Banihal Bypass Completion Boosts Connectivity and Security

Why in News?

Union Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari recently announced the completion of a significant stretch of the **Banihal Bypass** in **Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district**, which is expected to enhance both **national security logistics** and **tourism** prospects in the region.

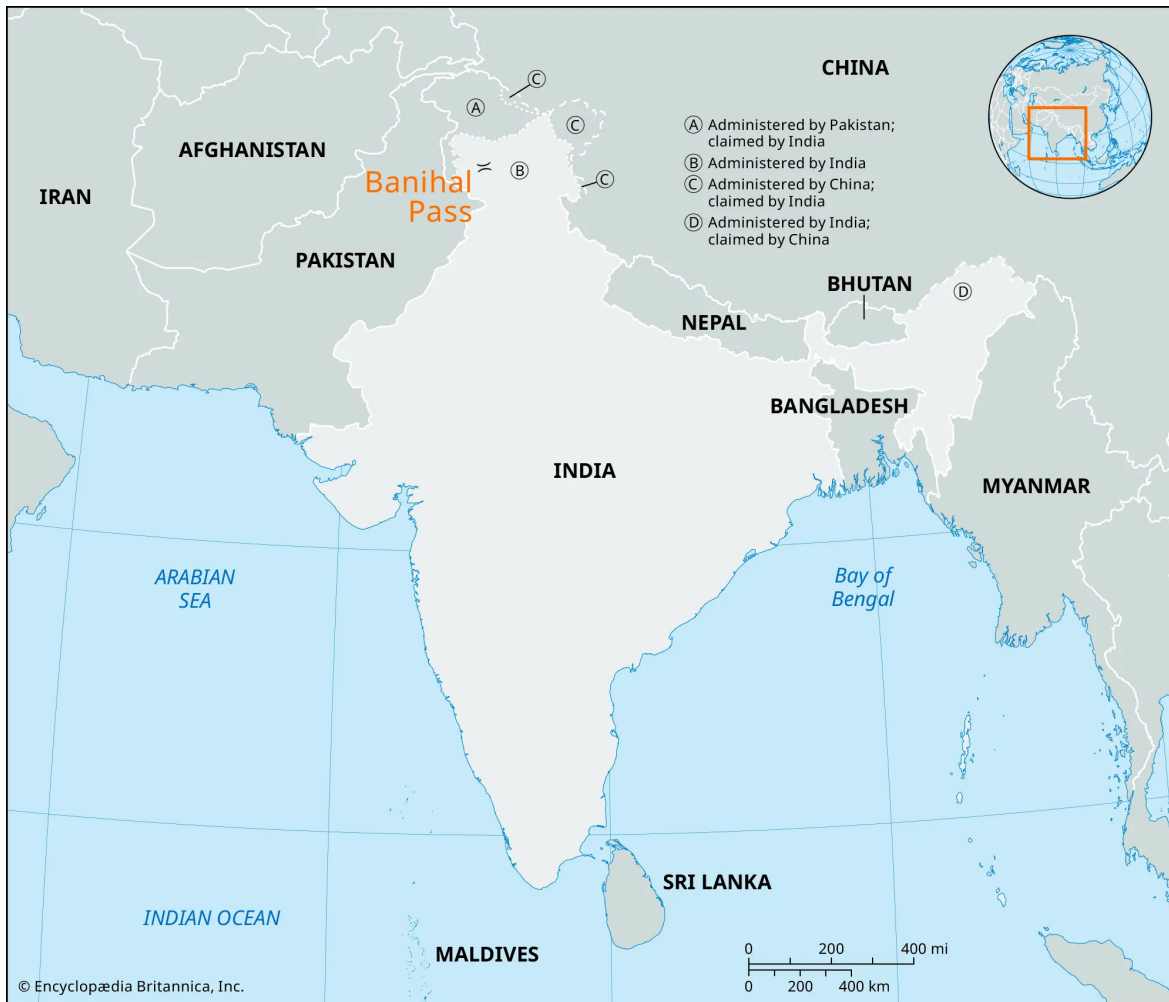- This **four-lane bypass**, measuring **2.35 kilometers,** was constructed at a cost of **₹224.44 crore.**

Key Points

- The bypass is seen as a **crucial infrastructure upgrade**, reducing congestion and travel time, benefiting both tourists and defense vehicles and route to the **Kashmir Valley**.
- It is part **of the broader initiative to improve the National Highway (NH) - 44**, the completion of the **Banihal Bypass** is expected to significantly enhance the region's connectivity.
- Travel time on the **Jammu-Srinagar highway** has already been reduced through various infrastructure upgrades, including tunnels. Further developments, such as the construction of a **14-kilometer tunnel** between Ramban and Banihal, will contribute to further ease of travel.
- Travel time on the **290-km-long Jammu–Srinagar National Highway,** which is part of **NH-44,** has reduced from **nine hours to around six hours** after significant upgrades such as tunnels.
- The **NH-44** is a major highway and longest in the country, it stretches from **Srinagar** in the north to **Kanyakumari** in the south.
    - The Centre has embarked on a major mission in J&K to ensure that the **NH-44** remains an all-weather road connecting the **Kashmir Valley** with the rest of the country.

Banihal Pass

- Banihal Pass is a high mountain pass located in the **Pir Panjal range** in the **Jammu and Kashmir region** of India.
- It connects the **Jammu region** to the **Kashmir Valley,** serving as an important route for travel and transportation.
- The pass is situated at an elevation of approximately **2,832 meters (9,291 feet)** above sea level and is known for its **rugged terrain** and **scenic beauty**.
- The **Banihal Pass** is historically significant and is a key point for travelers crossing between the two regions.

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Legend:
- Ⓐ Administered by Pakistan; claimed by India
- Ⓑ Administered by India
- Ⓒ Administered by China; claimed by India
- Ⓓ Administered by India; claimed by China

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