

An aerial photograph of a massive container yard, likely a port or industrial site. The yard is filled with thousands of colorful shipping containers (blue, red, green, yellow) stacked in neat rows. A large body of water is visible on the right side of the image, with several small boats or structures in the water. The overall scene is a dense, organized industrial landscape.

# Introduction



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Allahabad, earlier Kaushambi, is an ancient city, inhabited since the Iron Age (Northern Black Polished Ware Culture, 700 B.C – 200 B.C). It is located at 25.45° N and 81.84° E in the southern part of the State of Uttar Pradesh at an elevation of 98 metres (322 feet) above the sea level. The region was the capital of *Vatsa*<sup>1</sup> *Mahajanpada* (600 B.C, Age of Buddha) and has been mentioned in ancient Buddhist and Hindu texts. It has been a center of pilgrimage and tourism since then. The *Melas*, held at Allahabad in the month of *Magha* (eleventh month of the Samvat calendar, January-February), are graded in the order of religious significance on the basis of periodicity. *Maha Kumbh Mela* (MKM) is held every 144 years, *Purna Kumbh Mela* (KM) every twelve years, *Ardh Kumbh Mela* (AKM) every six years and *Magh Mela* every year on the banks of river *Ganga* and its tributary *Yamuna*. The confluence of these rivers, known as *Sangam* is the focal point of the *Melas*.

## What is Maha Kumbh Mela (MKM)?

*Kumbh-Mela* (KM) is a compound word comprising of two *Sanskrit* stems – ‘*Kumbh*’ referring to a ‘vessel’ and ‘*Mela*’ referring to a ‘gathering’. KM thus means ‘Gathering of the Vessel’. The origin of the ‘*Mela*’ alludes to mythology of ‘*Samudra-Manthan*’ mentioned in *Sanskrit* texts (viz. ‘*Bhagwat Purana*’, ‘*Vishnu Purana*’, ‘*Mahabharat*’ and ‘*Ramayana*’) from which a vessel containing ‘*Amrit*’ emerged. In the war that ensued between good and evil, portions of elixir spilled at Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, rendering these places a special religious significance.

In 2013, the *Maha Kumbh Mela* (MKM) at Allahabad was held for 55 days from 14 January to 10 March. There were six<sup>2</sup> most auspicious bathing dates during MKM this year.

The organization of MKM at Allahabad is governed by the United Provinces *Melas* Act, 1938 and the United Provinces *Melas* Rule (Miscellaneous), 1940.

## Organisational Structure

Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department was the nodal officer at the Government level for MKM. *Mela Adhikari* (MA) acted as the nodal officer at the district level and was responsible for management, execution and monitoring of MKM and related works. The executing agencies included– (i) various departments (ii) PSUs/co-operatives (iii) autonomous bodies of the State Government (iv) local bodies; and (v) Ministries of GoI: (a) Finance (b) Environment and Forest (c) Railways (d) Communication.

<sup>1</sup> One of the *Solasa Mahajanpada* (16 Kingdoms) earlier called *Kaushambi*, and now organized as a separate district *Kaushambi*.

<sup>2</sup> *Makar Sankranti*-14 January; *Paush Purnima*-27 January; *Mauni Amavasya*-10 February; *Basant Panchami*-15 February; *Maghi Purnima*-25 February; and *Mahashivratri*-10 March.

The organisational structure for MKM was as below:

