

# daily Excelsior

## Excavation for foundation of world's tallest rly bridge begins

*\* DRDO finalizes blast load parameters for superstructure*

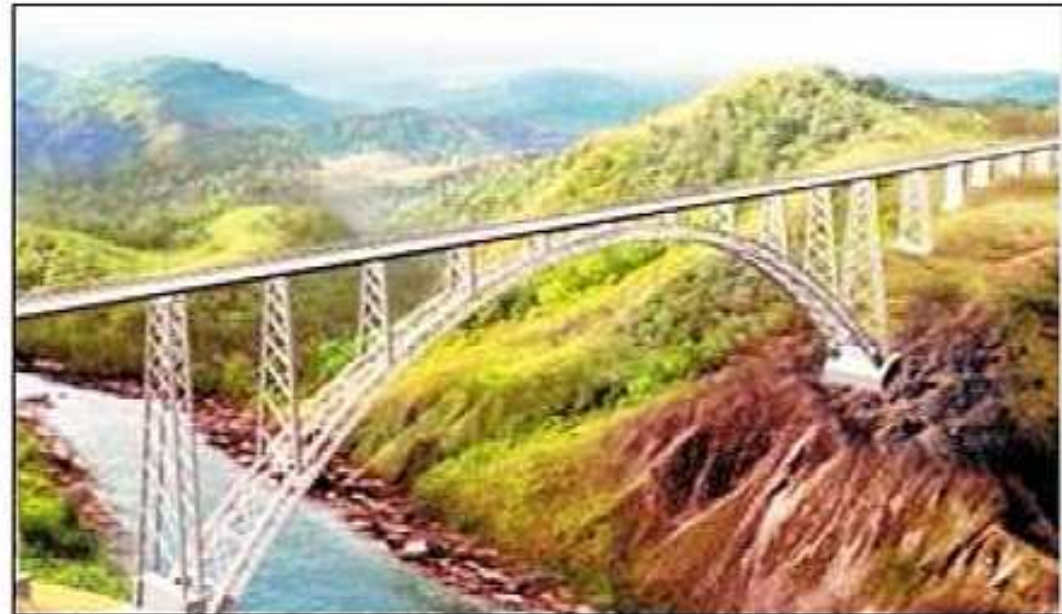
**Mohinder Verma**

JAMMU, May 4: About eight years after the contract for design and built of world's tallest railway bridge was awarded to AFCONS Infrastructure Ltd, the excavation for foundation of the 1315 meter long bridge across river Chenab on Katra-Banihal Section of the prestigious Udhampur-Baramulla railway project has begun in Reasi district while as Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has finalized the blast load parameters for the superstructure of the bridge.

Authoritative sources told EXCELSIOR that based on the soil, rock and other vital parameters furnished by the Northern

Railways and AFCONS Infrastructure Ltd, a team of Indian Institute of Science and Technology, Bangalore, headed by senior scientist Dr Sita Ram finalized the designs for excavation for foundation of world's tallest railway bridge across river Chenab. The designs were then submitted to foreign consultants for proof-checking.

"Following the approval of the foreign consultants, the designs were recently received by AFCONS Infrastructure Ltd and after mobilizing men and machinery, the company has finally begun the excavation for the foundation of the bridge towards Bakkal side", they said, adding "the company has also started construction of about two kilometers road, which is vital to have access to entire area



*An artistic impression of rail bridge across Chenab, which will be world's tallest.*

where the excavation has to be carried out".

About the other side, they said, "the design for excavation from Kauri side is in the final stages of completion and within next few months the same would be submitted to AFCONS after

proof-checking by the foreign consultants".

It is pertinent to mention here that contract for design and built of the bridge was awarded to AFCONS by Konkan Railway Corporation Limited

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(KRCL) in the year 2004 but excavation for the foundation could not be started during all these years because of varied reasons.

When contacted, D K Kunar, AFCONS' Senior Vice-President of the Project confirmed that excavation for the foundation has begun. "We will have to carry out 12 lakh tonnes of excavation on both sides of river Chenab for laying strong foundation of the bridge and it would take one and half year to complete the excavation", he informed.

"The excavation has to be carried out in most scientific manner in order to ensure that excavated material doesn't fall in river Chenab as the same will create silt in the dam of Salal hydroelectric project", Mr Kunar said.

According to the sources, the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has also finalized

the blast load parameters for the superstructure of the bridge and the same have been submitted to the foreign consultants — W S P Consulting Kortés (Finland) and Leonhardt Andra and Partners (Germany) for preparation of designs of the superstructure.

"The design of superstructure was also prepared in the past but the same had to be changed in view of some vital suggestions from security point of view and later the DRDO was approached to suggest the blast load parameters", they said.

Responding to a question, sources said, "the Finland and Germany based companies have not begun preparation of design as they are demanding around Rs 15 crore on the ground that they have no fault if the design of the superstructure has to be changed from security point of view", adding "the Northern Railways has been apprised of this problem

and a joint meeting of AFCONS, foreign consultants and Northern Railways is likely to be held in near future to resolve this issue and ensure that foreign consultants start preparation of design".

In reply to another query, they said, "by the time the excavation for foundation is completed, the design of the superstructure would be ready", adding "the bridge, which is vital to link holy town of Katra with Banihal, is targeted to be completed within next four years".

The railway bridge across river Chenab will be world's tallest as it will have highest point of 360 meter as against the 343 meter highest point of world's existing highest road bridge (Millau Bridge). The total length of the bridge will be 1315 meter and height from river bed to top of bridge 360 meter. The main arch span (steel structure) will be 480 meter.