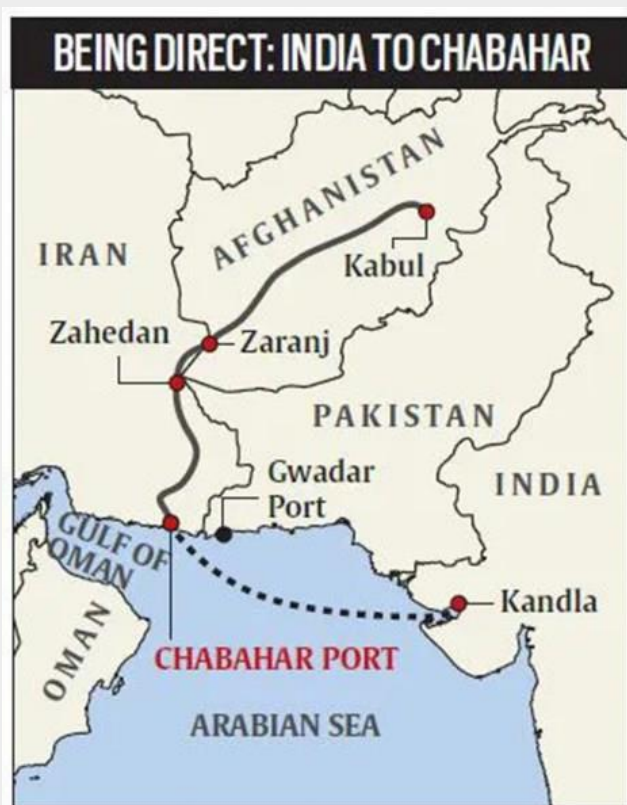


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1. The history of Iran's Chabahar port, and its imperative for India

Why in news?

There are two distinct ports in the Chabahar project, Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari. India's investment is restricted to the Shahid Beheshti port.



During this visit to Iran, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held discussions with the Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash on establishing a long-term cooperation framework for the Chabahar port in the south of the country.

Chabahar, which sits at the mouth of the Gulf of Oman, is Iran's first deepwater port that puts the country on the global oceanic trade route map. The port lies to the west of Iran's border with Pakistan, about as far as Gwadar, a competing port developed by China in Pakistan, lies to the east of the border.

Chabahar is of strategic importance to both Iran and India. It can potentially help Tehran ward off the effect of Western sanctions, and offers New Delhi an

alternative route that bypasses Pakistan, which does not allow India land access for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The port is also part of the proposed International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), 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.

How much of the Chabahar port has been developed?

There are two distinct ports in the Chabahar project, Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari. India's investment is restricted to the Shahid Beheshti port.

India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement in April 2016, after which the Indian Shipping Ministry worked at a rapid pace towards developing the port. In December 2017, the

first phase of Shahid Beheshti port was inaugurated, and India sent its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan through Chabahar that same year.

Two years later, Afghan exports to India passed through the port for the first time. India received four such consignments that year.

Meanwhile, in January 2015, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) was incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013, for the development of ports overseas. In December 2018, IPGL took over a part of the operations at Shahid Beheshti.

But why is it taking so long to develop the port?

Geopolitical roadblocks, the biggest of which is Iran's relationship with the US, have been the major reason for the delay.

The US-Iran relationship started to improve temporarily after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5+1 and the European Union in 2015 when Barack Obama and Rouhani were Presidents.

The Donald Trump administration, however, walked the US out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, and imposed sanctions on dealing with Tehran. A "carve-out" was provided to India for Chabahar, but it was difficult under the sanctions regime to find international suppliers for the material required to develop the port.

The US exit from Afghanistan and the return to power of the Taliban in August 2021 came as a further blow as India snapped ties with Kabul. The situation has improved since — in 2022, India reopened its embassy in Kabul and announced Rs 200 crore of development assistance to Afghanistan.

New Delhi also allocated Rs 100 crore for the Chabahar port project, and said in 2023 that it would send 20,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan through the port.

What happens in the project here onward?

The pace of development of Chabahar port will be impacted by US-Iran ties, which have been deteriorating steadily.

The ongoing crisis in the Red Sea, a spillover of the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza, has made the situation in the entire region extremely volatile and unpredictable.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Indian Express

2. What is the Nagara style, in which Ayodhya's Ram temple is being built



The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be inaugurated on January 22. Chandrakant Sompura, 81, and his son Ashish, 51, have designed the complex in the Nagara style of temple architecture.

A 'language' of architecture

The Nagara style of temple architecture emerged some time in the fifth century CE, during the late Gupta period, in northern India. It is seen in juxtaposition with the Dravida style of southern India, which too emerged in the same period.

Distinguished by a towering shikhara

Nagara temples are built on a raised plinth, with the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum) — where the idol of the deity rests — the most sacred part of the temple. Towering over the *garbha griha* is the *shikhara* (literally 'mountain peak'), the most distinguishable aspect of Nagara style temples.



A typical Nagara style temple also comprises a circumambulatory passage around the *garbha griha*, and one or more *mandapas* (halls) on the same axis as it. Elaborate murals and reliefs often adorn its walls.

Comparison to Dravida style

The Dravida counterpart to the *shikhara* is the *vimana*. There exists, however, a fundamental difference.

In the Dravida style temples, *vimanas* are typically smaller than the great gatehouses or *gopurams*, which are the most immediately striking architectural elements in a temple complex. Moreover, while *shikharas* are mentioned in southern Indian architectural sources, they refer to only the dome-shaped crowning cap atop the *vimana*.

The existence of *gopurams* also points to another unique feature of the Dravida style — the presence of a boundary wall. Few Nagara style temple complexes are lined with distinctive boundary walls that are a part of the temple's design.

This is one of Ayodhya's Ram temple's 'hybrid' features — although no elaborate *gopuram* has been built (citing paucity of space), a 732m long wall runs around the temple compound.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Indian Express and The Hindu

3. 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement

The 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement has held from 15th to 20th January 2024 in the capital of Uganda, Kampala. The 18th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit was held in 2019 in capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. In the 19th Summit, India was represented by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Non-Aligned Movement

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum of 120 countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. It was founded with the view to advancing interests of developing countries in the context of Cold War confrontation. After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide.

The movement originated in the aftermath of the Korean War, as an effort by some countries to counterbalance the rapid bi-polarization of the world during the Cold War, whereby two major powers formed blocs and embarked on a policy to pull the rest of the world into their orbits. One of these was the pro-Soviet socialist bloc whose best known alliance was the Warsaw Pact, and the other the pro-American capitalist group of countries, many of which belonged to NATO. In 1961, drawing on the principles agreed at the Bandung Conference of 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement was formally established in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, through an initiative of Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, and Indonesian President Sukarno.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations
Source: The Hindu

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