developed areas. According to the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025, the sector accounts for 13.34% of total employment (5.82% direct) and contributes 5.22% to GDP (2.72% direct).

Recognising its importance, the Union Budget 2026-27 identifies tourism as a key growth sector and proposes measures such as skill development through a National Institute of Hospitality and training of tourist guides, development of heritage and experiential destinations, creation of digital tourism platforms, and improvements in infrastructure and connectivity. Overall, the focus is on job creation, better services, and sustainable growth.

Thematic and Destination-Led Tourism Development

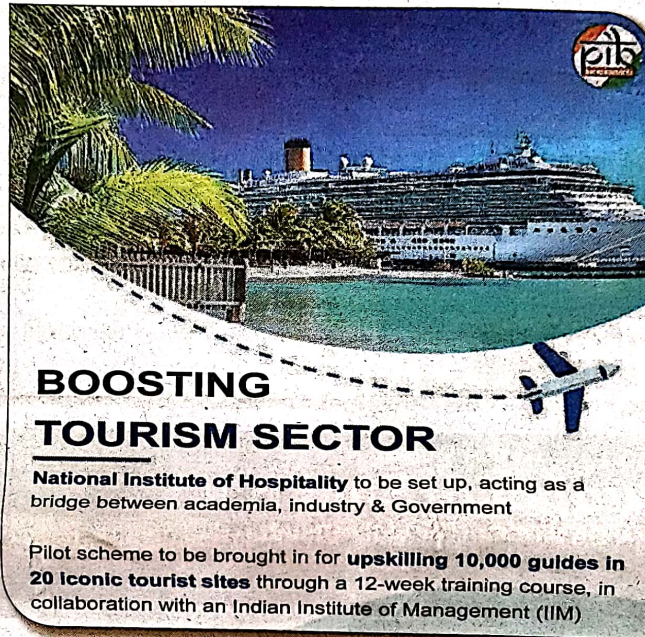
The government has announced a new scheme to develop Buddhist tourism circuits in the North-Eastern states-Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Sikkim, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura. The aim is to develop these areas as important global destinations for Buddhist and spiritual tourism.

Key measures include preservation and development of temples and monasteries, setting up interpretation centres to improve visitor understanding, better road and transport connectivity, and creation of pilgrim facilities and heritage infrastructure. These steps are expected to attract both domestic and international tourists while supporting local livelihoods.

This initiative builds on earlier programmes like the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, which focused on developing theme-based tourist circuits with improved infrastructure and visitor amenities. It has now been upgraded to Swadesh Darshan 2.0, which emphasises sustainable tourism, conservation of cultural and natural heritage, and community participation. So far, 76 projects have been approved under the scheme, with most already completed, showing strong progress in improving tourism infrastructure across India.

Eco-Trails and Connectivity

The Budget emphasises nature-based and sustainable tourism, proposing the development of ecologically sustainable mountain and nature trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Araku Valley in the Eastern Ghats and Podhigai Malai in the Western



BOOSTING TOURISM SECTOR

National Institute of Hospitality to be set up, acting as a bridge between academia, industry & Government

Pilot scheme to be brought in for **upskilling 10,000 guides in 20 iconic tourist sites** through a 12-week training course, in collaboration with an Indian Institute of Management (IIM)

Ghats. Initiatives such as turtle trails along key nesting sites in the coastal areas of Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala and bird-watching trails along the Pulicat Lake in Andhra Pradesh aim to leverage India's biodiversity and promote eco-tourism.

In addition, expansion of rail and regional connectivity, including high-speed rail and improved access to remote areas, is expected to facilitate tourism mobility and enhance accessibility to emerging and established destinations. These measures are designed to integrate tourism planning with infrastructure development, providing visitors with seamless access while promoting local economic growth and sustainability.

Global Positioning: Big Cat Summit 2026

India will host the first-ever Global Big Cat Summit in 2026, bringing together leaders from 95 countries to discuss conservation, habitat protection, research, and sustainable wildlife tourism. This highlights India's growing role in global wildlife cooperation and eco-tourism.

India is already leading efforts through the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), a global organisation for big cat conservation, with its headquarters in India and support from multiple countries. With five of the world's seven big cat species - tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, and cheetah - India has a strong natural advantage in this area.

Hosting the summit will boost India's global visibility as a wildlife tourism destination, attract more international visitors, and encourage improvements in infrastructure and visitor facilities around national parks. At the same time, it can create more jobs and income opportunities for local communities, while promoting tourism that respects and protects nature.

Institutional and Human Capital Reforms

The Budget proposes steps to improve skills and strengthen institutions in the tourism and hospitality sector. One major step is upgrading the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology into a National Institute of Hospitality. This new institute will offer better quality education, courses that match industry needs, research opportunities, and international partnerships. It is also expected to act as a link between education, industry, and the government.

Another important initiative is a pilot programme to train 10,000 tourist guides across 20 major destinations. This programme will be run with an Indian Institute of Management and will follow a 12-week hybrid format, combining classroom learning, field training, and online modules. The aim is to improve the quality of guides, enhance tourist experiences, and create more employment opportunities.

These efforts will add to existing programmes by the Ministry of Tourism,

such as Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) and the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF), which focus on improving skills and professionalism in tourism services. Overall, these measures aim to build a skilled workforce and improve the quality of tourism services across the country.

Digital and Heritage Infrastructure

The Budget proposes new steps to use technology and improve heritage sites to support tourism. One key initiative is the creation of a National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid. This will be an online platform that collects and shares information about India's cultural, spiritual, and heritage sites. It will help researchers, historians, content creators, and tourists access reliable information. It will also support better planning, improve the visibility of destinations, and help in managing heritage sites more effectively.

The Budget also plans to develop 15 important archaeological sites-such as Lothal, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Samath, Hastinapur, and Leh Palace-into engaging tourist destinations. This will include building walkways, interpretation



centres, visitor facilities, and improving conservation efforts so that tourists can have a more immersive experience.

These steps build on existing government schemes like Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and SASCI, which support tourism infrastructure and heritage development, as well as the PRASHAD scheme focused on pilgrimage sites. Overall, the aim is to preserve India's heritage while promoting sustainable tourism and involving local communities.

Medical Tourism and Wellness Integration

The Union Budget 2026-27 proposes a new scheme to help states set up five Regional Medical Hubs. The aim is to make India a leading destination for medical and wellness tourism. These hubs will bring together modern healthcare services, AYUSH-based

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