

India, Iran agree to accelerate work on strategic Chabahar project

The Chabahar port is considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade with central Asian nations by the three countries. It is located on the Indian Ocean in the Sistan and Baluchestan province of Iran. Jaishankar, who is on a two-day visit to Iran, cochaired the 19th Joint Commission Meeting with Zarif. He is also expected to call upon Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

"Just concluded a very productive India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting with my co-chair FM Zarif," Jaishankar tweeted after the meeting. "Reviewed the entire gamut of our cooperation. Agreed on accelerating our Chabahar project," he said.

The meeting comes after the US provided a rare exemption to India from sanctions on the Chabahar port in Iran as Washington said it recognized that the strategic project was a lifeline for war-torn Afghanistan to get humanitarian supplies from India.

Jaishankar thanked Zarif for "his cordial welcome and hospitality."

"Had a very good conversation on the regional and global picture with the Iranian foreign minister. India and Iran will work together closely on their shared interests," he tweeted.

Earlier, Zarif tweeted that the two countries held, "excellent discussions on closer bilateral relations & regional & global issues affecting our respective countries." "Our ties are ancient, historic & unbreakable."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met Rouhani earlier this month on the sidelines of the high-level 74th session of the General Assembly.

Modi reaffirmed India's support for giving priority to diplomacy, dialogue and confidence building for maintaining peace and security in the Persian Gulf amidst tensions in the region, as he held wideranging talks with Iranian President on regional and global developments of mutual interest.

In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan inked a pact which entailed establishment of Transit and Transport Corridor among the three countries using Chabahar port as one of the regional hubs for sea transportation in Iran, besides multi-modal transport of goods and passengers across the three nations.

The port in the Sistan-Balochistan province on the energy-rich nation's southern coast is easily accessible from India's western coast.

India has been closely working with Afghanistan and Iran to create alternative, reliable access routes for trade. Iran is India's third-largest oil supplier behind Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iran supplied 18.4 (million tonnes of crude oil during April 2017 and January 2018 (first 10 months of 2017-18 fiscal

