



India-Iran Pact on Seafarers

For Prelims: India-Iran Pact on Seafarers, International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (1978), International Maritime Organization, Tehran Declaration, Iran's location, Caspian Sea.

For Mains: Significance of India-Iran Relations.

Why in News?

India and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to smoothen movement of seafarers from both the countries as per the provisions of **International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) for Seafarers (1978)**.



What is the International Convention on STCW for Seafarers?

- It sets **qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel** on seagoing merchant ships.
- STCW was adopted in 1978 by a conference at the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in London and entered into force in 1984. The Convention was **significantly amended in 1995**.
- The 1978 STCW Convention was the first to establish basic requirements on training, certification

and watchkeeping for seafarers on an international level.

- It prescribes **minimum standards relating to training, certification and watchkeeping** for seafarers which countries are obliged to meet or exceed.
- One especially important feature of the Convention is that it applies to ships of non-party States when visiting ports of States which are Parties to the Convention.

How have been the India-Iran Relations?

- **India and Iran** share close civilizational ties since the times of the Persian Empire and Indian kingdoms.
- Iran is an important **nation in India's neighborhood and in fact, the two countries shared a border until India's partition** and independence in 1947.
- The "Tehran Declaration" signed during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Iran affirmed the **shared vision of the two countries for an "equitable, pluralistic and co-operative international order"**.
- It recognized the then Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's vision of a "dialogue among civilisations" as a paradigm of international relations based on principles of tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity.

What is the Significance of India-Iran Relations?

- **Location and Connectivity:**
 - Iran is located at a strategic and **crucial geographical location** between the **Persian Gulf** and the **Caspian Sea**.
 - Iran is important to India as **it provides an alternate route of connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asian** republics through **Chabahar Port** without passing the land route through Pakistan.
- **Cheaper Crude Oil:**
 - Since, Iran is one of the **largest deposits of crude oil and natural gas** in the world.
 - India may well consider restarting oil imports from Iran. If India changes course and resumes imports of Iranian oil, **it could potentially encourage some other countries to follow suit and open up additional oil** in the market, which could eventually bring prices of crude oil down.
- **Connectivity with Eurasia:**
 - The **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, aims to connect India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Central Asia, and **Europe through multi-modal transport, reducing the transit time of goods drastically**.
 - Although some part of it has been operationalized, again, due to sanctions on Iran, its full potential has not been realised. India and Iran could well play a major part in giving INSTC the required boost to reap the benefits of resultant trade.
- **Energy Security:**
 - The **Iran-Oman-India gas pipeline (IOI) too is an ambitious project** that has been stuck for a long time. Fortunately, Iran and Oman signed a deal to develop two gas pipelines and an **oil field along their maritime borders**.
 - If this comes through, there is potential for the pipeline being extended to India, which would help overcome the loss of the failed **Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline and facilitate the supply of natural gas to India**.

Way Forward

- There is a need to look forward toward areas of convergence, where **both countries have a mutual understanding of each other's common interests** and further work together to achieve the same.
- India and Iran, therefore, **have a lot that can be achieved together**. The assertive diplomacy being practiced by India, emphasizing on standing by its neighbors and friends and focusing solely on fulfilling its national interests, is a refreshing change.
 - If India can extend the same vision toward its engagement with Iran, it could open a huge potential for cooperation between these two great nations and civilizations. Time is

therefore ripe for a reset.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. What is the importance of developing Chabahar Port by India? (2017)

- (a) India's trade with African countries will enormously increase.
- (b) India's relations with oil-producing Arab countries will be strengthened.
- (c) India will not depend on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- (d) Pakistan will facilitate and protect the installation of a gas pipeline between Iraq and India.

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018. (2018)

Q. In what ways would the ongoing U.S-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to this situation? (2018)

Q. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. (2017)

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