CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

Human resources are available on plenty of diversified resources in India, but the resources have not been utilized in an organized way for the economic development of the nation as well as the people who have unaffordable commitment in the developing scenario of Indian economy. In India, much of expenditure has been on the infrastructure of military force and security of the nation, on the BRO that’s construction and maintenance of the border roads. The resources of human power have been availed from unorganized sector workers for their existing major projects and future projects. Therefore unorganized workers are always needed to run the most important organization of India. The present research focused on the need of unorganized workers/labours and the problems of BRO faced in major projects in China-India borders.

1.1 BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) maintains roads that serve the borders areas of India. It is staffed with a combination of Border Roads Engineering Service officers, Administrative officers, Medical Officers and Hindi Officers from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) and officers from the Corps of Engineers Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, ASC Officers and Officers of Military Police and Personnel of the Indian Army on ERE. The organisation develops and maintains arterial roads on the borders of India. The BRO is also involved in the construction of a tunnel at the Rohtang pass. BRO's activities have also helped to
accelerate the economic development of the North and North-Eastern Border States of India. The road-construction teams have to deal with harsh climatic conditions. The BRO faces environments like the icy Himalayan mountaintops, the marshes of West Bengal, and the deserts in Rajasthan. The BRO builds and maintains roads at high altitude; some of the BRO roads are built as high as 5,608 metres (18,399 ft) above mean sea level.¹ The Border Roads Organisation operates a network of over 32,885 kilometres (20,434 mi) of roads and 12,200 metres (40,026 ft) of permanent bridges.² BRO has operations in twenty-two states, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a union territory. It is currently headed by Lt General KT Parnaik.³

The BRO was formed on 7 May 1960 as the Border Roads Development Board with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as its chairman. BRO consists of BRDB and GREF and GREF led by the Director General of Border Roads, who holds the rank of Lieutenant General.⁴ BRO consists of BRDB and GREF. BRDB is akin to any other government department headed presently by Rajya Raksha Mantri as chairman of the BRDB and Chief of Army and Air Force and E-in C are its members, and there are other members as well. BRO is part and parcel of MoD but it is placed under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for budgetary allocation only as a matter of high policy; otherwise MoD has administrative control over BRO.

³ Lt General KT Parnaik
Organizational Chart

Figure 1.1
Vision

Nation's most reputed, multifaceted, transnational, modern construction Organisation committed to meeting the strategic needs of the armed forces with enlightened leadership, a strong, skilled and committed work force, a well ingrained value system and a strong environment conscience. Playing a national role in socio economic development through its large scale contribution to infrastructure development.

Mission

1. To support the armed forces to meet their strategic needs by committed, dedicated and cost effective development and sustenance of the infrastructure.
2. To achieve international levels of quality excellence and time consciousness in a diversified sphere of construction activity in a cost effective manner.
3. Optimise potential and expertise through increased involvement in agency, transnational and national development projects.
4. To attain leadership in development, adoption, assimilation and use of state of the art technology.
5. To create the environment for accurate, real time and effective decision making through optimising use of information technology.
6. Through a focus on core competencies, ensure highest level of skill and proficiency in construction activity.
7. To sustain a sense of values in the Organisation that will ensure a high level of self-esteem in each individual and immeasurable synergy in the Organisation.

8. To help enrich the quality of life of the community and ensure all round growth.

Role of the BRO

In Peace

Develop and maintain the Operational Road Infrastructure of General Staff in the Border Areas and contribute to the Socio-Economic Development of the Border States.

In War

To Develop and maintain roads to keep line of control through in Original Sectors and Re-Deployed Sectors. To execute additional tasks as laid down by the Government contributing to the war effort.

Let us not forget that roads in this difficult terrain have been built not only with mere cement and concrete, but also with the blood of men of the Border Roads Organisation of India. Many lost their lives for the cause of duty on the project. To these men, who always play with danger and laugh at death, duty comes first. These
fallen heroes came from all parts of Mother India, to contribute their mite to the
defence of their mother land and prosperity of their neighbours.\(^5\)

**The Genesis**

The early years of post independence saw India with a 15000 kilometers long
border to be secured and a vast, remote and economically backward North and North
Eastern Region, with an inadequate road communication network, to support its
future development.

