

**EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 16, 2023**

**NATIONAL**

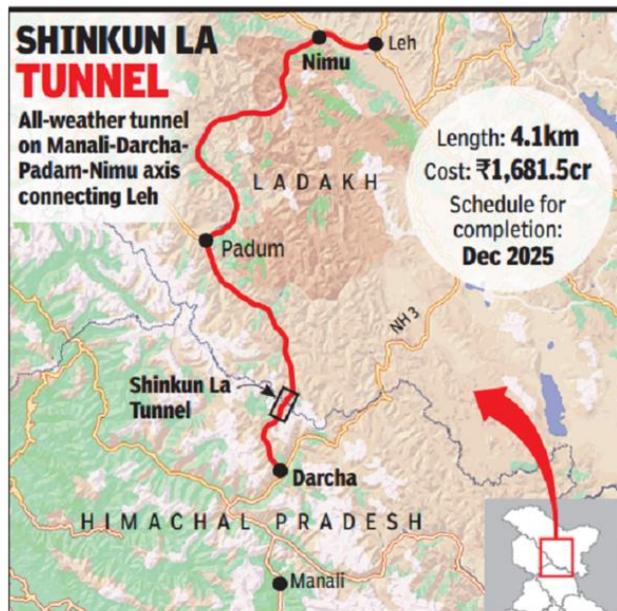
- On February 15, the Union cabinet - approved a Rs. 4,800 crore allocation for the 'Vibrant Villages Programme' (VVP), a centrally-sponsored scheme, to ensure the comprehensive development of villages along the northern border areas.

**2,966 VILLAGES TO BENEFIT** PTI

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cabinet approves ₹4,800cr for Vibrant Villages Programme</li> <li>➤ It is aimed at comprehensive development of villages of <b>blocks on northern land border and reverse outmigration</b></li> <li>➤ Scheme will provide funds for essential infra and jobs in <b>19 districts and 46 border blocks in four states and one UT</b></li> <li>➤ 1st phase to cover <b>663 villages</b></li> <li>➤ Additional battalions will man <b>47 new border out posts &amp; 12</b></li> </ul>	 <p><b>KEY TO SECURITY:</b> Anurag Thakur in New Delhi on Wednesday</p> <p><b>staging camps coming up along LAC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Expenditure to <b>raise the battalions and one sector HQ will be ₹2,772cr</b></li> </ul>
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- ✓ The financial allocation for 2022-23 to 2025-26 was approved at a meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- ✓ Out of the total allocation of Rs.4,800 crore, Rs.2,500 crore rupees will be used for roads.
- ✓ VVP — first unveiled in the 2022-23 Union Budget — will provide funds for development of essential infrastructure, including connectivity with all-weather roads, mobile and internet services, and creation of livelihood opportunities
- ✓ The scheme will be implemented in 19 districts and 46 border blocks in four states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Ladakh along the northern land border of the country.

- ✓ The move will improve quality of life of residents of the identified border villages so that they are encouraged to stay back and reverse the outmigration trend
  - ✓ It will have both components of central sector schemes with 100% direct funding as well as central sponsored schemes
  - ✓ The scheme will cover ten sectors including economic growth, livelihood generation, road connectivity, energy, development of cooperative sectors for 24X7 electricity and water, besides promotion of tourism of culture
  - ✓ The cabinet also approved the constitution of a high-powered committee on VVP with specific terms of reference.
  - ✓ The vibrant village action plans will be created by the district administration with the help of gram panchayats.
  - ✓ Under the scheme, growth centers will be established on a "Hub and Spoke Model" through the promotion of social entrepreneurship, skill development, and entrepreneurship empowerment for youth and women.
  - ✓ The scheme aims to develop sustainable and viable agricultural, dairy and fishery cooperatives in each village, supported by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB).
  - ✓ In the first phase, 663 villages will be taken up in the programme.
  - ✓ **The Union cabinet also approved the raising of seven new battalions of Indo-Tibetan Border Force (ITBP) — comprising 9,400 personnel — to plug the border gaps in Arunachal Pradesh.**
  - ✓ An additional sector headquarter, 16th for ITBP, was also approved on the meeting
  - ✓ The Cabinet decisions were announced by information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur
  - ✓ ITBP, which now has a sanctioned strength of 88,430 personnel, secures 3,488km-long India-China borders ranging from the Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh
- **On February 15, the government - approved the the construction of the 4.1-km Shinkun La tunnel on the Nimu-Padam-Darcha road link**
- ✓ The tunnel will be completed by December 2025 at a cost of Rs 1,681 crore.
  - ✓ The tunnel, to be constructed by the Border Roads Organisation, will provide all-weather road connectivity to Ladakh and this will be the shortest route to the border areas of the Union territory.
  - ✓ The approval is seen as a major move to strengthen the country's defence along the China border amid the military faceoff with China
  - ✓ Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said that the Shinku La tunnel will allow a continuous supply of troops, equipment, and rations to East Ladakh in winter, when heavy snow will affect the traffic along with regular routes



