

[How the Mela Measured Up](#)

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Published by Anonymous on May. 01, 2001

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.

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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.