



## **Sikkim: BRO proves its mettle again; clears snow along Gangtok-Nathu La border road**

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The Border Roads Organization (BRO) achieved a herculean task of clearing the snow along the Gangtok-Nathu La border road.

The Gangtok-Nathu La border road was closed after the sudden snowfall that stranded nearly 4,000 tourists in the upper reaches of East Sikkim on Friday.

The BRO has once again proved its mettle as a first responder in emergency and crisis situations.

The tourists vehicles could not return to Gangtok as the road became slippery and dangerous for plying of vehicles. Immediately, the local formation of BRO swung into action and started clearing snow to enable tourists to come back to Gangtok by night, reports Sikkim Express.

The BRO deployed specialized snow clearing machines and moved them along Kupup-Nathula road.

The situation was assessed again by civil and Army authorities and it was decided to halt the snow clearance operation by BRO in the larger interest of safety and security of tourists.

The tourists were accommodated in camps of BRO and Army and were given warm clothes and food for the night, a Border Roads Organization statement informed.

Two task force commanders of Project Swastik of the organization were given the specific task of overseeing the operation of speedy opening of the stretch so that tourists could get back to their places as early as possible.

As more snow had accumulated in the intervening night, more dedicated resources were deployed in a coordinated manner. The road was finally cleared of snow and all tourists were safely guided to Gangtok by Saturday afternoon.

# BRO rescues stranded tourists in Sikkim

GUWAHATI, DEC 31: In a recent snowfall in the upper reaches of East Sikkim, nearly 2500 tourists were stranded as the road surface become slippery and dangerous for plying of vehicles. On 28th Dec afternoon there was a sudden change in weather conditions and it started snowing profusely resulting in 6 inches to 10 inches of snow along the road from Gangtok to Nathula (on Indo-China Border).

Nathula which is approximately 56 km north east of Gangtok is a popular tourist destination and this period of the year attracts lot of tourists from all over the country due to X mas vacations. Some 400 tourist vehicles mostly hired Innova, Scorpio, Bolero, WagonR and other light vehicles were allowed to visit the Nathula Pass on the day (28th Dec) by civil and Army authorities. Due to sudden onslaught of snowfall late in the day, most vehicles could not negotiate the snow-laden road surface and got stranded on the road in sub zero weather conditions.

Immediately The local formation of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) swung into action and started clearing snow, though it was quite late in the day to normally undertake such an operation, to enable tourist to fall back to Gangtok by night. BRO deployed specialised snow clearing machines and moved them along Kupup – Nathula road. By the time these machines reached clearing the stretch from Nathula to 17th mile (25Km from Gangtok), it was 8 P.M in the night. The situation was assessed again at 8 P.M by Civil and Army authorities and it was decided to halt the

snow clearance operation by BRO in the larger interest of safety and security of tourists.

The tourists were accommodated in camps of BRO and Army and were given warm clothes and food for the night. Before the first light on 29th Dec, BRO resumed the snow clearance operation from two ends that is both from Mile 17 end and Gangtok end. Two Task Force Commanders (764 BRTF and 758 BRTF) of Project Swastik of BRO were given the specific task of overseeing this operation of speedy opening of the stretch so that tourists can get back to their places as early as possible. As more snow had accumulated in the intervening night, more dedicated resources were deployed in a coordinated manner. The road was finally cleared of snow by 1130 Hrs and all tourists were safely guided to Gangtok by noon of 29th Dec.

The operation was highly challenging as it was to be completed partially in the night itself and required mobilisation of resources in the night after assessing the needs for following day's job to ensure faster clearance of the remaining stretch. The personnel of General Reserve Engineer Force of BRO rose to this gargantuan challenge and were raring to carry out the operation in the night itself before it was decided by the authorities to halt the snow clearance after 8 PM keeping in mind the safety of tourists. All through out the operation the DGBR and ADG (East) of BRO coordinated and monitored the job closely.