

ROADS WING, MINISTRY OF SHIPPING & TRANSPORT

In 1930, the Office of the Special Chief Engineer was created with a small staff to administer the newly constituted Central Road Fund and to advise the Government of India generally in all matters concerning road development. Later, this became the Office of the Consulting Engineer to the Govt. of India (Roads) and was expanded in 1935 and again during World War II.

The realisation that a balanced road system was a vital prerequisite to the post-war economic development of the country impelled the Central Government to convene a Conference of all the State Chief Engineers (at Nagpur in December, 1943) to make proposals for a comprehensive plan of road development for India. Their report (commonly known as the Nagpur Plan) represents the first integrated Road Plan for India.

In the process of implementation of the various recommendations in this plan and as a result of the Central Government assuming complete financial liability for the maintenance and development of a system of roads accepted by them as National Highways, the Office of the Consulting Engineer to the Government of India (Road Development) was expanded and came to be known as the Roads Wing of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport. In 1966, the head of the Organisation was designated as Director General (Road Development).

Administrative set-up : The Director General (Road Development) is also ex-officio Addl. Secretary to the Govt. of India. He is assisted by one All. Director General (Bridges) and one Addl. Director General (Roads). They are in turn assisted by Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers, Executive Engineers and Assistant Executive Engineers. On the Secretariat side, there are 2 Deputy Secretaries, 4 Under Secretaries and Secretariat Branches. Besides the Headquarters staff, the Roads Wing has 10 Regional offices which are located in the States of Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow), Bihar (Patna), Karnataka (Bangalore), Rajasthan (Jaipur), West Bengal (Calcutta), Maharashtra (Bombay), Tamil Nadu (Madras), Chandigarh, Assam (Gauhati) and Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad).

Main Functions : Broadly speaking, the Roads Wing is concerned mainly with the following matters pertaining to :

- (i) to administer the Central Road Fund and allocate it equitably to the various states for works approved by the Government of India;
- (ii) to regulate the construction and maintenance of National Highways and to provide funds for these works;
- (iii) to develop and maintain roads other than National Highways in Union Territories and Centrally administered areas;
- (iv) to provide Central Aid for selected State roads including bridges on inter-State or economic importance;
- (v) to develop and maintain roads considered necessary on strategic grounds;
- (vi) all *ad hoc* projects which the Government of India might want to be undertaken from time to time such as roads/bridge projects which might be financed with World Bank Aid although they are also supposed to be part of normal Plan;
- (vii) to secure balanced development of roads and road transport and to co-ordinate with other systems of transport, principally railways;
- (viii) to collect compile, analyse and interpret road statistics covering all aspects of road development;
- (ix) to draw up Standard Specifications and Designs for roads and bridges;
- (x) to deal with all policy matters relating to the Indian Road Construction Corporation set-up by this Ministry as a Public Sector Undertaking for road bridge construction works abroad;
- (xi) to sponsor, guide and finance Highway Research, Development and Planning Studies;
- (xii) to improve the technical knowledge and experience of the highway engineering personnel by sponsoring the training of engineers in India and abroad; by disseminating information on standards and modern engineering techniques, and by encouraging the study of road economics and administration;
- (xiii) to advise the State Governments in the procurement and the use of road making machinery, including the fostering of their manufacture;
- (xiv) to arrange for the priority and procurement of road making materials in short supply such as steel, cement and bitumen and to assist in securing priority transport;
- (xv) to advise other Central Government Ministries (Defence, External Affairs, etc.) on all matters concerning roads and to advise similarly the State Governments; and
- (xvi) to function generally as a repository of technical, statistical, and administrative information on all matters concerning roads and bridges.

National Highways : The National Highways came into being on 1.4.1947 when the Government of India assumed responsibility for the development and maintenance of certain roads provisionally known as National Highways. In 1956, the Govt. of India enacted the National Highway Act 1956, and the existing National Highways were declared statutorily as National Highways.

Central Road Fund : This fund was constituted in the year 1929 as a non-lapsing Fund. It derives its revenue out of the proceeds from duty of customs and excise levied on non-aviation motor spirit, at the rate of 2½ annas per gallon (now 3.5 paise per litre) of taxed motor spirit.

Twenty per cent of the proceeds from revenue accruing to the CRF is retained by the Central Govt. and credited to the CRF (Ordinary) Reserve. The balance eighty per cent of the revenue forms part of the CRF (Allocations). Account and is distributed to States/Administrations of Union Territories by way of allocations in proportion to the quantity of non-aviation motor spirit consumed by each. In addition, the Fund has also a third sub-division called the Special Reserve. It consists of the funds provided by any Central Ministry (Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Defence, etc.) for road schemes required to be handled by the Ministry of Shipping and Transport for these Central Organisations.

The revised objectives of Fund are to carry out :

- (i) Road Research and Intelligence;
- (ii) Traffic Studies and Economic Surveys;
- (iii) Training of Young Engineers;
- (iv) Scheme of all India importance leading to the removal of regional imbalances such as helping in the development of tribal areas and backward regions, promoting inter-state communication facilities, helping in combating anti-social and criminal elements, part contribution to programmes for setting up roadside resting places and passenger way-side facilities on state roads, promotion of tourism, agricultural marketing areas links and road/bridge works required for National Projects such as Atomic Power Stations, Industrial Undertakings etc.

Besides handling the work of sanctioning and implementation of different Central Sector Road Programmes and the development and maintenance of National Highways, the Roads Wing is also responsible for co-ordination and control, standards and specifications, settling priorities and general administration in respect of National Highways. In addition, the Organisation is to coordinate the road policies of the Centre and the States and act as a repository of Technical Information on roads and bridges.

Highway Research Development and Planning Studies :- This Scheme was included in the Fifth Plan for the first time and is intended to provide earmarked funds for the promotion of Highway Research and Planning Studies. With a view to ensuring proper programming, planning and implementation of schemes undertaken under this programme, there is a Highway Research Board set-up under the aegis of the Indian Roads Congress with the Director General (Road Development) as the Chairman. This Board is intended to co-ordinate, disseminate and recommend to the Central and State Govts. schemes to be taken up under this programme. With a view to processing the research scheme further, the Ministry have set-up 3 Groups viz. Highway Research Advisory Panel, Steering Group and Planning and Implementation Group. Important projects undertaken under this programme is the Highway Design Study. This programme is estimated to cost Rs. 74.15 lakhs and is being aided by the World Bank partly to the extent of US \$ 2 lakh (Rs 18 lakh), the balance cost being met by the Ministry of Shipping and Transport and the Central Road Research Institute. Already 15 roads/bridge schemes approved by the Highway Research Advisory Panel are in progress and the preliminary work on most of the second package of 20 schemes approved by the Panel has been completed.

Training Institute for Highway Engineers : This has been set-up with a view to providing facilities for at-entry and in-service training for Highway Engineers. The expenditure involved would be met by this Ministry and the states on a 50:50 basis. The objectives of the Institute are :-

- (i) to help highway engineers develop managerial skill and professional ability to plan, design construct, and maintain an efficient, safe reliable and economic highway system as an integrated part of the nation's economy.
- (ii) to stimulate and encourage amongst the highway engineers a desire to learn and know within the organisation and realise their potential in a spirit of mutual-understanding and co-operation; and
- (iii) to help highway engineers to build up character and develop an all-round personality and 'spirit de corps'.

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