

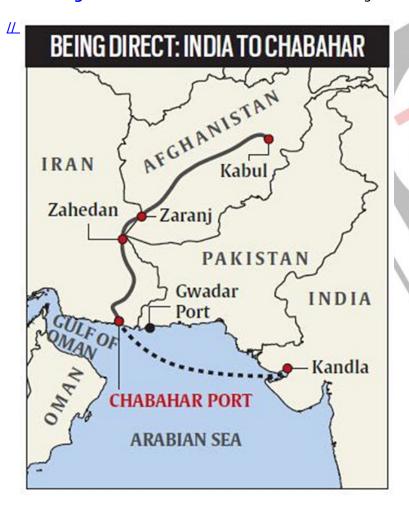
External Affairs Minister's Visit to Iran

Why in News

India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) visited Iran to attend the **swearing-in ceremony of new Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.** This marks a landmark event attempting to **reset the** <u>ties with Iran</u> that have been under strain in recent times.

■ This is EAM's **second visit in a month** and it comes amid a sharp escalation of the **fighting in Afghanistan** between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces.

The Vision



Key Points

- Importance of Iran for India:
 - Geo-strategic Outreach: India views Iran as key to access land-locked Afghanistan and Central Asia through Chabahar Port.

- Iran's geographical position is paramount to India's geopolitical outreach, especially to **Central Asia**, a rich reservoir of natural resources.
- Similarly, Iran is vital for <u>India's access to Afghanistan</u> in which India has immense strategic and security interests.
- Further, India has been developing the **Chabahar port in a bid to bypass the impediments placed by Pakistan** in the way of its attempts to trade with Afghanistan.
- **Energy Security:** Iran, **one of the richest countries in hydrocarbons** and India, a rapidly growing economy with a deep thirst for energy make them natural partners.
- Significance of the Visit:
 - Reasons for Tussle in India-Iran Relationship:
 - India cancelling oil imports from Iran due to US sanctions.
 - **Slow progress** in Chabahar port.
 - Tussle over **Farzad-B Gas Field**.
 - Iranian comments on Kashmir over the past few years.
 - Security Concerns Emanating From Afghanistan: Visit comes amidst rapid developments in Afghanistan, with the <u>US completing the pull-out of troops</u> and the Taliban increasing its attacks on Afghan cities.
 - The rapid advance of Taliban concerns both India and Iran.
 - Given this context, and common interests, it is necessary for India and Iran to cooperate more closely, particularly on Afghanistan.
- Associated Challenges:
 - India's Exclusion in Afgan Peace Process: Another "Troika plus" meeting, the
 U.S.-Russia-China-Pakistan grouping on Afghanistan peace process, is going to be held in
 Doha.
 - However, India and Iran, which are two regional powers, are being left out.
 - Persisting Sanctions on Iran: Despite campaign promises to reverse the Donald Trump policy on Iran, US President Joe Biden's administration is yet to withdraw most of the additional sanctions placed in 2017-2018.

Way Forward

- India has proposed to include the Chabahar port in the framework of the <u>International North</u>
 South Transport Corridor.
 - In this context, the formation of India-Uzbekistan-Iran-Afghanistan Quadrilateral
 Working Group on the joint use of Chabahar port is a welcome development.
- India needs to balance its ties with Iran on one side and the US along with its allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel, on the other.

Source: TH