

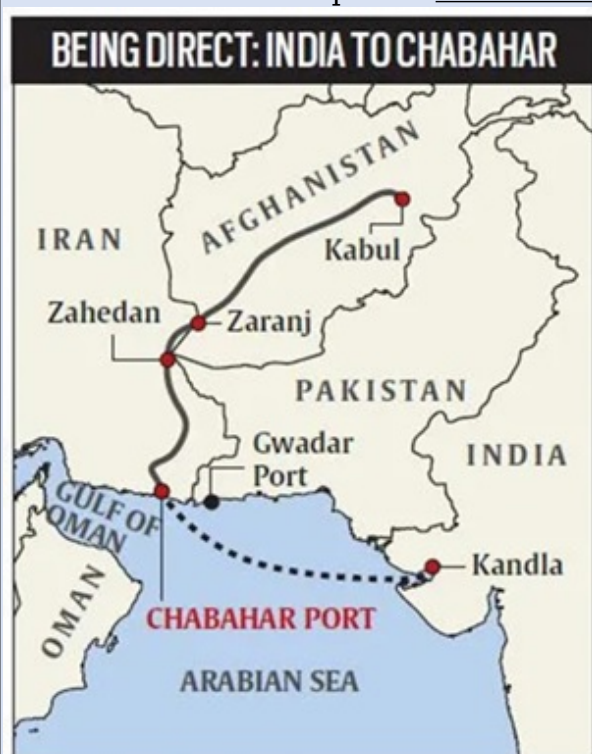
## Relevance of Chabahar Port to India

### Why in news?

India and Iran are set to hold talks to establish "long-term cooperation framework" on Chabahar port.

### Chabahar Port

- Chabahar is **Iran's** first deepwater port and sits at the mouth of the **Gulf of Oman**.
- It is Iran's only oceanic port situated in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on the Makran coast.
- It consists of 2 main ports - **Shahid Kalantari** and **Shahid Beheshti**.



- **Chabahar port project**- It was signed in 2003 between **India and Iran**.
- **Trilateral Transit and Trade Agreement**- It was signed in 2016 between **India, Afghanistan and Iran**.
  - India was granted a 10-year lease and access to the Chabahar free trade zone.
  - India got the opportunity to build the 628 km rail line from Chabahar to Zahedan, just across the border from Afghanistan.
- India is restricted to the Shahid Beheshti port that is undertaken by India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) which is established for the development of ports overseas.

### Why Chabahar port is crucial to India?

- **Geostrategic location**- [Chabahar port](#) has geographic proximity to countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.
- **Access Afghanistan**- India can bypass Pakistan which does not allow India land

access for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

- **Infrastructure development-** The ***Zaranj-Delaram road*** constructed by India in 2009 can give access to Afghanistan's Garland Highway, setting up road access to four major cities in Afghanistan - *Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif*.
- **Gateway to Central Asia-** It will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the ***International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)*** that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.

*INSTC is a multi-modal transportation project linking the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and onward to northern Europe via St Petersburg in Russia.*

- **Counter China-** It will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the ***Gwadar port***.

*Gwadar port is located in Pakistan and is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.*

- **Defence ally-** The port being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India.
- **Reduce import bill-** There will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India.
  - The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline.
- **Connectivity hub-** It will ensure in the establishment of a politically sustainable connectivity between India and Afghanistan leading to better economic ties between the two countries.
- **Diplomatic engagement-** The port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.

### **Why there is delay in the development of Chabahar port by India?**

- **Geopolitical roadblocks-** The main obstacle has been the fluctuating relations between the US and Iran, which has affected the supply chain through US sanctions.
- **Uncertainty in Afghanistan-** The volatile and uncertain political situation due to rise of Taliban regime is also a cause of concern.
- **Red sea crisis-** The conflict between [Israel and Hamas](#) in Gaza has spilled over to the Red Sea, where Iran-backed Houthi rebels have attacked commercial ships, provoking responses from the US and the UK adding to the instability of the region.
- **Iran Pakistan strikes-** Both exchanged missile strikes against military groups on their borders on the common Baloch problem thus creating new challenges for the Chabahar project.

## What lies ahead?

- Through active and visionary diplomacy and efficient implementation and operations of the project, Iran and India can overcome the delays in the development of Chabahar port.
- India should be able to maintain Chabahar project as a viable transit hub and link to serve as a reliable and competitive route for transportation among India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and beyond.

## Reference

[Indian Express- History of Iran's Chabahar port](#)