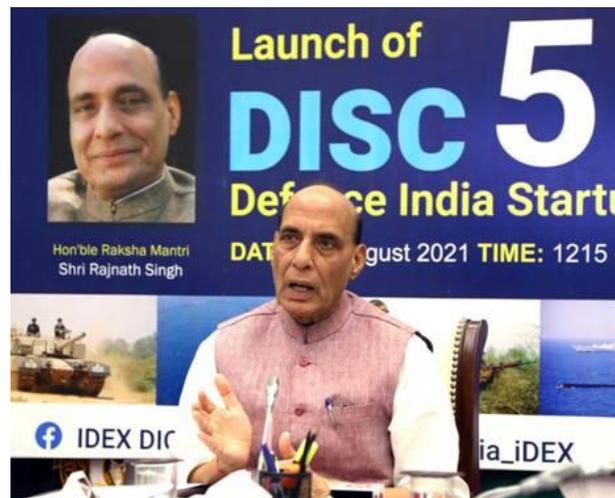
- ✓ Earlier, in May 2021, the defence ministry had approved the plan to build the 4.1-km tunnel after long deliberations between the BRO and National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL).
- **On February 15, the Union cabinet - approved a decision to establish two lakh primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) across the country in the next five years.**
- ✓ The plan aims to establish viable Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in each uncovered Panchayat, viable dairy cooperatives in each uncovered Panchayat or village, and viable fishery cooperatives in each coastal Panchayat or village.
- ✓ Currently, there are 98,995 PACS having a member-base of 13 crore.
- ✓ These societies constitute the lowest tier of the short-term cooperative credit (STCC) structure in the country
- ✓ They provide short-term and medium-term credit and other input services, like seed, fertiliser, pesticide distribution to member farmers.
- ✓ Panchayat/villages having large water bodies will also be covered under the plan.
- ✓ Currently, there are 1,99,182 primary dairy cooperative societies, having around 1.5 crore members and 25,297 primary fishery cooperative societies, having around 38 lakh members, in the country.
- ✓ The government has constituted a high level inter-ministerial committee (IMC) under the chairmanship of home and cooperation minister Amit Shah to take necessary steps for smooth implementation of the plan.

## DEFENCE

- **The Bandhan Ceremony of Aero India 2023, held on February 15 - witnessed the signing of 266 MoUs and nine product launches.**



- ✓ A total of 201 MoUs, 53 major announcements and three Transfers of Technology were also held during the ceremony.
  - ✓ The wide array of developments was worth around Rs. 80,000 crore.
  - ✓ The major agreements that were signed include an MoU between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Safran Helicopter Engines, France; License Agreement for ToT between Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and R&DEE, DRDO.
  - ✓ Further, MoUs were also signed in the areas of jointly developing passenger aircraft, autonomous weaponised boat swarms, missiles, rockets and engines.
  - ✓ The nine products launched during the Aero India event include Vertically Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VLSRSAM); SAL Seeker ATGM for BMP II; Jishnu; NAVIC/GPS receiver module; Indigenously-built 'Counter Drone Radar'; 9 mm sub-sonic ammunition; BFT on Ios; HF SDR Radio; and Goniometer.
  - ✓ The MoUs and ToTs signed during Bandhan Ceremony will bring increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the defence industry and boost the sector's manufacturing to new levels.
  - ✓ Chief Minister of Karnataka Basavaraj Bommai, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pande and senior officials from the Ministry of Defence present on this occasion.
  - ✓ In the 2023-2024 budget, the Ministry of Defence has been allocated a total Budget of Rs 5.94 lakh crore, which makes up about 13.18% of the total budget.
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh - announced the launch of the Defense India Start-up Challenge, DISC-9 on 'Cybersecurity' with 28 problem statements during the annual defence startup event 'Manthan' on February 15**
- ✓ The Minister also launched the Innovations For Defence Excellence (iDEX) Investor Hub (iIH) and said Indian investors have pledged over Rs.200 crore under the scheme
  - ✓ According to the Minister, iDEX has enabled talent from across the country to come forward.



- ✓ The iIH aims to accelerate investment in the defence sector and give investors a unified view of opportunities and innovations
- ✓ Further, the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) also signed MoUs with investors at Startup Manthan at Aero India, which included MoUs with Isro, INSPACE, and ISpA, while another MoU was signed with Axis Bank.
- ✓ An MoU was signed with the Border Roads Organisation to potentially launch startup challenges in the future.
- ✓ The fourth edition of Innovate4Defence internship (i4D) was also launched, inviting applications from students all over India.