

S Jaishankar In Iran

Discuss Expanding Bilateral ties

Why In News

- As part of his **two-day visit to Iran**, S.Jaishankar called upon **President Ebrahim Raisi** and conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's greetings, also seeking Raisi's guidance on "further development of ties" between the two nations.

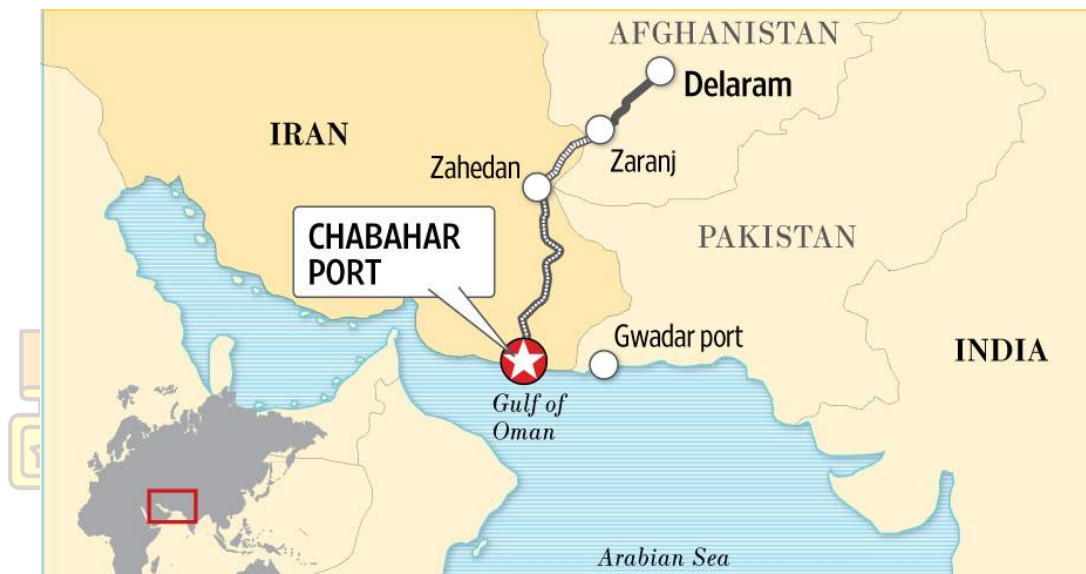


Why Time Of Visit Is Crucial

- In a year of **continuing global uncertainties**, India is out to rediscover old friends.
- The timing of External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar's visit to Tehran**, when **Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen** have heated up crucial shipping lanes in the Red Sea as well as around it with **missile attacks**, ostensibly to avenge **Israel's brutal retaliation against Palestinians**, is significant.



- The visit to Tehran came days after his five-day sojourn in Moscow to make nice with Russia.
- **India's ties with Iran have been strained** for a while because of Delhi's proximity to the US and Israel.
- In 2018, **Delhi stopped buying oil from Iran** in deference to US sanctions reimposed after former President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the Iran nuclear deal.
- One of unfortunate consequences of the sanctions has been **India going slow on the Chabahar Port project**.



- Indeed, there seems to be a belief in Delhi that this connectivity project that envisaged bypassing Pakistan to Afghanistan and Central Asia has been rendered irrelevant by the new **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor plan**.
- **In response to the sanctions, Iran signed a long-term partnership with China** that will purportedly see Beijing invest billions of dollars in connectivity and infrastructure in Iran.
- Jaishankar's visit comes after Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra went in November, apparently to assure the Iranians that Delhi had not lost interest in Chabahar.
- At this point, with **Indian ships also targeted the Houthis**, it was important to signal to Tehran that Delhi remains a friend, but if the targeting continues, Delhi might have to take steps in self-defence.
- He may have also had to sanitise Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's pledge to home audiences that India would go after "whoever did this" and find them "even from the depths of the sea".

About The Visit

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said **attacks on ships** in the vicinity of India is a matter of “**grave concern**” to the international community and such threats have a direct bearing on India’s energy and economic interest, underlining that this “**fraught situation**” is not to the benefit of any party.
- Jaishankar, who is visiting **Iran in the middle of an escalating West Asian conflict** and challenging situations in the Red Sea, **also had meetings with his Iranian counterpart** Hossein Amirabdollahian, Secretary of the National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian, and Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash, with whom he discussed cooperation on the strategically vital Chabahar port.



- **The main areas of discussion** included the importance of the common view of the two countries in the field of combating terrorism and organised crime; the need for cooperation to establish stability and security in Afghanistan; strengthening international trade, especially through national currencies; and the emphasis on maintaining the security of shipping in international waters.
- Moreover, in part of his speech, **Raisi highlighted Israel's counter-offensive** in Gaza and urged India to help in ending the bombings.
- "The **President described the crimes** committed by the **Zionist regime** in Gaza as clear examples of war crimes and crimes against humanity and clarified, stopping the attacks on Gaza, punishing the Zionist regime and fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people is the only way to return stability and security to the region, and it is important for India to play a role in ending the bombings,

lifting the blockade of this region and realising the rights of the Palestinian people," the statement added.

- Highlighting **India's interest in concluding a comprehensive and long-term cooperation agreement with Iran**, Jaishankar emphasised "India's complete adherence to its commitments in the Chabahar port development project as well as comprehensive development of cooperation with Iran," according to the statement.
- **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian** hosted EAM Jaishankar in Tehran, where the two leaders discussed expanding bilateral and multilateral ties within the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** and BRICS.



- Discussions on Gaza situation, he said, "The loss of civilian lives, especially that of women and children, was our primary focus. There is a visible humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed and the creation of sustainable humanitarian corridors is the need of the day. We welcome the international community's efforts in that direction. India has delivered shipments of relief material to Gaza and contributed to the UNRWA," the minister said.
- Also exchanged views on the **International North-South Transport Corridor.**" The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a **multi-modal transportation route** linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and onward to northern Europe via St Petersburg in Russia.



- INSTC is India's vision and initiative to reduce the time taken for **EXIM shipments to reach Russia, Europe and enter the central Asian markets**, according to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways earlier press release. Successful activation of the corridor will help connect India to Russia and Central Asian countries. Located in Iran, the Chabahar Port is the commercial transit centre for the region, particularly Central Asia.

