

Published Date:	30 Jan 2025	Publication:	Morning India [Kolkata]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	4
Circulation:	24,992		

Conference tourism to get priority at Bengal GB Summit

MI News Service, Kolkata: Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) are expected to be a focus area for the hospitality sector in the upcoming Bengal Global Business Summit on February 5 and 6, with the state showcasing its existing infrastructure and the pipeline of hospitality projects. Industry sources said there is an inventory of around 4500 rooms across 5-star, 3-star and 2-star categories in the pipeline across Bengal, taking the aggregate room count in the state closer to 10,000. At present, Kolkata alone has an inventory of over 5100 rooms as per the 2024 Indian hospitality report from Hotelivate. IHCL, Park, ITC Hotels, IHG Hotels & Resorts, Lemon Tree are among those looking to expand in the state.

Besides Sunderban and Digha, the northern part of Bengal including Siliguri, Kalimpong, Lataguri, Mirik will be a key focus of the hospitality industry with several developers keen to expand there, sources said. The focus on MICE is in addition to the state's initiatives to promote religious and heritage and tea tourism. The BGBS is also coinciding with the MICE conclave organised by India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) from February 4-6. "Over the

past few years, new convention centres and exhibition areas such as the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, Dhano Dhanyo auditorium, Biswa Bangla Mela Prangan, Dighashree International Convention Centre have been developed in the state. New star category hotels have also come up and more are in the pipeline. These are all essential ingredients for the growth of the MICE category. So we have been discussing with state government officials to host the MICE conclave in Calcutta," said Amaresh Tiwari, immediate past vice president and board member IPCB. With India's share in estimated global MICE business at less than 1 per cent despite the natural & cultural advantages of India and being one of the highest growing economies, Tiwari said that more than conclave will deliberate on how to expand India's MICE prospects and bring back outward MICE activities to the country. "The thrust on tourism, especially MICE tourism, is immense. With the initiative of the chief minister and the state tourism department, the BGBS will have all the focus on promoting Bengal as a favourable MICE destination in the country," said Sudesh Poddar, president of HRAEL.