

Business Standard

World's largest 'tent city' to host 400 million people for Mahakumbh 2025

Total visitor count to be more than combined US and UK population

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Representational Image

Spread across 4,000-hectares, Uttar Pradesh (UP) is setting up the world's largest 'tent city' to host an estimated 400 million pilgrims for the Prayagraj Mahakumbh 2025. That is, according to some estimates, also the world's largest gathering of humanity.

The convergence of 400 million people, which equals the combined population of the United States and the United Kingdom, during the auspicious 45 days of Mahakumbh in Jan-Feb 2025, would be 1.6 times the current population of Uttar Pradesh, pegged at 250 million.

According to the UP government, the enormous tent city will comprise 2,000 tents and 25,000 public accommodations to serve the visitors, illuminated with 67,000 streetlights.

About 23,000 CCTV cameras and an artificial intelligence-based chatbot system will complement the security detail for the temporary settlement, which will be manned by a dedicated brass of senior police and administration officials.

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A string of road projects, temporary bridges, hospitals, markets etc will dot the proposed 25 sectors of the temporary tent city in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) district at Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. Devout Hindus consider Prayagraj as one of the holiest cities, believed to grant salvation to those who bathe at the 'Sangam'.

A 'grand, green' affair

Meanwhile, the Yogi Adityanath government is burning the midnight oil to make the Mahakumbh Mela 'green and smart' by covering the entire area with 150,000 saplings.

The UP chief minister has already announced that the Mahakumbh 2025 will be organised on a much grander scale than the Ardhkumbh 2019, when an estimated 240 million pilgrims converged to the holy city.

The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela is overseen by the Prayagraj Mela Authority. While the Mahakumbh Mela and Kumbh Mela take place every 12 and six years respectively, the Magh Mela is an annual event.

So far, the state has approved 384 projects worth Rs 7,500 crore for successfully hosting Mahakumbh 2025. The projects pertain to different departments including tourism, roads, bridges, health, medical, power, irrigation and others. More than Rs 2,200 crore have already been released by the state government for 250 projects.

Expanding the reach

Apart from the traditional channels of communication and branding efforts, the Yogi government is leveraging social media for the global branding of Mahakumbh 2025. It is being projected as a cornerstone of 'Brand UP', encompassing cultural, religious, economic, and heritage facets.

UP chief secretary Durga Shankar Mishra recently reviewed the ongoing projects and directed officials to ensure optimum safety, security and convenience for the pilgrims. "The Mahakumbh 2025 will represent India and UP before the domestic and international tourists, which are estimated to number a record 400 million. It is, therefore, imperative that the visitors carry pleasant memories of their stay," Mishra said.

Compared to the expenditure purse of Rs 4,200 crore in Ardhkumbh 2019, there is an uptick of over 78 per cent with an allocation of Rs 7,500 crore for Mahakumbh 2025.

The preparations for Mahakumbh 2025 follow Ayodhya's ascent onto the global tourism map, marked by the 'Pran Pratishtha' (consecration) ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22. Mahakumbh 2025 will provide a strong footing to the Yogi government to bolster its 'cultural nationalism' agenda.

Strengthening infra

Meanwhile, the civil works on two mega infrastructure projects in UP – the Jewar International Airport in Greater Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar district) and the Meerut-Prayagraj Ganga Expressway – are in full swing. The two are likely to be commissioned by the end of the 2024 calendar itself.

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The CM has assigned officials with the responsibility of ensuring the completion of the Expressway before the Mahakumbh, which will facilitate travel for the large number of visitors to and from Prayagraj.

The UP State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) is also looking to upgrade its ageing fleet with 5,000 new buses ahead of the Mahakumbh.

Besides, the state tourism department is setting up a 'Digital Kumbh Museum' to showcase the cultural heritage of the country and offer insight into the mythological and historical significance of the Kumbh Mela.

It will feature galleries with spiritual themes like Spiritual and Kumbh Mela Interpretation Gallery, Samudra Manthan Gallery and Akhada Gallery. The museum will include a food plaza and shops, allowing visitors to purchase literature and souvenirs related to the Mela.

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