

WELL-DEVELOPED BORDER AREAS SERVE AS A DETERRENT TO ADVERSARIES' CLAIMS.

INTERNAL SECURITY



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced on Wednesday that the government aims to transform border villages in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh into model villages with better connectivity and infrastructure. He emphasized that improving these areas is crucial for national security, as well-developed regions with strong economic and tourist activity can deter adversaries and counter disputed claims.

The Union government approved the Vibrant

Village Programme (VVP) on February 15, 2023, with a budget of ₹4,800 crore for 2022-23 to 2025-26. This scheme will enhance 2,967 villages across 19 districts in border states like Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Singh highlighted progress in border area development, noting that the Border Roads Organisation has built over 8,500 km of roads and more than 400 permanent bridges. Key projects like the Atal Tunnel, Sela Tunnel, and the upcoming Shikun-La Tunnel will be significant achievements. These efforts have facilitated military deployments and improved connectivity for border residents.

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NCPCR TELLS SUPREME COURT THAT MADRASAS ARE 'UNFIT' FOR PROVIDING PROPER EDUCATION

SOCIAL JUSTICE



The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), the country's top child rights body, has informed the Supreme Court that madrasas are unsuitable for providing proper education to children. The NCPCR, represented by senior advocate Swarupama Chaturvedi and advocate Abhaid Parikh, argued in response to petitions challenging an Allahabad High Court judgment that invalidated the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004.

The commission criticized madrasa textbooks for promoting the supremacy of Islam and claimed that incorporating a few NCERT books does not ensure quality education. It highlighted issues such as outdated curricula, inadequate teacher qualifications, opaque funding, land law violations, and lack of a holistic educational environment.

NCPCR noted that madrasa teachers often rely on traditional methods and that many madrasas lack social and extracurricular activities, leading to incomplete and ineffective education. The commission also raised concerns about non-Muslim children receiving Islamic education in certain states, which it views as a violation of the Constitution's prohibition against compulsory religious instruction.

The High Court had directed the transfer of madrasa students to regular schools, but the Supreme Court stayed this order in April. On Wednesday, Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud announced that the petitions would be reviewed in detail soon. The NCPCR also drew attention to the Darul Uloom Deoband Madrasa, alleging its influence on extremist groups and its conservative interpretation of Sharia. The commission pointed out that many madrasas across various states remain unrecognized or unregulated.



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CABINET APPROVES HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL SENIORS AGED 70 AND ABOVE

SOCIAL JUSTICE



On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved health coverage for all senior citizens aged 70 and above under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), regardless of income. This expansion will provide ₹5 lakh in annual health insurance per family, benefiting approximately 6 crore seniors from 4.5 crore families.

Eligible seniors will receive a new card under the scheme. Those already covered by AB PM-JAY will get an additional ₹5 lakh top-up annually, while others will have a ₹5 lakh family-based cover. Seniors with existing public health insurance schemes can choose between their current plan or AB PM-JAY.

The scheme, the world's largest publicly funded health assurance program, covers ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care. This expansion was previously announced by Modi in April.

CENTRE TO ENCOURAGE BANKS TO FINANCE GREEN ENERGY PROJECTS

INDIAN ECONOMY

To address India's ₹30 trillion funding need for 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is engaging with financial institutions and banks to secure renewable energy investments.

At the upcoming Re-Invest summit in Gandhinagar next week, major banks and financial institutions will provide "shapath patra" (promissory notes) outlining their funding plans for renewable energy projects. Developers, manufacturers, and private equity investors will also present similar commitments.

While no specific targets have been set, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi emphasized that firm commitments from banks and industry are crucial for attracting the necessary finance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate the conference.



ORGAN-ON-CHIP TECHNOLOGY COULD ENHANCE THE BIOE3 INITIATIVE'S GOAL OF PERSONALIZING MEDICINE.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



On August 24, the Indian government introduced the 'BioE3' policy to spur innovation in biotechnology by establishing biomanufacturing facilities, bio-AI hubs, and bio-foundries, with a focus on precision therapeutics and biologics like gene and cell therapies.

Recent advances in human-relevant 3D culture models, or 'new approach methods' (NAMs), including organ-on-chips, show promise for precision therapeutics. The global organ-on-chip market is projected to reach \$1.4 billion by 2032, driven by increased R&D investments. This technology aims to replace animal testing by simulating human organ functions in

a controlled environment, potentially reducing drug development time and costs.

Significant investments are being made, such as CN Bio's \$21 million funding and Vivodyne's \$38 million in the U.S. Organ-on-chip technology, which started gaining attention in 2010, has received substantial funding, including \$100 million from the NIH and support from the FDA Modernisation Act 2.0. In India, the government has amended regulations to include NAMs in drug testing and hosted a workshop on this technology. To advance this field, India needs dedicated centres for interdisciplinary research and industry-academia collaboration. Such centres would support the development, standardization, and regulation of organ-on-chip devices, foster talent, and drive innovation in precision medicine.