**Responsibilities**

- Publication/updating of technical instructions based on various IRC/IS codes.
- Interaction with various technical organizations of the country for the new
  engineering concepts and construction techniques.
- Dissemination of newly approved engineering concepts and new constructional
  materials to the projects under command.
- Institutional memberships for various technical bodies of the country.
- Nomination of BRO Officers for various technical committees of IRC, BIS and
  other committees of technocrat institutions.
- Nomination of BRO Officers for various technical seminars/symposia and
  workshops
- Publication of DGBR

\(^5\) From an Article 'Highways to Adventure' published in 'THE MIRROR' Magazine, Jul 1975
Historical Perspective

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the great visionary and the First Prime Minister of India, conceptualized *Border Roads Organisation (BRO)* in 1960. The organisation primarily meets the defence requirements towards infrastructure development including roads, bridges, highways, airports, tunnels, buildings and other structures. Post-Chinese operations in Aksai Chin in 1960, India, could not react due to lack of infrastructure in border areas. A strategic need was felt to develop road infrastructure in border areas for more effective response against such activities. None of the existing construction organisations could take up this daunting task. BRO was conceived and raised as a special organisation. It is the executive arm of the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB). To ensure that bureaucratic delays do not stifle the organisation, the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawharlal Nehru himself became the chairman of BRDB. This ensured that BRO delivered in a way that no other organisation had done in the past. However, over the years, the scenario has undergone change. Today Hon'ble Minister of State for Defence is the Chairman BRDB.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF BRO

The BRO is a work charged regimented and uniformed, but unarmed force. Its core competence is in departmental work but specialised works like major bridges, tunnels etc are outsourced. Due to BRO's record, other agencies also award works to BRO in difficult and hostile areas. Now the endeavour is to enhance outsourcing in areas, where it is feasible to enhance the capability of BRO. Almost 60 to 70% of the
personnel are deployed in high altitude, extremely inhospitable areas and insurgency prone / hostile environment. Average casualty rate of 330 deaths per year occurs due to work related, environmental and hostile conditions.

1.3 EVOLUTION OF THE BRO

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) was born on 07 May 1960 as an executive arm of BRDB. The Director General of Border Roads (DGBR) is the executive head and the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) is the execution force. The BRO had a small beginning:

(a) East - Project Tuskar (now Vartak) – Tezpur.

(b) West - Project Beacon – Srinagar.

Today BRO is a vast and vibrant organisation with 17 projects deployed at various border and naxalite areas of the country.

DEPLOYMENT OF PROJECTS

Figure 1.2
## TYPES OF WORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERIAL NO</th>
<th>TYPES OF WORKS</th>
<th>FUNDING AGENCY</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GENERAL STAFF WORKS</td>
<td>GENERAL STAFF</td>
<td>ENDORSED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND FUNDS ALLOTTED BY MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT &amp; HIGHWAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AGENCY WORKS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(A)</td>
<td>NATIONAL HIGHWAYS (O), SARDP-NE &amp; STRATEGIC</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT &amp; HIGHWAYS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(B)</td>
<td>INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE &amp; INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER WORKS</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(C)</td>
<td>NORTH-EASTERN COUNCIL &amp; M'DONER WORKS</td>
<td>MINISTRY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION (M-DONER).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(D)</td>
<td>BHUTAN &amp; MYANMAR WORKS</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(E)</td>
<td>ROHTANG TUNNEL &amp; ALTERNATE ALIGNMENT OF NIMU-PADAM-DARCHA</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF DEFENCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(F)</td>
<td>OTHER ROADS</td>
<td>PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DEPOSIT WORKS</td>
<td>PRIVATE AGENCIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditure of BRO over the Years

![Expenditure of BRO over the Years](image)

**Figure 1.3**
**Table No. 1.1 DEPARTMENTAL ANNUAL WORKING CAPABILITY OF BRO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM OF WORK</th>
<th>CAPABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EARTH WORK (SINGLE LANE) IN KM</td>
<td>1120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURFACING (SINGLE LANE) IN KM</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERMANENT WORKS (RS IN CRORE)</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR BRIDGES (IN M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Border Roads Development Board and the General Reserve Engineer Force**

