



Indian Firm Takes Over Chabahar Port Operations

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As of now, Chabahar port has received a waiver from the U.S. sanctions on Iran, but these concessions could be withdrawn at any time, given the constant upheaval in the administration.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).

Japan to Resume Commercial Whaling

Recently Japan announced its **withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission (IWC)** conservation body and it will **resume commercial whale hunting** in its territorial waters and exclusive economic zones from July 2019.

- The **IWC, established in 1946 to conserve and manage the world's whale** and cetacean population, introduced a **prohibition on commercial whaling in 1986** after some species were almost driven to extinction.
- Earlier Japan tried to convince the IWC to allow it to resume commercial whaling as certain species were sufficient to support renewed hunting but it failed with strong opposition from anti-whaling nations led by Australia, the European Union and the United States.
- After withdrawal **Japan joins Iceland and Norway** in openly **defying the IWC's ban** on commercial whale hunting.
- Leaving the IWC means Japanese whalers will be able to resume hunting of minke and other whales in Japanese coastal waters currently protected by the IWC.
- Japan will **not be able** to continue the so-called **scientific research hunts in the Antarctic** that has been exceptionally allowed as an IWC member under the **Antarctic Treaty**.
- According to Japan IWC has failed to live up to its initial dual mandate in 1946 to find a balance between preserving whale stocks and allowing the orderly development of the whaling industry.

Whaling in Japan

- Japan has **hunted whales** for centuries, and the meat was a **key source of protein** in the immediate post-World War II years.
- According to Japan whaling is an important part of Japan's traditions and the withdrawal would allow fishermen to pass on country's rich whaling culture onto the next generation.
- Engagement in whaling has been supporting local communities, and thereby developed the life and culture of using whales.
- **Influential lawmakers** in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party whose constituencies include **whaling communities have long lobbied for a resumption** of commercial whaling.
- Whale is hunted for oil which is used for various purposes like producing candle wax, margarine and other products, like additives in motor oils, automatic transmission fluids, cosmetics, perfumes, detergents and vitamins.

Criticism of Japan's decision

- By leaving the IWC, Japan is **rejecting multilateralism** and setting a bad precedent for conservation, which will likely have serious negative consequences for the world's whales.
- According to **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** Japan has long **exploited a loophole allowing whales to be killed for “scientific research”** and selling it commercially.
- According to Conservationists it will **further aggravate the situation** as **marine ecosystem** is already **facing existential threats** from climate change and marine pollution, including plastics, chemicals and noise.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

- IWC is an **Inter-governmental Organisation** whose purpose is the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.
- The legal framework of the IWC is the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling which was established in 1946.
- The commission is the pre-eminent global body responsible for the conservation and management of whales and leads international efforts to tackle the growing range of threats to whales globally, including by-catch, ship strikes, entanglement, noise, and whaling.
- **India** is a member of IWC.

Antarctic Treaty

- The treaty was opened for signature on December 1, 1959, and officially entered into force on June 23, 1961.
- The original signatories were 12 countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- **India** is also a party to the Antarctic Treaty.
- Some important provisions of the Treaty:
 - Antarctica shall be used for **peaceful purposes** only.
 - **Freedom of scientific investigation** in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end shall continue.
 - Scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available.
- India is expanding its infrastructure development in Antarctica. The government is rebuilding its station, **Maitri**, to make it bigger and last for at least 30 years.

Pilot Project to Integrate Police Stations and Courts

A Supreme Court panel has launched a **pilot project** in Telangana’s Warangal district to integrate **two crucial pillars of the criminal justice delivery system- the courts and police stations**.

- The Inter-operable [Criminal Justice System \(ICJS\)](#), an initiative of the apex court’s **eCommittee**, seeks to make live exchange of data possible between all criminal courts and police stations.
- **Justice MB Lokur**, heads Supreme Court’s eCommittee, and is also the chairman of ICJS.
- This project is in alignment with **Digital India initiative** of the Government and will **boost e-governance**.
- This would help save time spent on completing paperwork and documentary evidence such as the first information reports (FIR) and charge sheets.
- Tracking court proceedings would become easier for investigating officers.
- The next phase would include **extending the ICJS data sharing to other states** and also expanding it to **prisons, forensic facilities, the prosecution system and juvenile homes**.
- The e-courts project is aimed at **computerisation** of district and subordinate courts across the country.

- It has reached the final stages of implementation and covered 16,755 district courts. Several electronic services such as e-summons, SMS alerts to lawyers and litigants and e-filing have been initiated under the project.
- The **National Judicial Data Grid** hosts a dynamic repository of over 100 million cases.

The National Judicial Data Grid

- The e-Courts National portal (ecourts.gov.in) was **launched in August 2013**.
- More than 2852 Districts and Taluka Court Complexes have since secured their presence on the NJDG portal.
- The NJDG is working as **National data warehouse** for case data including the orders/judgments for Courts across the country.
- NJDG has specifically helped India improve its ranking in **World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report**.

Important Facts for Prelims (27th December 2018)

Three Andaman Islands to be Renamed in Honour of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- Three Andaman Islands- the **Havelock, Ross, and Neil Island** will be officially renamed on the occasion of **75th anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose's historic visit to the islands**.
- The **Havelock Island will be renamed Swaraj Dweep**, the **Ross Island will be called Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island** and **Neil island will be renamed Shaheed Dweep**.
- S.C. Bose **hoisted the Indian national flag** at the Gymkhana Ground (now Netaji Stadium) in **Port Blair on 30 December 1943**.
- Andaman Islands were the **first Indian territory** to be **freed from British rule** after the Japanese defeated the British forces **during World War II**.
- At the time, Bose had named **Andaman Island as Shaheed** and **Nicobar Island as Swaraj**. Bose had also appointed Indian National Army (INA) General AD Loganathan as its Governor.

Two Separate High Courts for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

- Following a Supreme Court order to notify the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts by January 1, the President has ordered the separation of the common Hyderabad High Court into the two separate High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Both will **function separately from January 1, 2019**.
- According to the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, both States were to have a common high court, till separate ones were formed.
- **Article 214** of the Constitution provides that there shall be a **High Court for each State**.
- With the creation of the new high court, **the country now has 25 high courts**.
- **Justice Ramesh Ranganathan**, who is at present the Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court, will **head the new High Court of Andhra Pradesh**. It will have **15 judges besides the chief justice**.
- **Ten judges**, who were part of the common high court, will now be the judges of the **Telangana High Court**.
- The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is **Amaravati**, the capital of the State. The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana.

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