

India's first runway underpass taking shape under Kashi airport

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Construction is underway on a pioneering infrastructure project in UP—a 2.89-km underpass tunnel on National Highway 31 that will run directly beneath the runway of Varanasi international airport.

Designed to revolutionise both road connectivity and airport operations, the tunnel is the first-of-its-kind in India and is being built at a cost of Rs 250 crore.

Within the airport boundary, the tunnel will span 450m, allowing highway traffic to move seamlessly below ground while aircraft operate safely overhead.

Work on the tunnel began in Sept 2025, marking a major step forward in developing the region's transport network. Engineers have incorporated high-grade safety measures into the project, including the ability to withstand blast intensities of up to 100 TNT, ensuring robust protection for both commuters and aviation activity.



Visual projection of upcoming 2.89-km tunnel running directly under Varanasi international airport runway

The tunnel will eliminate surface-level vehicular movement near the runway, providing a safer and more efficient environment for airport expansion. A similar arrangement currently exists at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, where a road passes through the taxiway, but the Varanasi project will be the first to route a national highway directly beneath an active runway. The project is

expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2027. After traffic is shifted underground, the Airports Authority of India will begin extending Varanasi airport's existing 2,745m runway to 4,075m. This extended runway will accommodate Code E aircraft, including large wide-body jets like the Boeing 777-337, enabling greater passenger capacity and improved long-haul connectivity.