The BRO consists of Border Roads Development Board and the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF). GREF is the execution force under the Ministry of Surface Transport for budgetary allocation only; otherwise it is under the Ministry of Defence for administrative control, and officers from Indian Army Corps of Engineers, who are posted to GREF on ERE. The status of GREF is equivalent to that of JAKLI in the Indian Army. The GREF includes civil, electrical, mechanical engineers, Administrative Officers, Medical Officers, and Hindi Officers. Engineers are selected from engineering colleges across India through the Indian Engineering Services examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. Other Officers also include administrative officers, medical officers, who are also selected through UPSC and placed under Army act 1950 and Army rules 1954 with exceptions and modifications vide SRO 329 and 330 of 1960 and SRO 1001 of 1961 for equivalent ranks of GREF with regular army. The BRO's operations are spread across India, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. The fundamental unit of the BRO is similar to a platoon. The functional platoon, composed of civil engineer
officers from the GREF and civil engineers from the College of Military Engineering, Kirkee Pune, is in charge of activities such as formation cutting, surfacing, and safety mechanisms to maintain correct road geometry. BRO units also handle the construction of permanent and temporary bridges, causeways, and airfields.

**BRO’s Projects**

The BRO includes 18 Projects, which are divided into Task Forces, Road Construction Companies (RCCs), Bridge Construction Companies (BCCs), Drain Maintenance Companies (DMCs), and other functional platoons. The organisation also includes base workshops, store divisions, training and recruitment centers, and other staff. The BRO is also in charge of maintenance of its road networks. In many places landslides, avalanches and snow block the routes and have to be cleared as quickly as possible. BRO also employs more than two lakhs (200,000) local workers in the task. An Internal Financial Advisor supports the BRO, performing the roles of Chief Accounts Officer and Internal Auditor. This system was introduced on 23 March 1995 to introduce efficiency and improve resource utilisation. The IFA secured ISO 9001 certification in December 1999.

**Projects/Initiatives**

The BRO undertakes projects in India and friendly countries. These projects typically include developing roads, bridges, and airfields in hostile environments shunned by private enterprises, whether due to security concerns related to hostilities,

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or because of environmental challenges. Some of these projects carry out some of the
development initiatives of the Indian government in foreign territories like Tajikistan,
Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Bhutan. These include the Delaram-Zaranj Highway in
Afghanistan, completed and handed over to the Afghan government during 2008, and
the restoration of the Farkhor and Ayni air bases in Tajikistan. The BRO also played a
vital role in reconstruction work in the aftermath of the devastating
2004 Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, and the 2010 Ladakh
flash floods. The organisation employs labourers locally. No local labourer is
deployed in the GREF for more than 179 days at a stretch, thus keeping the nature of
their employment casual.

Unorganized labours issues

In Akhnoor on Feb 4, the Chief Engineer of Project Sampark of Border Roads
Organisation expressed that BRO is not an Industry and never comes under the
provisions of ‘Minimum Wages Act’ or the Industrial Disputes Act. Taking serious
note of the dharna staged by some casual paid labourers (CPL) recently dis-engaged
by the GREF authorities in R S Pura, he added, GREF is uniformed force of Defence
Services covered under provisions of Army Act 1950 and army Rules 1954. This force
has basically been raised to meet the strategical and operational requirements of Indian
Army and has specific role assigned during military operations and war.

He disclosed that the main aim of the force is to construct and maintain roads
and bridges as per requirement projected by Indian Army and accepted by Border
Roads Development Board depending upon the availability of resources. It also undertakes works on behalf of Ministry of Surface Transport and Ministry of Home.

There is no provision of any agitation, unionism or the formation of an Association. Commenting on the agitational path adopted by some casual workers of GREF at R S Pura, the Chief Engineer said that terms and policies of the BRO are very clear and all the workers know them. The members of ‘so called’ Defence Civil Workers Association are on agitational path, as appeared in a section of press is most unfortunate and unjustified.

Clarifying his position, as per the instructions of Army during army build up along border, about 306 locals were engaged as casual workers on daily wages basis for removing silt from defence Ditch- cum-Bund (DCB) and digging it at several points. After the job was finished within some weeks, they were disengaged. Now they are pressurising the GREF authorities to accommodate them which is not possible. They have gone on staging protest dharna at R S Pura, GREF unit.

