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## **HISTORY OF PROJECT VARTAK**

### **The Beginning**

1. During the second meeting of BRDB on 13 May 1960, late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister directed that the work on the construction of Road Bhalukpong-Tenga should commence on 01 Jun 1960. Accordingly, Project Tusker was raised on 07 May 1960. Thus Project Tusker was the first in Border Roads Organisation to commence road construction activity.

2. Project Tusker was also made responsible for the maintenance of road Missamari-Foothills-Chaku-Tenga, which had been constructed by PWD.

### **Elephant Gate: Entry To Bomdila-Tawang Road**

3. Work on the improvement of the Road Bhalukpong-Tenga-Bomdila was continued by 14 BRTF, which was raised in early 1962. The most difficult stretch on this high priority road was between Sessa and Bomdila. The task was completed in 6 months and the road was made trafficable by Oct 1962. Further improvements continued. Shri YB Chavan, the then Defence Minister formally opened the road in Apr 1963.

4. In 1962, a jeepable track Bomdila-Dirang-Sela-Tawang was also attempted. A Signals Task Force was raised for laying of telephone lines for Bomdila-Tawang, North Lakhimpur-Lekhabali-Along, Kimin-Ziro and Along-Daporijo sector.

## **Initial Problems**

5. During the initial induction of the Project, there were many teething problems. Maj Gen OM Mani, the first Chief Engineer (then Brigadier) of the Project later recalled:-

“The Administrative Offices functioned under the cover of tarpaulins spread over bamboos. The office furniture comprised of a few packing cases and even these were in short supply. Working hours were from sunrise to sunset and could not be extended further, only because of non-availability of hurricane lanterns.”

6. The main problem was communication. The rail link was only upto Rangapara North. Therefore, Dibrugarh had to be the base from where men and material could be inducted into areas North of River Brahmaputra.

7. The Force had newly recruited officers and men who were not well versed with the area and nature of work. Only a limited number of Army officers and MES staff were made available. Labour was not available locally and had to be imported from the neighboring States of Bihar and Orissa, and also from Nepal.

8. Procurement of stores was also a serious logistic constraint, as the market infrastructure available nearby was inadequate. The problem was compounded by the lack of proper communications. Transportation of ration and POL was a major problem and often it had to be done on man-pack basis through slush and mud.

## **1962 Chinese Aggression**

9. The 1962 Chinese aggression totally disrupted the construction activity. Instructions were received to wind up all work and evacuate all troops and stores. All plants, machinery and camps had to be destroyed. 1, 3, 4, 7 and 14 BRTFs were moved out and re-organised at Roorkee and Allahabad. During this operation, 1571 Pioneer Coy which was working North of Bomdila, suffered many casualties and many GREF personnel were taken as Prisoners of War.

## **Resumption of Works**

10. On cease-fire and consequent re-organization, the Task Forces returned to their areas of operation as under:-

(a) 1 BRTF was re-inducted in Jan 1963 at Dibrugarh and later moved to Lekhabali for improvement of the Moridhal – Sessi – Burgaon sector. It was later moved to Pooh in Jun 1963 and placed under Project Deepak.

(b) 7 BRTF was reinducted at Basar. It took over the Bame – Daporijo and Along – Basar roads. In Dec 1964, it also took over the Daporijo – Taliha and Daporijo – Lamdak roads on Daporijo – Ziro road. This TF was disbanded in Apr 1967, after handing over the Bame – Daporijo road to 3 BRTF and other roads to 4 BRTF.

(c) 3 BRTF was deployed on Moridhal – Sassi – Burgaon.

(d) 14 BRTF moved to its original location on the Bhalukpong – Tenga – Tawang axis.

## **Renaming of The Project**

11. In 1963, subsequent to the Indianisation of names, the Project was rechristened as VARTAK.

12. During 1964-65, for the improvement of the Bhalukpong – Tenga – Tawang axis, formation targets to connect Bomdila with Sela (a distance of approximate 102 Kms), and surfacing work from Bhalukpong to Rupa (a distance of approximately 88 Kms) were assigned to 14 BRTF. This challenging task was under taken by the Task Force and was achieved by working 12 to 16 hours a day.

