



Indian Firm Takes Over Chabahar Port Operations

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Indian firm India Ports Global Limited took over the operations of the Shaheed Beheshti Port at Chabahar on the southeastern coast of Iran.

- The Chabahar port has been **jointly developed by India, Iran, and Afghanistan**.
- In the first meeting for implementation of the trilateral Chabahar Agreement, the three countries agreed to finalize the Protocol to harmonize transit, roads, customs, and consular matters.
- It was agreed to allow cargo movement at Chabahar using **TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers)** Convention provisions.

Significance

- It will **boost India's regional connectivity** and trade connectivity plan. Chabahar port opens up a permanent alternative route for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing the route through Pakistan.
- It gives a **boost to India's bilateral ties with Iran** which is a major oil supplier for India.
- It will **facilitate India's role in Afghanistan's** development through infrastructure and education projects.
- It will allow **Afghanistan to have a commercial fleet** under the Afghan flag sailing from Chabahar.
- The port is also a **key link in the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, a multi-modal network of ships, rail and road routes to move freight between India to Russia via Iran.
- Chabahar Port is a **key element in India's Indo-Pacific strategy** that also includes Eurasia's connect with the Indian Ocean Region.
- Central Asian countries like– Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan– also view Chabahar Port as their gateway to the Indian Ocean Region.

Challenges

- **The US Sanctions:** As of now, Chabahar port has received a waiver from the U.S. sanctions on Iran, but these concessions could be withdrawn at any time, given the constant upheaval in the administration.
- **Security Concern:** The possibility of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan will add to security concerns in the region and will impact the Chabahar route as well.
- **Gwadar Port, Pakistan:** The reconciliation process of the US and Russia with the Afghan Taliban might lead to greater engagements with Pakistan in the region. The Chabahar port is seen as a rival warm water port to China financed Gwadar port in Pakistan.
- **Supporting Connectivity Projects:** To tap the full potential of Chabahar Port for benefit of Afghanistan, India should pace up the development of a rail line from Chabahar to Zahedan at Iran-Afghanistan Border which will be further connected to Zaranj-Delaram Highway in Afghanistan.

TIR Convention

- The Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under cover of **TIR Carnets, 1975 (TIR Convention)**, is an international transit system under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
- TIR Convention facilitates the **seamless movement of goods within and amongst the Parties to the Convention.**
- At present, there are 76 parties to the Convention, including the European Union.
- **India became the 71st country** to ratify the United Nations TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers) Convention in 2017.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), is multi-modal transportation established in 12 Sep 2000 in St. Petersburg, by Iran, Russia and India for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States.
- This corridor connects India Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via the Islamic Republic of Iran and then is connected to St. Petersburg and North Europe via the Russian Federation.
- The INSTC was expanded to include eleven new members, namely: the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Armenia, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Republic of Ukraine, Republic of Belarus, Oman, Syria, Bulgaria (Observer).