He said that their agitation was illegal and unjustified. They were already told about the nature of work and moreover, after the army asked to stop the work, they were dis-engaged. Depending upon the quantum of workload available and availability of funds from the Indian Army or other agencies, a fixed target of various works is allotted to the different units of GREF under different projects. To complete the specific work targets within the stipulated time, CPLs are resorted to supplement pioneers on as required basis under provision of Para 501 to 504 of Border Roads Regulations.
He further claimed that labourers thus recruited are discharged from services and when workload is reduced or the work is completed. No casual labourer is deployed in the GREF for more than 179 days at a stretch as such their employment is casual by nature. He said Para 503 of Border Roads Regulations clearly says: "The personnel may be employed on daily or monthly rates of pay. If on monthly rates, the period of their engagement shall be for a maximum period of six months at a time and the personnel shall not be eligible for any of the privileges of continued employment under Government. The services of the personnel are liable to be terminated at any time without notice and no terminal benefits shall be payable." He said some elements were misguiding those people and moreover, they can be engaged at work in other sectors if they are interested to go away from their home villages. In R S Pura 306 workers were discharged on Jan 21 after army ordered the stoppage of work on DCB after laying land mines. He said that there is provision of taking 60 per cent of the people out of CPL lot for permanent adjustment as per rules. But for that they have to come under all India competition and have to undergo training. No person is employed in any force without completion of requisite formalities/procedures, he maintained.

1.4 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF BRO

The BRO has constructed roads for 48300 km, 406 major bridges, and 19 airfields. Presently 699/202 roads (28000/12790 km) (both new construction and double laning) and 516 major bridges (22700 meters) are under execution. BRO is maintaining 478 roads (20071 km), bridges and tunnels on these roads, 06 airfields, snow clearance, 68 roads (1668 km) winter snow clearance, and 27 roads(1293 km)
summer snow clearance. In Aman setu of Jammu and Kashmir BRO constructed 17.250 km road; it connects Srinagar in India to Muzaffarabad in Pakistan.

The Problems Area Maintained By the BRO

- Located at km 141.740 on road Shillong-Jowai-Badarpur - Churaibari (NH-44).
- NH-44 is the only line of communication for the states of Tripura, Mizoram, part of Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya.
- Due to severe earthquake in 1987, strata of mountain developed further cracks and slide got activated in 1988.
- On 25 Jun 1988, road was closed for more than two months.
- Area falls under seismic zone 'v'.
- Slide is still active.

1.5 SOLUTION TO PROBLEM

- RCC cut and cover tunnel (120 m) and allied works for Rs 1172.25 Lac.
- Works completed and tunnel was inaugurated by the minister of state for Defence Dr. Pallam Raju on 29 Sep 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ser No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Fence (in Kms)</th>
<th>Road (In Kms)</th>
<th>Financial (In Crs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>241.95</td>
<td>255.490</td>
<td>154.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>98.84</td>
<td>545.37</td>
<td>303.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>197.46</td>
<td>115.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the more agitations of unorganized labour force of the BRO against the government, the government decided to give few benefits to them such as EPF and ESI. The then Congress Government assured through the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour that it would recommend to the Union Ministry of Labour to frame laws so as to bring workers of the unorganised sector in the country under the
social security net. The Committee's chairman S Sudhakar Reddy has expressed that he has requested the ministry to extend these laws to all the states in the country, including Sikkim. Bringing casual labourers under the social security net implies extending to them the benefits of labour welfare schemes, including the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Employees State Insurance schemes. The decision to make this recommendation is based on the outcome of the committee's discussions with the casual labourers working in the Border Road organisation (BRO) projects in Sikkim and the tea gardens of the Dooars region in North Bengal. Favouring extension of various central acts of labour welfare such as Factories Act and Industrial Disputes Act to Sikkim has an act to register and recognize trade unions as there was no such law in the state at present. "The total absence of trade unions in a democracy is not a healthy sign. It might give rise to naxalite activities.

The perspective as conceived from the above discussion is that “many of the achievements have been done by the BRO with the assistance of unorganized labour forces and their dedication to the nation; apart from that they executed the same in other countries is incredible support to the BRO and the national development. Therefore the researcher suggested that the government may step forward to accommodate the unorganized employees in to the legal frame of the BRO. This activity may cause financial burden and administrative bottlenecks, but the national development is highly possible and the unorganized labours’ life resources will lead to bright future. The natural climates of the unorganized labours are assassinated by
political disputes and issues; they are utilized for the voting mechanism of the Indian political strategy and scenario.