

Amid build-up, past data indicates Mahakumbh to be a money spinner

The fair will be the hub of a wide range of economic activities and is likely to witness significant revenue inputs

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MAHAKUMBH NAGAR (PRAYAGRAJ): As the grandeur and scale of the Mahakumbh increases with the Uttar Pradesh government claiming that the religious fair is expected to draw an estimated 40 crore (400 million) pilgrims and visitors, past data and experts' estimates indicate that the mega event will be a big money churning.

On the lines of big-ticket events like elections and multinational sports championships, the Mahakumbh is all set to be a hub of economic activity, creating jobs and generating revenue, according to experts and those who have observed the fair closely in the past. The mega event will begin on January 13 and conclude on February 26.

The last Mahakumbh held in 2013 generated a total revenue of around Rs 12,000 crore while the Kumbh Mela 2019 churned out overall revenue of Rs 1.2 lakh crore, according to a study by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Economic activities associated with the Kumbh generated employment for over 6 lakh



A luxury cottage with dome shaped relaxing area having a price range of Rs 80,000 per day on normal days besides Rs 1.10 lakh per day on main bathing days of mela in Mahakumbh Nagar. HT PHOTO

workers in 2019 across various sectors.

This time, estimates of the revenue potential of the Mahakumbh-2025 vary with experts putting the figure between Rs 1.5 lakh crore and Rs 2 lakh crore. The event has already seen heavy infrastructural investment. The services and supplies on offer would range from basic devotee management to hotels, transport, food grains to helicopters and AI-based services.

During his Prayagraj visit on December 13, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the economic aspect of the fair: "Kumbh not only gives social strength but also provides economic empowerment of the people."

TURNOVER ESTIMATES

Just the basic items of daily need required by devotees during Mahakumbh 2025 would be around Rs 17,310 crore or above, as per turnover estimates prepared by the U.P. Chapter of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).

According to president of the UP Chapter of Confederation of All India Traders Mahendra Kumar Goyal, the business volume of puja items alone is expected to be around Rs 2000 crore while the flower trade at the 45-day mela would be an estimated Rs 800 crore.

According to these estimates by UP Chapter of CAIT, the business volume of other items during the fair include groceries (wheat flour, sugar, tea, spices)

Rs 4000 crore, edible oils Rs 1000 crore, vegetables Rs 2000 crore, bed, mattresses, bedsheets and other household goods Rs 500 crore, milk and other dairy products Rs 4000 crore, heater and blowers Rs 50 crore, firewood Rs 50 crore, plastic jerrycan for carrying Ganga Jal Rs 60 crore, hospitality Rs 2500 crore, travel (car rental, e-rickshaw) Rs 300 crore, boatmen Rs 50 crore and miscellaneous Rs 300 crore.

The devotees and tourists will travel by train, bus and plane. They will use various basic facilities including hotels, guest houses, buy food, medicines besides other essentials. This fair will generate livelihood for a thousand odd teeth purohiths (priests), considered the cornerstone of the religious fair, but also for corporate entities.

HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

Nearly 150 hotels in Prayagraj and its neighbouring areas, including the two newly built five-star hotels in Sangam city, are expected to cater to the visitors. Other sectors connected with the hotel industry, including food and travel, would also get a slice of the revenue.

Homestays, luxury tent cities, cottages to super luxurious Dome City in Arai have been prepared. For these, rates ranging between Rs 7000 and Rs 1.10 lakh per day have been fixed. The Mahakumbh-2025 is a huge world level event where revenue generation in the hotel industry separately could not be calculated, said Uttar Pradesh Hotel and Restaurants Association general secretary Garish Oberoi.

"It's an inter-connected exercise where tourists would not just put up in hotel rooms, but avail services of several other different sectors too, be it food,

tourism, medical, FMCG, etc.," he said.

EARNINGS FOR ALL

The Mahakumbh 2025 would provide earnings to all, right from a milkman to a company giving a helicopter on hire. Uttar Pradesh industrial development minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi has estimated that Prayagraj will earn over Rs 2 lakh crore revenue from the Mahakumbh 2025.

HELICOPTER SERVICE

This time, there would be a helicopter service for taking a tour of the Mahakumbh area. Revenue will be generated through tenders from interested agencies.

The helicopter service alone would earn Rs 3.5 crore per day on an average catering to 7000 pilgrims over a span of 45 days at a rate of Rs 5000 per trip for each pilgrim. The helicopter service would earn over Rs 157 crore in 45 days.

EXPERTS SPEAK

Director of Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute (GBPSSI), Prayagraj, Prof Badri Narayan said the Mahakumbh-2025 has a thriving economy wherein retailers providing articles of daily use like blankets, woollen clothing, vermilion, eatables to even the scrap dealers have a lucrative market.

"In the 2019 Kumbh Mela, we conducted a study of the economic aspect of the fair which showed a market, wherein everyone had a chance to earn a living," he said.

Manmohan Krishna, former professor at department of economics, Allahabad University, feels that the turnover of a fair like Mahakumbh-2025, the greatest religious gathering on

earth, can only be estimated and not calculated to precision.

"Be it the boatmen, the gaj land sellers, coconut, incense sticks, diyas to luxury accommodations, the range is mind-boggling and any attempt to calculate would be unrealistic. Roughly, the turnover can be said to be over Rs 2 lakh crore," he added. Mahakumbh Nagar district magistrate Vijay Kiran Anand said, "Certainly, income will be received during Mahakumbh. It is difficult to estimate the actual amount of income, but the expenditure of the domestic and foreign tourists coming will generate more income than expected."

GST REVENUE

All government departments have been instructed by the administration to ensure that GST should be paid for whatever work is done. In this way, the government coffers would also receive phenomenal inputs in the form of taxes paid on purchases.

INVESTMENT THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE

Heavy investments have been made in developing the infrastructure and beautification of Prayagraj ahead of Mahakumbh-2025 to the tune of around Rs 7000 crore, including construction of 14 ROBs (road overbridges) and RUBs, 61 roads, beautification of 40 intersections and railway line expansion.

INCREASED BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS

Chief minister Yogi Adityanath had said the Mahakumbh-2025 would give a major push to state's economy. In the 2024-25 state budget, Rs 2,500 crore was allocated for organising the Mahakumbh. The amount was Rs 2,500 in the 2023-24 budget and Rs 621.55 crore for the financial year 2022-23.

The Centre has approved a special grant of Rs 2,100 crore for the Mahakumbh.

The U.P. government had allocated Rs 4,200 crore for the 2019 Kumbh Mela while the previous state government had spent around Rs 1,300 crore for organising the Mahakumbh in 2013.

BOATMEN

The Prayagraj Navik Sangh has around 6000 registered boatmen. Recently, the boating charges of Rs 60 per person were hiked to Rs 90 as against the demand of boatmen to double the rates. Lallu Lal Nishad, president of the Prayagraj Navik Sangh, said every boatman earns between Rs 800 and Rs 1000 every day during the fair.