Push for Chabahar Port in INSTC Corridor

Why in News

India expressed its **intent to include Chabahar port in the 13-nation International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** that extends from India to Russia, and to **expand INSTC membership** by including Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, at a "Chabahar Day" event organised as part of **Maritime India summit.**

- This Summit saw participation from several regional officials including infrastructure Ministers from Afghanistan, Armenia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Uzbekistan.

Key Points

- **About India's Proposal:**

    - Pitching for Chabahar in the INSTC which goes via Iran's biggest port Bandar Abbas, India proposed that the land route via Kabul (Afghanistan) and Tashkent (Uzbekistan) would form the INSTC's "Eastern corridor".

        - India's push to include Chabahar in the INSTC could have been made with **an eye on the new Biden administration's push for restoring talks with Iran on the** JCPOA nuclear agreement, and the possible easing of some sanctions**.**
    - Establishing an eastern corridor through Afghanistan would maximise its potential.

        - India highlighted Chabahar's role in recent years in **sending Indian humanitarian aid and emergency supplies to Afghanistan and Iran** and in **opening up trade opportunities.**
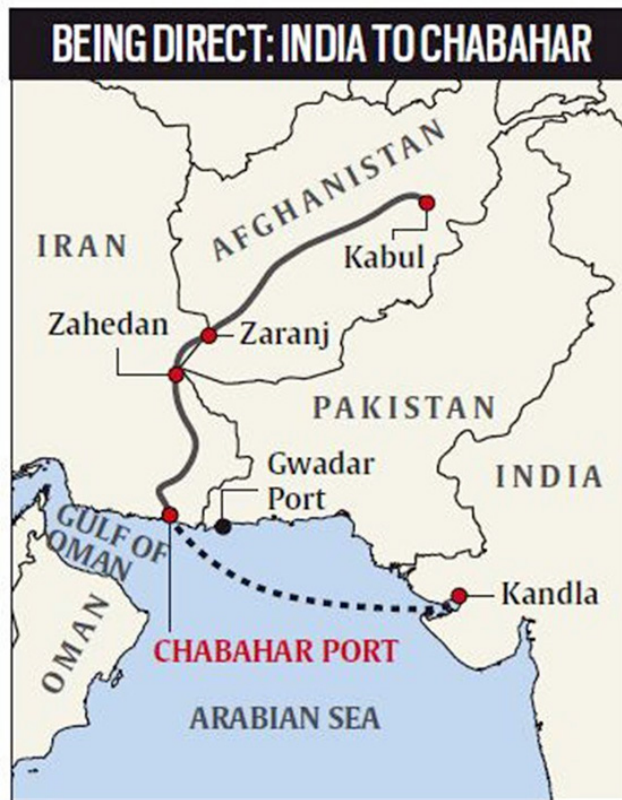- **Chabahar Port:**

    - **Location:**

        - It is located on the Gulf of Oman and is only 72 km away from the **Gwadar port** in Pakistan which has been developed by China.
    - **About:**

        - It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian ocean and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari.
        - Afghanistan, Iran and India signed a tripartite agreement on developing Chabahar port and setting up a trilateral transport and transit corridor in 2016.
    - **Significance:** //

BEING DIRECT: INDIA TO CHABAHAR

- **For India:**

  - **Connectivity:**

    - It is **a key part of India's plans to enhance connectivity to Afghanistan and the Central Asian states.**
  - **Countering China and Pakistan:**

    - It opens up a **permanent alternative route for trade** with Afghanistan and Central Asia, given the hurdles in the direct route through Pakistan.
    - **China and Pakistan** are striving to increase their economic and trade cooperation through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar port, which both are part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.**
  - **Part of Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Chabahar Port is a key element in India's Indo-Pacific strategy that also includes Eurasia's connection with the Indian Ocean Region.
- **For Afghanistan:**

