

CHAPTER VII : BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION

7.1 Avoidable extra expenditure due to injudicious planning

Injudicious planning of expansion of a road by Border Roads Organisation led to duplication of work and avoidable extra expenditure of Rs 72.83 lakh.

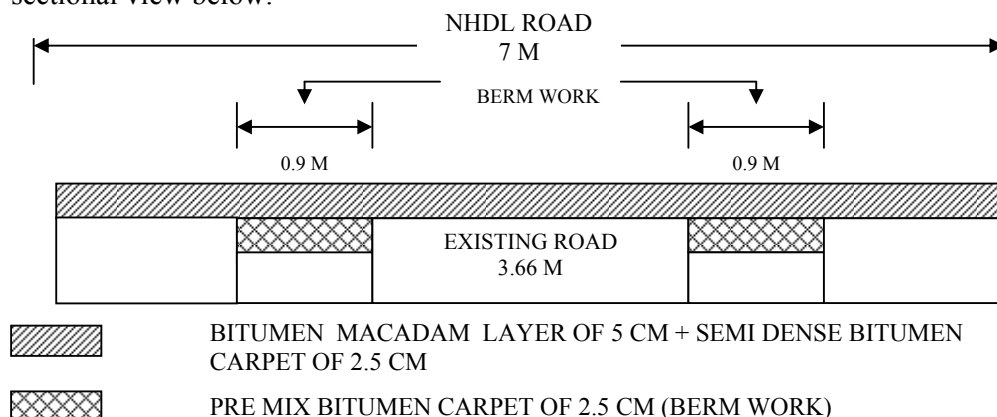
Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri road, a part of Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road is an important road link between Kashmir Valley and Ladakh region. Project Beacon of Border Roads Organisation looks after the road from Km 12 to 108.

Chief Engineer Project Beacon observed in July 1999 that existing class-9 road between Km 12 to 81 was not sufficient to sustain heavy traffic as its width was 3.66 metres only. It was proposed to expand it to National Highways Double Lane (NHDL) (7M). Army Headquarters approved the work in October 1999.

Meanwhile in July 1999 itself, Project Chief Engineer, anticipating delay of two to three years in land acquisition for expansion of the road to NHDL, proposed strengthening of 80 to 90 cm berms on either side of the road between Km 12 to 81. This would make two-way traffic possible without involving land acquisition. Director General Border Roads (DGBR) accepted the above proposal and sanctioned the work in November 1999 at a cost of Rs 4.02 crore. The berm work commenced in November 1999 and was completed in March 2003 at an expenditure of Rs 4.20 crore. The work included, among other items, 2.5cm bitumen work which was done at a cost of Rs 1.47 crore.

While land was yet to be acquired, DGBR also accorded three sanctions between November 2002 and August 2003 for improvement of the road to NHDL specification at three stretches of 34.225 Km between Km 12 to 81. The work of NHDL commenced in May 2002 and was in progress as of July 2004.

Bitumen work of NHDL specification involved laying a bitumen macadam layer of 5 cm thickness over which semi dense bitumen carpet of 2.5 cm thickness was to be provided. This work was to be done over the berm work as depicted in the cross-sectional view below:



The bitumen work executed during the strengthening of berm proved infructuous as the bitumen work of NHDL specification had to be done over and above this. The expenditure of Rs 72.83 lakh on the bitumen work done during berm strengthening for road length of 34.225 Km was thus avoidable.

To an audit query, DGBR stated in July 2004 that bituminous work had to be done during NHDL improvement work as the existing surface got damaged due to frequent movement of dozer etc. The reply is not tenable. DGBR instead of doing berm strengthening work could have directly taken up work on NHDL improvement given the fact that Army Headquarters had approved NHDL, as early as in October 1999. NHDL work in the 34.225 Km road stretch was done without any land acquisition, the reason cited for taking up the intermediate berm work.

The matter was referred to the Ministry in September 2004; their reply was awaited as of December 2004.