CABINET APPROVES ₹10,900 CRORE SCHEME TO BOOST E-MOBILITY

INDIAN ECONOMY

Charge booster

PM E-Drive scheme, approved by the Union Cabinet, aims to address range anxiety among EV buyers

■ Scheme, valid for two years, will support 24.79 lakh e-2Ws, 3.16 lakh e-3Ws, 14,028 e-buses

■ ₹4,391 cr. for procurement of 14,028 e-buses by State transport undertakings of 9 cities

■ ₹2,000 cr. to set up charging stations in cities with high EV penetration and on some select highways



On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet approved the ₹10,900 crore PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-Drive) scheme to support the procurement of e-buses and the installation of over 72,000 EV charging stations across cities and highways. The two-year scheme aims to alleviate 'range anxiety' among EV buyers.

It includes ₹3,679 crore in subsidies for e-two wheelers, e-three wheelers, e-ambulances, and e-trucks, benefiting 24.79 lakh e-two wheelers, 3.16 lakh e-three wheelers, and 14,028 e-buses. Specifically, ₹4,391 crore will be allocated for 14,028

e-buses in nine major cities. Additionally, ₹2,000 crore is designated for setting up charging stations in high EV penetration cities and selected highways.

INDIA'S EFFORT TO COMPETE WITH CHINA'S MANUFACTURING POWER FACES REALITY CHECK

INDIAN ECONOMY



India's ambition to become a manufacturing powerhouse faces challenges, partly due to strained relations with China, its major rival. Since the 2020 border clash, India has imposed strict vetting on Chinese investments, slowing capital, technology, and talent flows despite high demand for electric vehicles, semiconductors, and AI.

The Modi government's restrictions have deterred billions in investments from companies like BYD and Great Wall Motor, and created complications for Indian firms with Chinese stakeholders. However,

with manufacturing scaling struggles, New Delhi is now considering easing these restrictions to bolster the "Make in India" initiative.

India plans to relax investment rules, allowing firms with up to 10% Chinese ownership to invest without prior government approval. To address security concerns, a post-investment monitoring framework will be established. This move aims to integrate India into global supply chains, especially in high-tech sectors like solar cells and EVs.

Visa policies for Chinese professionals have also been relaxed, with nearly 2,000 short-term visas issued since late 2022. Despite this, India's trade deficit with China has surged to \$85 billion, and China remains a key supplier of industrial products. Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran acknowledges that integrating into Chinese supply chains, either through imports or investments, is essential for India's manufacturing growth.

U.K. GOVERNMENT IMPOSES SANCTIONS ON 10 SHIPS FROM RUSSIA'S 'SHADOW FLEET'

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

On Wednesday, the U.K. government imposed sanctions on 10 Russian oil tankers, alleging they were evading Western oil sanctions. This move coincided with a visit to Kyiv by U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. It follows recent sanctions by the U.K., France, and Germany targeting Iran for supplying missiles to Russia.

The sanctions are part of a broader effort by the EU and G7 countries to enforce U.S.-led restrictions on Russian oil, crucial for funding Russia's war in Ukraine. The G7's \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian oil was introduced in December 2022. The new sanctions increase the U.K.'s list of banned ships to 25, preventing these tankers from docking at U.K. ports.



Lammy emphasized that the U.K. aims to undermine the illicit economic networks supporting Russia's war effort. The newly sanctioned tankers have transported over \$5 billion worth of Russian oil since February 2022.

India, a major buyer of Russian oil, has defended its purchases based on national interests. The issue was discussed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's August visit to Kyiv, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged India to halt its Russian oil imports.

AFGHANISTAN TO START WORK ON TAPI PIPELINE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Afghanistan announced on Wednesday the start of work on the \$10-billion TAPI gas pipeline, which will cross South Asia from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The pipeline, celebrated in a ceremony in Turkmenistan, aims to transport 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan's Galkynysh field.

Despite ongoing security issues and delays, Afghan officials, including Prime Minister Hassan Akhund, marked the occasion with optimism. Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedow highlighted the regional economic benefits of the

project. However, experts estimate it may take another decade before the pipeline is fully operational, as it remains partially unfunded.

The pipeline will deliver gas to Pakistan and India, each receiving 42%, while Afghanistan will get 16% and earn around \$500 million annually in transit fees. The project, significant for the Taliban government since taking power in 2021, faces potential challenges due to India-Pakistan relations and competition from LNG markets.

Afghanistan, despite Western sanctions, is pushing ahead with major infrastructure projects, including a recently revived copper extraction venture with China near Kabul.



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