

AIR Spotlight - Strengthening Road Network along the Borders

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panelists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is the strengthening of the road network along India's borders by the BRO.

Participants:

- Lt General Rajiv Choudhary, DG, Border Roads Organization.
- Ramesh Chandra, AIR Correspondent.

Introduction:

- 'We will either find a way or make one' is the motto of the [Border Roads Organization \(BRO\)](#).
- BRO is a 60-year-old organization that is creating infrastructure not only with cement and mortar but also with sweat and blood.

Working of BRO:

- BRO was started in 1960 and since then has done tremendous work.
- BRO works in difficult terrains and under harsh conditions. It creates infrastructure along the border for the movement of the military and for the socio-economic development of border villages.
- BRO is deployed in challenging geographies from the Thar desert to Leh-Ladakh to the North-Eastern states.
- Under project Himank, BRO has constructed a bridge that will ease vehicular movement to the base camp of Siachen Glacier, the world's highest battlefield.
- In Ladakh, BRO is clearing mountain passes above 16000 feet from mean sea level.
- The road constructed by them in remote border areas has helped people in trade and commerce, health, and education.
- In Himachal Pradesh, BRO connected a remote village named 'Huri' to the nearby town, bringing cheers to the inhabitants.

Achievements of BRO:

- Since 1960, BRO has constructed 60,000 km of roads and 6000 km of roads are under construction, 743 bridges have been constructed and 234 bridges are under construction.
- On 3rd October 2020, the [Atal Tunnel](#) constructed by BRO was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. This is the longest tunnel above 10000 feet.
- Recently, the construction of the Chamba tunnel in Uttarakhand has been completed. BRO is also constructing tunnels in Arunachal Pradesh.
- A tunnel under the Brahmaputra river is also being constructed. There will be three tubes of the tunnel: two for road and one for railways. It will be a unique and the longest project of its type.

- For the first time in history, BRO managed to keep Zozila pass open till 31st December and reopened it on 21st April.
- The budget of BRO has increased from Rs. 5000 Cr in 2018-19 to Rs. 7000 Cr in 2019-20 and Rs. 8763 crores in 2020-21. For this year (2021-22), the target is to achieve Rs. 12,000 crore.

Technology and new development:

- BRO started with simple technology. As challenges of construction keep on increasing, BRO keeps on adopting advanced technologies for infrastructure development.
- For example, across the Himalayan states of Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the slope is very steep and fragile. To stabilize the slopes various methods such as the use of geo-textiles, specific chemicals, etc. have been used.
- In certain areas, plastic-coated aggregates have also been used. Plastic-coated aggregates strengthen the roads and make them impervious. As waste plastics are used, the carbon footprint also reduces.
- Now, controlled blasting is being used to make passes through mountains so that the whole rock structure of the mountains does not get disturbed as was happening under normal blasting.
- Silent explosives are also used to avoid too much explosion-related noise.

COVID impact on work of BRO:

- BRO made extensive preparations for COVID. BRO created quarantine facilities, vaccinated all its employees, and is now focusing on their families.
- BRO has one of the lowest cases of COVID-related casualties among all other government departments.
- BRO also kept on working during the pandemic. Recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 63 bridges in eight states and UTs. The projects were completed by BRO at a combined cost of Rs.240 crores.
- The government has provided satellite phones to labourers so that they can connect with their families even from remote locations. Mr. Singh will also give 19,000 winter jackets to workers, who are working in tough conditions.
- BRO personnel have also been provided rations similar to the military. They are provided with good medical facilities and air uplift in case of emergencies. These raise their morale.

Humanitarian works by BRO:

- Apart from construction work, BRO also performs other tasks such as operating schools, hospitals, distribution of books, organizing medical camps, etc.
- BRO is active in rescue and relief operations. For example, recently, in the Baralacha pass, some tourists got stranded. BRO rescued and provided them with medical facilities.

Conclusion:

BRO has an unparalleled record when it comes to efficiency and working under harsh conditions. The quality of works speaks for itself. That is why southern states demand that BRO should also construct projects in their states. The work culture of BRO is an example for other government departments to follow.