## **Re-Organisation Of Task Forces**

13. Between 1967 and 1971, there was a massive reorganization of Task Forces. 7 BRTF was disbanded in Apr 1967. 4 BRTF was re-organised as 39 Maintenance Task Force and in Jan 1971 moved to Dimwe in Lohit District and subsequently re-named as 48 BRTF. 3 BRTF was renamed as 44 MTF in Sep 1970

and re-organised as 44 BRTF in May 1972 with its Headquarters at its present location Along. 1310 Fractional Task Force was raised in Apr 84, re-organised in Dec 1986 as 756 BRTF and was located at Ziro. Deposit works from various agencies like NEC, NEEPCO and OIL INDIA were under taken by this TF. The TF HQ subsequently in Feb 98, moved to Naharlagun, 8 Kms short of Itanagar. Prestigious works like construction of accommodation for NERIST in Itanagar and Tezpur University were also undertaken by 756 BRTF.

### **Raising of New Project Udayak**

14. As the work load of Project Vartak increased, sectors South of Brahmaputra River and eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh (East of Likabali-Along) were taken out from Project Vartak. Project Udayak was raised during 1986 to take over these sectors. HQ 48 BRTF and other units were placed under Project Udayak.

### **Raising of New Project Arunank Out of AOR of VARTAK**

15. The increased work load of the Project as well as the specified PDsC for Indo-China Border Roads necessitated raising of a new Project, namely Arunank. It was located at Naharlagun in Itanagar(AP). This new Project started functioning wef Dec 2008. Works in the valleys of Subansiri, Siang and Siyon of Arunachal Pradesh and NH-52 sector in Assam were entrusted to Project Arunank. Three TFs i.e. 756 TF, 44 TF and 23 TF were placed under this new Project.

### **Departmental Construction Of Permanent Bridges**

16. In 1986, it was decided by the BRO to go in for construction of permanent bridges departmentally. This resulted in the establishment of two Bridge Construction Coys. 1441 BCC was allotted to Project Vartak. The Project's first departmentally constructed permanent pre-stressed concrete bridge, Kamla II, on Balipara – Charduar – Tawang road was inaugurated by Lt Gen MS Gosain, AVSM, VSM, the then DGBR, on 04 Nov 1990. Subsequently, six more permanent bridges were completed in 14 TF sector by 1993. 1441 BCC continues to construct high quality permanent bridges, even at altitudes of over 10000 feet and across swift

mountain rivers in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam the year wise achievement of BCC as part of Project Vartak in the recent past is as under:-

	Year	A/U	Target	Achieved	Remarks
(a)	2008-09	Mtrs	115.920	130.690	Excl progress of sectors handed over to (P) Arunanak
(b)	2009-10	Mtrs	250.070	205.430	
(c)	2010-11	Mtrs	289.050	219.430	
(d)	2011-12	Mtrs	267.610	280.640	
(e)	2012-13	Mtrs	326.39	276.43	
(f)	2013-14	Mtrs	285.18	185.08	
(g)	2014-15	Mtrs	329.21	67.378	

### **Building Works (As Deposit Works)**

17. The following building works was entrusted to this Project as deposit works by different agencies since 1996:-

(a) Construction of residential accommodation, area development and internal roads of Tezpur University, Nappam Campus. Works were since completed and handed over to concerned agency.

(b) Construction of the Degree & Diploma Academic blocks, and residential accommodation by the North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), Itanagar.

(c) Construction of Residential School with boys and girls hostel for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya at Gorponding in Tawang, as part of the Rural Education Development Programme.

### **Tawang Axis**

18. The Project has been tasked to upgrade the main axis, Balipara-Charduar-Tenga - Tawang from CI-9 to National Highway Double Lane specifications. Initial stretch of 34 Kms between Balipara – Bhalukpong lies in the state of Assam whilst the bal stretch of 283 Kms is in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Trans Arunachal Highway (NH-13)**

19. Part of road Balipara-Charduar-Tawang from KM 85.00 to 317.52 has been declared as part of Trans Arunachal Highway (NH-13) to be devp to NHDL specifications. The Project has the distinction of being responsible for 1442 Kms of GS roads contributing towards operational preparedness of the Army in Tawang sector.

