

KUMBH MELA, NASHIK

- **Background**

Kumbh Melas are one of the most sacred and possibly among the largest religious events of India. According to mythology and religious scholars, it is believed that when Gods and demons were having fight over the *Amrut* (nectar of life), then Lord Vishnu flew away with the pot of nectar spilling drops of nectar at four different places; these are where the Kumbh Melas are held. These places were Haridwar, Nashik, Ujjain and Prayag Sangam, Allahabad. Since then “Kumbh Mela” is celebrated once every 12 years in each of the four places, on the banks of river Godavari in Nashik, river Kshipra in Ujjain, river Ganges in Haridwar, and at the Prayag Sangam in Allahabad which is the meeting point of the three rivers- Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati.

Kumbh Mela is celebrated with great extravagance - devotees congregate and perform several rites and rituals at the Mela site and a numbers of ceremonies are performed, religious discussions and devotional singing is held; mass feeding for devotees, pilgrims and holy men are also organised. Among all the rituals performed at the Kumbh Mela, taking a dip in the river during the mela is considered as most sacred. This event takes place through the day, in batches, where devotees take a dip the bank of river where the Kumbh is celebrated.

In 2015, Nashik has hosted the Kumbh Mela known as “Sinhastha Kumbh Mela” from July 14 to September 25, 2015. The overall Sinhastha Kumbh Mela includes a collaboration of over 22 Government Departments. This includes the departments of Collectorate Nashik (Kumbhamela Cell), Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC), Trimbakeshwar Municipal Council, Nashik City Police, Nashik Rural Police, Public Works Department, Irrigation Department, Maharashtra Jivan Pradhikarn, Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation, Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd. (City), Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd. (Rural), Civil surgeon (For Nashik and Trimbakeshwar), District Health Officer, National Highway Division, Disaster Management Cell, Central Railway, District Information office, Deolali Cantonment Board, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, Forest Department, State Archaeology and Central Archaeology.

- **Location, Date**

Nashik, 2015

- **Areas**

Kumbh Mela

- **Stage/Scale**

Pilot in Kumbh Mela, Nashik

- **Objective of the assignment**

To make the mela Open Defecation Free

• What was done

- NMC had demarcated about 323 acres (322.81 acres) of land comprising of 1900 plots as “*Sadhugram*” for accommodation and a service centre for the pilgrims and Sadhus. The *Sadhugram* area was divided into “*Akharas*”.
- **Sanitation:** In terms of sanitation provision, three types of toilet facilities were provided for the devotees and pilgrims – temporary toilets, permanent toilets (already existing public toilets by the Nashik Municipal Corporation or Sulabh) and portable toilets. Temporary toilets were built mostly in the *Sadhu* Gram area where religious leaders had camps for themselves and their followers. The structure of these toilets was made of tin with pans cemented. The temporary toilets were demolished after the Kumbh Mela. Portable toilets are made of Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP) and easy to move/resemble. They were placed in the *ghat* areas and parking (inner and outer).



- **Drinking Water Facilities:** Throughout the Nashik and Trimbakeshwar area, treated and piped water was provided by NMC for all purposes (drinking, washing, bathing, etc.). For the mobile populations coming on *Parvani* days, drinking water was provided through a network of 5000 litres tanks placed at regular intervals along the main routes in Nashik. In the campsites/khalsas, each plot had been provided with a standpost for drinking/handwashing. Some of the campsite/khalsa had more than one stand post depending on the number of plots in the particular khalsa.
- **Solid Waste Management:** NMC has made arrangements for the solid waste management during Kumbh Mela. The solid waste was systematically collected, at specified locations from where it was transported to the waste management site through dumpers. NMC provided an innovative shape of dustbin in the shape of an earthen pot (kumbh/*kalash*) to engage the public and to encourage them for proper disposal of waste. Separate manpower/agencies were recruited for sweeping of the streets, parking areas, *Sadhugram* and *ghats* on regular basis. Extensive mobilizations of cleaners were done on the days after the *Parvani* days.



• Impact

The number of toilets available was estimated at 26,455 toilets at two main sites: 24,975 in Nashik and 1,480 in Trimbakeshwar.

• Challenges and Issues

Providing WASH infrastructure for this temporary, yet massive, gathering was a humungous challenge.

- **Innovation**

All the arrangements of the mela were an innovation in itself. From dustbins and communication tools & techniques, all were innovative.

- **Lessons learnt**

The Nashik Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela (NTKM) no doubt has showcased an excellent example of managing an event where large crowds gathers for the religious activity of holy dip or bath at sacred place for some specific days. There is a lot to learn from the success of this Kumbh Mela. To organize such type of events the key government personal should do the planning in reference to the following key attributes in general but very specifically for managing the Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure.

- **Financials**

The overall cost estimates come to a total of INR 2378.78 crore (USD 356.5) as presented on the Maharashtra government website. Unfortunately these data are not disaggregated for WASH.

- **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

No revenue model

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

- Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC)

- **Sources and References**

- Project Report of Kumbh Mela