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H.M.'s Personal Section.

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Correspondence with Cabinet Ministers.

Previous References.

Later References.

Sheet - 3

To - do

1

Government of India.
Ministry of Works, Mines & Power.
New Delhi, dated the 24th May, 1948.

Mr. S.S.

Pl. open a
new file -
"Covers with
Cabinet Ministers"
✓ send me

S.S.
6/7

My dear *Mr. S.S.*

The construction of pukka modern road between Pathankot and Jammu was entrusted to this Ministry in the month of September 1947 and this Ministry was asked to complete the work before the monsoon was on; the date fixed was 30th June 1948. The mileage is 65, two big bridges, one on Ravi with a length of 2800 feet and another on Uja with a length of 2700 feet besides half a dozen big causeways and dozens of culverts constitute the quantum of work. Mr. Puri, Chief Engineer, Central P.W.D., was put incharge of this.

Immediately he set up the necessary organisation, materials such as crushers, mixers, bridge material, etc. were collected from all over the country from the various Disposal Depots. Pumps and other equipment were also assembled. This took nearly two months. Early in December transport facilities were made available and the material was moved to Pathankot by special trains.

The line of the road runs through uneven terra with several cuttings and with several Malas, some of them are more than a mile in length. Many difficulties undoubtedly were anticipated but certain sudden difficulties also cropped up; one of them was that the road being just 7 to 8 miles from the Pakistan Border, was subject to occasional raids from Pakistan side. The labour difficulties were also great as no local labour was available and the refugees would not, in the initial stages, even work for love or liquor. The road had to pass through thick forests which also meant unhealthy conditions for labour working there. Another sudden difficulty which the Engineers had to face was ~~unseasonable~~ floods of river Ravi and other petty rivers which lie between Nadhaur and Jammu. There were moments when our Engineers became pessimistic but the urgency of the task and the issues involved were so over-whelming that they got over the pessimism and worked with a determination to overcome all difficulties.

The real work started from the 10th of March with high hopes and steady determination to complete everything within the scheduled time. In this great task the military authorities not only made available to us such material as they had but they actually have given us the benefit of two Companies of Sappers & Miners and one Pioneer Company. The cooperation between the military engineers and our engineers is so cordial and so thorough that it augurs very well for the future. In the beginning of April General Williams, Head of the Military Engineering Organisation, visited Pathankot and warned our engineers that they were too optimistic, ^{I was} It was very nearly impossible to complete it within the scheduled time. I am, however, glad to state that work started in right earnest from the 15th of March and is going on day and night. Over 40,000 labourers are working between Jammu and Pathankot. It was with a view to give encouragement and stimulate the speed that I visited and inspected the works. ^{In the} Out of the 65 miles of road, most of the culverts are complete so also most of the causeways. As regards the two main bridges, one on Uja is complete. It is 2700 feet in length and is completely of iron of Ingle's pattern. The one on Ravi is 2800 feet in length with 19 piers. 9/10th of this is complete, 1/10th is expected to be complete within the next four weeks. All our engineers and workers are completely confident that by the 30th of June they will have completed the last patch and the last nut on the road and the bridge.

I should say that the enthusiasm with which the work is being done is marvellous. They are making a fine job of it. At the same time every precaution is being taken to see that no wastage either of material or of money or of manpower is made. This is done with a view to avoid any criticism.

^{During} In my inspection tour yesterday General Williams was present throughout and he spoke very highly about the skill of our engineers and he too now is confident that the work will be completed within the scheduled time.

-3-

It is my desire that the formal opening of the bridge and the road should be performed by you as Head of the National Government. This road, when completed, will be a landmark in the history of this country testifying that Indians can do such work in such a short time. It will undoubtedly link up Kashmir and this will be a highway which will bind Kashmir and India indissolubly. I and the officers of my Ministry are very much obliged to you for giving them this opportunity to show the metal in them.

Yours sincerely,

N. V. Gadgil
(N. V. Gadgil).

The Hon'ble Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi.

Copy to Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Deputy
Prime Minister, Govt. of India, Camp Mussorie.