

New corridor to be bridge of faith between two Mahakumbh hubs

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LUCKNOW: Pilgrims travelling between Haridwar and Prayagraj may soon experience a much faster journey, with plans under-way to extend the 594-km-long Ganga Expressway from Meerut to Haridwar.

Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are expected to soon sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to facilitate construction of the corridor, officials aware of the development said.

The proposed six-lane extension, spanning around 140 km, is expected to not only improve connectivity between the two major religious centres but also act as a bridge of faith between northern and eastern India's spiritual circuits and ease travel between two key centres of Sanatan tradition — Jyotirmath (Joshimath) and Govardhan Math, Puri.

Linked by their religious identities, both Prayagraj and Haridwar host the biggest Kumbh Melas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the extension of the Ganga Expressway up to Haridwar from Meerut during its inaugural ceremony in Haridwar district on April 29.

Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have reached in-principle agreement for the Haridwar extension via the Amroha-Bijnor route. After the MoU is signed, the project implementation will gain pace, said a senior official of the Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA).

After MoU, a decision will be

KEY FEATURES

- **Length:** Proposed extension of 110 km to 140 km
- **Coverage:** About 29 km in Uttarakhand, the remainder in Uttar Pradesh
- **Route:** Mangraula in Amroha through Bijnor to Haridwar
- **Connectivity:** Direct high-speed access to Prayagraj, Varanasi and eastern India
- **Integration:** Link near Halgoya with the Delhi-Saharanpur-Dehradun Economic Corridor and connectivity to the Char Dham highway network
- **Decongestion:** Expected to reduce traffic load on NH-58



PM Narendra Modi had announced the extension of Ganga Expressway after its launch on April 29.

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taken on responsibility sharing for construction, cost sharing, land acquisition, and compensation policy. The authority has sought settlement maps from Amroha and Bijnor districts and has begun a survey for land acquisition, officials said.

"Preparations are underway to extend Ganga Expressway up to Haridwar from Meerut. This will connect two prominent religious destinations — Haridwar and Prayagraj — which host the Mahakumbh, the biggest religious congregations in the world," Nand Gopal Gupta, 'Nandi', UP minister for industrial development, said.

Travel time likely to reduce sharply

At present, travel between Haridwar and Prayagraj takes around 11 to 13 hours via Meerut, Hapur, Aligarh and Kanpur. After completion of the extension, travel time is expected to

come down to around seven to eight hours. Travel between Haridwar and Puri, which currently takes 20 to 24 hours, is expected to become significantly faster, with an estimated saving of six to eight hours once the corridor becomes operational.

Currently, NH-58 serves as the main arterial route connecting Haridwar with Delhi, Meerut and the upper Himalayan region of Uttarakhand. However, heavy vehicular movement frequently leads to congestion on the highway. Once the Ganga Expressway is linked to Haridwar, travellers will be able to use the new extension route to connect directly with the main expressway network near Meerut/Bulandshahr. From there, the corridor will continue towards Prayagraj, providing seamless high-speed connectivity to eastern UP, Bihar and further towards Puri through NH-16 and other regional routes.