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Ministry of Defence approves delegation of Powers to Border Roads Organisation

The Ministry of Defence has decided to delegate administrative and financial powers to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) right upto the level of Chief Engineer and Task Force Commander, so as to avoid delays on account of references between the Chief Engineer and HQ DGBR and also between HQ DGBR and the Ministry.

Functioning under the control of the Ministry of Defence since 2015, the BRO is engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions in the border areas of the country. The Ministry of Defence intends to bring transformational changes in the organization in order to improve the pace of execution of works and to achieve the desired outcomes according to the requirement of the Armed Forces.

In line with the aim to bring in transformational changes in the BRO, various powers of delegation have been revised. According to the earlier delegation of powers, a Chief Engineer in the BRO could give administrative approval of works only upto Rs. 10 crore, that too only for departmental works, whereas the ADGBR had powers to accord administrative approval only upto Rs. 20 crore for departmental works. For contractual works, all administrative approvals were given by DGBR, who had powers only upto Rs. 50 crore. Enhancing the powers at all levels in the BRO, the Ministry of Defence has now approved that for both departmental and contractual mode of execution, a Chief Engineer of BRO can accord administrative approval upto Rs. 50 crore, ADGBR upto Rs. 75 crore and DGBR upto Rs. 100 crore.

Further, according to the earlier delegation of powers, a Chief Engineer in the BRO had the power to accept execution of contracts only upto Rs. 10 crore, ADGBR had powers upto Rs. 20 crore, beyond which all tenders had to be sent to DGBR. With the intent to speed up the tendering process, the Ministry of Defence has now enhanced the powers of Chief Engineer for acceptance of bids with cost of contract upto Rs. 100 crore and that of ADGBR for cost of contract upto Rs. 300 crore. With this delegation, the entire tendering process including acceptance of bids would be completed at the level of Chief Engineer/ADGBR for a majority of the contracts.

For adopting the DPR mode of execution, there is a need to outsource consultancy services. According to the earlier delegation of powers, a Chief Engineer had powers only upto Rs. 10 lakh, ADGBR upto Rs. 50 lakh and DGBR upto Rs. 2 crore. The Ministry of Defence has now enhanced the powers of Chief Engineer to accord administrative approval for outsourcing of consultancy services upto Rs. 2 crore and ADGBR upto Rs. 5 crore and full powers beyond Rs. 5 crore to DGBR.

There also is a need to replace obsolete construction equipment in the BRO with modern equipment. According

to the earlier delegation of powers, DGBR had powers only upto Rs. 7.5 crore for procurement of indigenous equipment and Rs. 3 crore for procurement of imported equipment. All other cases of procurement had to be referred to the Ministry of Defence. In order to fast track the procurement of latest construction machinery and equipment in the BRO, the Ministry of Defence has enhanced the delegation of powers upto Rs. 100 crore to DGBR for procurement of both indigenous/imported equipment.

In case of emergent need for construction equipment, DGBR has been given full powers for hiring upto three years and for Chief Engineers (Project), powers have been enhanced from Rs. 50 lakh to Rs. 5 crore and the period of hiring has been enhanced from 6 months to one year.

The BRO is engaged in road construction activities in the most difficult areas and the usage norms and fixation of life of construction equipment varies from terrain to terrain. Earlier, all cases of revision of norms of equipment and fixation of life had to be referred to the Ministry of Defence. In a departure from the earlier policy, full powers in this regard have been delegated to DGBR.

The Ministry of Defence in consultation with the Armed Forces would identify the roads to be entrusted to the BRO and fix priorities by approving the Long Term Roll-On Works Plan and Annual Works Programme for the BRO. Thereafter, powers related to execution of works have been delegated to be exercised by different levels within the BRO. However, to ensure accountability, a MIS is being developed for online monitoring of progress of works.

From the current year, the BRO has initiated the practice of preparation of DPRs for all new road projects to be taken up and has adopted the project mode of execution. In an important policy change from the conventional departmental mode of execution followed by the BRO in the past, the organisation has now also started adopting the EPC mode of execution. The Ministry of Defence has approved policy guidelines in this regard, based on which the BRO may engage big construction companies for taking up road projects on a turnkey basis.

It is expected that with delegation of powers by the Ministry of Defence to the BRO, the pace of road construction in border areas would improve and the BRO would be able to complete ongoing/new projects in compressed timelines.

NW/DK/Rajib