

## Zojila tunnel to bring Srinagar, Kargil and Leh closer

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the Zojila tunnel project, which will provide all-weather connectivity to Srinagar, Kargil and Leh. At 14.15 km, it will be the country's longest road tunnel.

The tunnel will cut down the time taken to cross the Zojila pass from the three hours 30 minutes to 15 minutes.

Asia's longest bidirectional tunnel will be built at a cost of Rs. 6,809 crore. The work is expected to be completed in five years.

The pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 ft on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway and remains closed during winter because of heavy snowfall, cutting off the Ladakh region from Kashmir.

"The Centre and the State government are working together to take the development work forward. Today alone, there will be inauguration of, or laying of foundation stones for, projects worth Rs. 25,000 crore. This is a testimony to the Centre's commitment to the development of the State," the Prime Minister said in Leh after unveiling the plaque marking the commencement of the work on the tunnel.

Mr. Modi said many local people would get employment opportunities during the development of the tunnel.

### Modern features

The tunnel will have a transverse ventilation system, uninterrupted power supply, emergency lighting, CCTV monitoring, pedestrian cross passages at every 250 metres and emergency telephones and fire-fighting cabinets at every 125 metres.

Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone for a 42.1-km Srinagar Ring Road and 58.25-km Jammu Ring Road, which will be built at a cost of Rs. 1,860 crore and Rs. 2,023.87 crore, respectively.

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