



Chabahar Port

For Prelims: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Chabahar Port, Gulf of Oman, International North-South Transport Corridor, Belt, and Road Initiative (BRI)

For Mains: Significance of Chabahar Port in Enhancing Regional Connectivity

Why in News?

Recently, during the foreign ministerial meeting of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) meeting, India pushes for a greater role for [Chabahar Port](#) in increasing the connectivity in the region.

- India will be taking over the SCO presidency next year.

What other points Highlighted by India?

- On Afghanistan, highlighted that India extended humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan to help it fight **hunger and food insecurity**.
- Raised the problems of the [energy crisis](#) and [food crisis](#) arising from the [Ukraine conflict](#).
- Highlighted the need to adopt zero tolerance policy towards [terrorism](#).
- He also appreciated the entry of **Iran into the organization**.
 - Iran's inclusion will strengthen the SCO forum as now all the member nations will have the opportunity to use the facilities of the Chabahar Port in Iran.

What is Chabahar Port?

- **About:**
 - The port of Chabahar is **located in southeastern Iran in the Gulf of Oman**.
 - It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.
 - It's located in the Sistan-Balochistan province on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast.
 - The Chabahar port is considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries.



▪ Significance:

- No other international port has seen the level of involvement and enthusiasm from Chabahar as India.
- It will make way for **India to bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan using a sea-land route.**
 - At present, Pakistan does not allow India to transport its territory to Afghanistan.
- It would give momentum to the [International North-South Transport Corridor](#) of which both are initial signatories along with Russia.
 - Iran is the key gateway to this project.
 - It would counter the Chinese presence in the Arabian.



What is INSTC?

▪ About:

- The **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** project was originally decided between India, Iran, and Russia in 2000 in St Petersburg, and subsequently included 10 other central Asian and west Asian countries:
 - Azerbaijan Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, Syria, and Bulgaria are observers.
 - Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan are not party to the INSTC agreement but are interested in using the transport corridor.
- It envisions a **7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road routes 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.
- The route primarily involves moving freight from India, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia.

▪ Objective:

- The objective of the corridor is to **increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Astrakhan, etc.**

▪ Significance:

- It would be provided as a viable and fairer alternative to China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- Further, it will enhance regional connectivity.

Way Forward

- This project would give a boost to trade as India will get access to Afghanistan and beyond Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Europe.
- This project is also important in Countering the Chinese presence in the Arabian sea.
- Further it would enhance people to people contact in this region and also boost trade and investments, in future it could be shaped into one common market like European Union or ASEAN.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questionv (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)

- A commercial contract for the development and operations of Chabahar Port was signed between India and Iran in 2016. The contract is for a period of 10 years.
- **Chabahar Port will provide India with an alternative and reliable access route into Afghanistan and also a reliable and more direct sea-route access into the Central Asian region.**
- It will eliminate dependency on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. What do you understand by 'The String of Pearls'? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this. (2013)

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