  - It will facilitate India's role in Afghanistan's development through infrastructure and education projects and also allow Afghanistan to have a commercial fleet under the Afghan flag sailing from Chabahar.
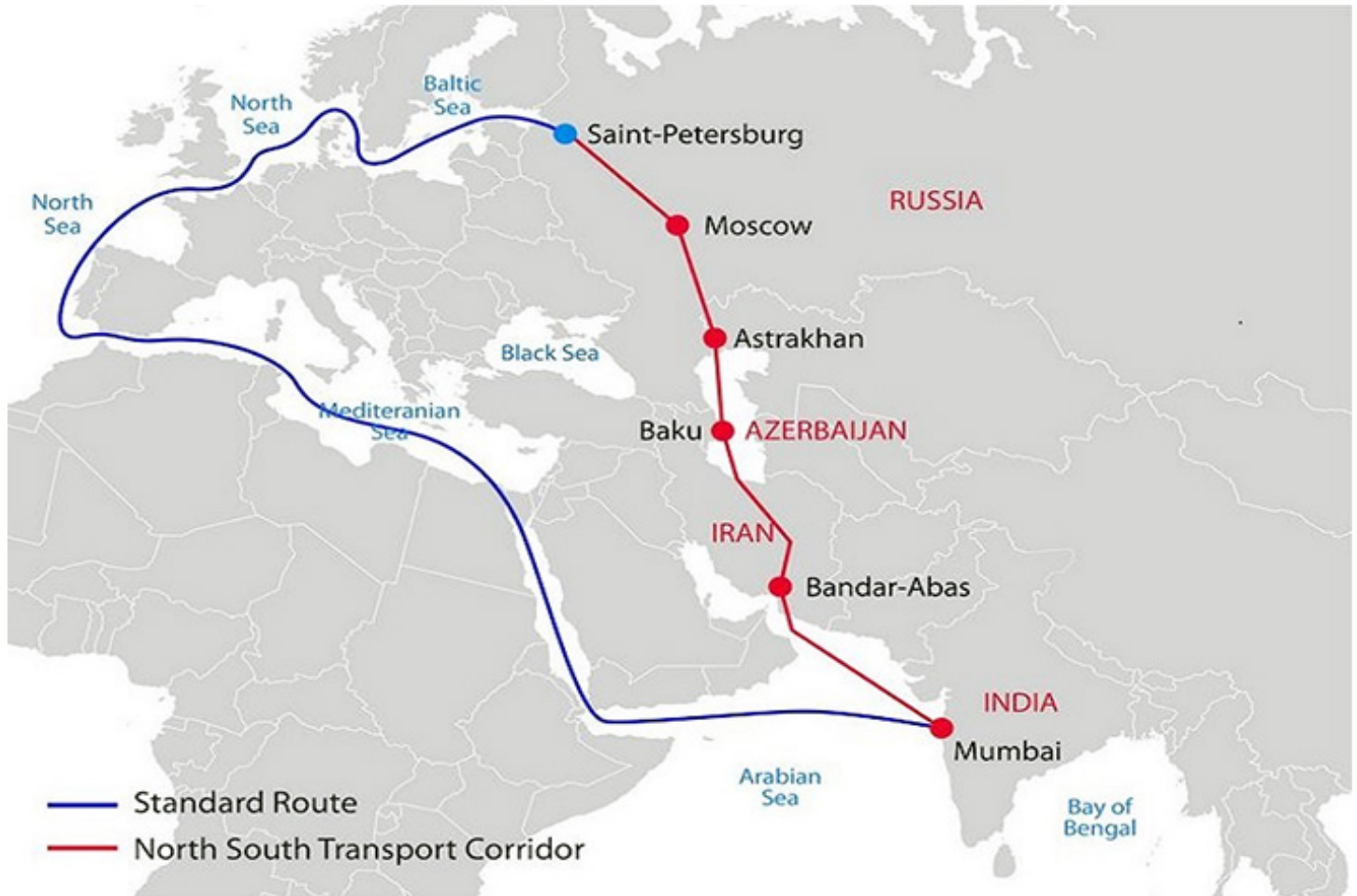- **For Central Asian Countries:**

  - Central Asian countries like– Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan– also view Chabahar Port as their gateway to the Indian Ocean Region.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):**

  - It is a **multi-modal transportation established on 12th September 2000 in St. Petersburg**, by Iran, Russia and India for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States.

- 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).
- It envisions a **7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail and road route** for transporting freight, aimed at reducing the carriage cost between India and Russia by about 30% and bringing down the transit time from 40 days by more than half.
- 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.

Source:TH

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