Improved Public Experience at Prayagraj Kumbh Mela, 2019

Kumbh Mela is the largest congregation of humans on the planet. Held on floodplains at the confluence of three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati, the Mela represents centuries-old traditions that are held sacred by millions of individuals.

The Kumbh Mela 2019, held in Prayagraj, was a mega event that witnessed 24 crore pilgrims and tourists in a city with a population around 11 lakhs. The Hon'ble Chief Minister had provided the vision of Divya Kumbh, Bhavya Kumbh which meant that the amenities, facilities, security arrangements, and the overall pilgrim experience had to be elevated to an unprecedented level. For this, green-field and brown-field development works worth Rs. Four thousand crores were decided to be undertaken.

A design thinking approach for large scale coordinated implementation and digital interventions were the backbone on which these improvements in overall planning and management of the world's largest

gathering of humans could be achieved. The Prayagraj Mela Authority led a coordinated effort, where over 32 State and Central Government Departments came together to deliver the safest, cleanest, and an incident-free Kumbh Mela.

The feedback received from the Pilgrims visiting Kumbh Mela 2019 and global media was immensely positive. Kumbh 2019 was visited by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India twice. Kumbh Mela was a paradigm shift in innovation in project management and visitor experience enhancement. The turnover of pilgrims at Kumbh 2019 was unprecedented for which numerous permanent and temporary physical infrastructural projects were undertaken with multi-stakeholder coordination and management.

Design thinking oriented objectives included making it a zero-incident Mela, accessible to all sections of the society, using digital interventions. To enrich experience of pilgrims it was planned to make it aesthetically pleasing and develop it into a legacy of cultural feats?

Since it involved transformation of the entire city of Prayagraj before the beginning of Kumbh Mela, the planning phase began 18 months prior to the Kumbh Mela 2019. The Prayagraj Mela Authority was formed under U.P. Prayagraj Mela Authority, Allahabad, Act, 2017.

In organising the Kumbh Mela, multiple departments under the GoUP and GoI were involved. Financial planning being the most critical point, it was essential to

ensure closures within timelines. New techniques were developed to ensure continuous cash-flows during the implementation phase.

The entire planning was shaped around the peak day (Mauni Amawasya) wherein, the influx of pilgrims touched 5 crores. Kumbh Mela 2019 can be viewed as one of the best practices of effective project management and public administration.

Streamlined bidding process management and vendor on-boarding was unique feature of the project. Within a year, more than 100 tenders were issued in which more than 500 agencies participated. Kumbh Mela 2019 was not only a congregation of people, culture and administration but also that of traditional and modern techniques. Multiple digital innovations were planned and implemented throughout the process. These innovations included – digital lost and found centre, online project management tool (PMIS), digital site planning using AutoCAD, georeferenced temporary parking locations across the city, ICT enabled monitoring of sanitation etc.

Social and Electronic Media presence in Kumbh Mela played a key role in global recognition of the event and reach out to the public. In addition to hosting the largest human gathering, the Mela also garnered global attention by setting up 3 Guinness Book World Records in a row, for the first time in the History of Kumbh &Prayagraj.

Key Initiatives for achieving – "Divya Kumbh, Bhavya Kumbh"

Following are some of the state-of-the-art interventions in Prayagraj City and Mela area to ensure safety, security, cleanliness, and an enhanced citizen/pilgrim experience for the pilgrims:

- **Swachh Kumbh:** Maintaining sanitation and hygiene in the 3200 hectare area of Kumbh Mela and the city of Prayagraj where 24 Crore people travelled from across the country and globe was a herculean task. To ensure open defecation free (ODF), garbage free and odour free Kumbh Mela, 1,22,500 toilets were constructed and 20,000 dustbins installed across the Mela. Swachhagrahis were trained to use mobile application and give feedback twice a day.

- **Paint my City:** With support and guidance from National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), a campaign was undertaken to paint the entire city of Prayagraj in various hues that reflected the theme and spirit of Kumbh Mela and promoting IEC and behaviour change over Swachh Kumbh. Paintings on these canvasses were blended with a social message.

- **Integrated Command and Control Centres to integrate for Pan City Area from Smart City perspective** to enable collation of information and collaborative monitoring, thus helping in the analysis of data for quicker decision making. Intelligent operations capability ensured integrated data visualization, real-time collaboration and deep analytics that help different stakeholders prepare for exigencies, coordinate and manage response efforts, and enhance the ongoing efficiency of city operations.

- **Safety and Surveillance:** Mela Administration together with Police Department executed the Planned Circulation Movements for effective crowd control, channelization and diversions ensuring safe and fast exit of people to prevent stampede. Modern systems were deployed to reunite the pilgrims who get separated from their family and friends in the Mela area.

- **Mobility Planning:** To ensure smooth ingress and egress of pilgrims, 95 dedicated parking areas were developed around the Mela area and connected to the Mela by of 500 full-sized shuttle buses and 500 e-rickshaws.

- **Digital site planning and plot allocation system:** A complete digital plot allocation database of every plot-holder and their activity was identified and created. In addition to efficiencies in the process of allotting the shops, digitalizing the inventory of shops and vendors' database also led to significant revenue gains for Mela Authority.

- A **Project Management Information System (PMIS)** was used by the administration to keep track of the numerous infrastructure projects that were being undertaken for the Kumbh Mela. All departments were on-boarded and regular progress updates were uploaded.

- **Digital PDS:** Many visitors received temporary ration cards for basic food that is subsidized by the government.