### **SARDP NE**

20. The Project has been entrusted with improvement of existing roads and construction of new roads under SARDP, also known as NHDP-NE programme. In this a programme a total of 1170 Kms of existing roads are to be upgraded/improved at an approximate cost of 1225 crores and 680 Kms new roads to be constructed at an approximate cost of Rs.740 crores. Accordingly, works are in progress at different stages. Only one road Lumla-Tashigaon in this Project is under constr for a length of 47.850 km under SARDP-NE programme.

### **ITBP Roads Along Indo – China Border**

21. Construction of three Nos of ITBP roads aggregating 110.60 Kms length has been entrusted to the Project. Accordingly, works on following roads were taken up:-

- (a) Shungatsar – Kharsangla. - 15.90 Kms .
- (b) Zimithang–Survasamba–LogBr–Khinzemane. - 1.70Kms.
- (c) Br IV-Thimbu-Mago-Chuna. - 83.00 Kms.

(Work not yet commenced)

### **Alternate Route To Tenga**

22. Certain stretches of Road Balipara-Charduar-Tawang (sector Bhalukpong-Tenga) which were constructed prior to 1962 have poor geometrics in terms of steep gradients and blind curves besides passing through densely foggy area and thus is prone to accidents. To overcome these draw backs, construction of road Foothills-Chaku-Tenga was taken up but was later abandoned on directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court because the alignment passed through Eagle Nest wild life sanctuary.

23. Based on Hon'ble Supreme Court directions, MoEF has cleared development of road Orang-Kalaktang-Shergaon-Rupa-Tenga (OKSRT) as alternate route to Tenga. Approval was also accorded by Army for improvement of this axis to NHDL specifications

### **Achievements Over the Yrs**

24. Target Vs Achievement of the Project in the last five yrs are as under:-

S No	Item	A/U	Achievement					
			2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
(a)	Fmn	Kms CI-9	183.28	150.04	217.12	209.07	67.623	27.149
(b)	Surf	Kms CI-9	114.41	110.57	117.63	195.28	166.949	135.014
(c)	Resurf	Kms CI-9	110.17	112.12	90.02	58.46	79.802	33.404

(d)	Pmt Works	Cr	65.56	91.92	128.19	91.922	88.27	56.97
(e)	Maj Br	Mtr	205.43	219.43	280.64	276.43	185.08	67.375

25. To cope up with the increased work load new units were inducted/raised in the Project:-

(a) HQ 763 BRTF - 763 BRTF was raised on 31 Jul 2008 at Khirmu.

(b) HQ 42 BRTF - 42 BRTF along with 97 RCC and 1065 Fd Wksp was inducted from (P) Setuk in Jun 2010. HQ 42 BRTF and 1065 Fd Wksp have been loc at Sapper Camp, KM 189 of BCT road alongwith 1032 (I) ESPL. HQ 97 RCC moved to Munna Camp at KM 167 of BCT road. Sapper camp is a temporary location for HQ 42 BRTF as the available land is not sufficient to accommodate three units. Presently land measuring 2.03 acres at KM 172.400 of BCT road has been identified and acquired for siting 42 BRTF

(c) 125 RCC - 125 RCC moved from (P) Himank in Jan 2010

(d) 120 RCC - 120 RCC moved from (P) Setuk in 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

(e) New Raising:- Assorted platoons, one Pnr Coy and one ESPL have also been raised as accretions.

## **Conclusion**

26. Vartak with its motto “Patience – Perseverance – Performance” has always looked to the future with an aim to promote quality and excellence in every sphere of its activity in the service of The Armed Forces and the people of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and will continue to do so with undeterred resolution. It has also continued to pioneer the opening up of the inaccessible vast hinter land in this State, to the Socio-Economic development opportunities of today.

27. In the continued achievement of its objectives against all odds, 4388 persons, including CPLs, have made the Supreme sacrifice in the service of the Nation. Project Vartak pays homage to the Martyrs of the Project, who sacrificed



their lives for the construction of roads for the country. A befitting memorial in their memory has been erected at Tezpur.

28. Operating in the remote and pristine locales of Western Arunachal Pradesh, the “Land of Dawn-Lit-Mountains”, Project Vartak continues to stand true to the motto of the Border Roads Organisation, which in essence propagates that “Everything Is Achievable With Hard Work”. The provision and maintenance of vital strategic road communications for the Army in the remote frontiers of the Western Arunachal Pradesh continues to be our primary objective.

