

**Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on
Construction of a Bridge over River Yamuna at Allahabad/ Naini**

Usha P. Raghupathi
Professor
National Institute of Urban Affairs
New Delhi, India

Relevance: The Approach paper to India's 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) recognizes that "Infrastructure inadequacies in both rural and urban areas are a major factor constraining India's growth". It suggests that investment in infrastructure will need to increase from 4.6% to around 8% of GDP in the 11th Plan period. According to the Report of the Working Group set up on Roads for the 11th Plan, "the rehabilitation/ repair/ reconstruction of existing weak bridges, culverts and construction of new bridges/ culverts" needs to be given priority in the Plan. This shows that the sector policy continues to emphasize strengthening old and weak bridges.

Allahabad is an important centre of education and business. Allahabad is well placed on the Indian road map. It is located at the junction of NH-2, which forms a part of the Golden Quadrilateral and NH-27, which forms a part of the North-South Corridor. The city spills across the river by virtue of transport connectivity of bridges. GT road (NH-2) passes through the city and Rewa road (NH-27) is a major arterial link for cement industries and grain trade of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The old rail-cum-road bridge connecting Allahabad with Naini was constructed in the year 1893. Over the decades it became weak and grossly inadequate for the present day traffic. Long traffic hold ups on the existing bridge became a daily feature. There was also a restriction on the use of bridge by commercial traffic for eight hours in a day. The absence of a modern bridge link meant diversion of long distance traffic for about 90 km. Therefore, the construction of the new Naini Bridge was considered essential.

Impact: The project has led to reduced traffic congestion, travel time and road accidents. A satellite image of urban sprawl in the years 1994 and 2000 shows that since 1994 there has been a marked increase in urban activity in the main city of Allahabad and also Naini, which started spreading outwards and forming a sort of continuum towards the main city by 2000 (City Development Plan, Allahabad). Ribbon development along major corridors including Naini, are visible in the satellite imagery. The role of Naini Bridge in this development has been positive. There has also been a positive impact on land prices and housing development.

On the industrial development front, however, the Naini Industrial Area, which was set up to promote industries in the region, has not been very successful. Lack of adequate industrial infrastructure to support the industrial sector has adversely affected the industrial development. Once the industrial infrastructure improves, the city will see major growth assisted by the free flow of traffic on the bridge.

The city will witness an increase in population in the coming years due to natural growth and due to migration. Owing to its religious sanctity and importance, there is a large influx of tourists to Allahabad for pilgrimage and performance of last rites. The bridge would help in handling the huge traffic that would be generated by the inflow of people and goods.