

## [How the Mela Measured Up](#)

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### STATISTICS

## How the Mela Measured Up

Numbers of note from the world's largest human gathering

How shall we summarize the mela? like the bottom line of an accounting sheet, numbers get right to the point. The Guinness Book of World Records confirms that no human gathering comes close to the Mela's 30 million worshipers on a single day. The next contender is Mecca, at two million on one day. Experts say this year's Mela was the biggest of them all.

## 70 Million Devotees

Most reports agree that approximately 70 million pilgrims attended the 43-day Kumbha Mela with a record-breaking 30 million worshiping on January 24, the main bathing day. That's a record for Guinness!

## 5,000 Ashrams

A flood of sadhus from a variety of traditions, including the 13 major akharas (ancient Hindu monastic orders), stayed in thousands of ashrams (most only temporary tents), carpeting the Mela grounds.

## 1,090 Fire Hydrants

Fire is one of the greatest concerns at the Mela (stampede is another). More

than 100 miles of pipeline were specially installed to supply water. Volunteer organizations stood by for crowd control.

## 20,000 Policemen

The massive Mela police force was wired for action through 28 closed-circuit TVs. And there was plenty

to do. Sixty-thousand people, mostly women and children, reunited with families at lost-and-found shelters.

15,000 Street Lights

Some 350 miles of over-head power

cables were installed to provide power for 15,000 street lights. The streets were well lit. Vehicular traffic was banned. The power supply never failed through the 43 days.

## 150 River Patrol Boats

Largely in response to terrorist alerts, 150 police boats patrolled the Mela by sea, 10 bomb squads were deployed to defuse mines and 20 commando units from the Nepal border patrol

hovered nearby.

13,000 Tons of  
Flour

Everybody loves  
chapattis, and

13,000 tons of  
flour makes about  
520 million--eight  
per pilgrim. Food  
was abundant and  
many Mela  
supplies were sent  
to Gujarat after  
the massive  
January 26



earthquake.

may/june, 2001  
hinduism today 27

7,800 Tons of

# Rice

In north India,  
where chapattis  
are king, rice  
takes second  
place to wheat.

Even so, there was 7,800 tons on hand--enough for 62 million servings. Meat, eggs and alcohol were strictly prohibited at the Mela site.

# 5,000 Tons of Sugar

Would you like  
sugar with your  
tea? No  
problem. The

Mela's five  
thousand tons  
of sugar put a  
teaspoon in 170  
million cups.  
Government-su  
bsidized shops  
sold good food

(and tea) at  
fixed prices.

74

Swiss-Cottage  
Luxury Tents

Amid the  
half-million  
tents covering  
the crowded  
Mela grounds,  
74 really stood  
out. They  
rented for

\$481 per  
person for two  
nights. That's  
more than  
what it costs  
to stay in a  
five-star Delhi  
hotel!



# 20,000 Public Toilets

# Sewer pipelines

were  
upgraded  
and  
expanded for  
a  
smooth-runni  
ng network of

waste water  
disposal.

There were  
20,000 public  
toilets, and  
8,000 people  
were

employed for  
sanitary  
maintenance.

60,000 to a

# Ghat

Although  
never wider  
than 350

meters, any  
one of the  
three main  
bathing  
ghats  
packed in an  
estimated

60,000  
fervent  
devotees at  
any given  
point in  
time. Only  
two

drownings  
were  
reported this  
year.



# 25 Large Pontoon Bridges

## Huge

bridges  
built on  
pontoon  
the size of  
trucks were  
absolutely

essential  
for pilgrims  
to traverse  
water  
everywhere  
in and

through the  
Mela site.  
More than  
100 miles  
of new  
roads were

paved.

# 12 Mela Hospitals

In addition  
to the 12  
hospitals  
built by the  
government,  
local

ashrams,  
relief  
organizations and  
shelters  
provided

beds and  
simple  
care for  
the sick,  
the hurt  
and the



needy.

35

Electrical

# Power Centers

# Thirty-five

dedicated  
substation  
s supplied  
electricity  
for the

50-square-  
mile Mela  
compound  
. In  
addition,

charcoal,  
fire wood  
and  
cooking  
gas were

available  
at  
controlled  
prices.