

## Tehran, Moscow to develop cooperation in gas technologies' field



Energy officials from Iran and Russia emphasized expanding and developing bilateral cooperation in the field of gas technologies. Director of the corporate planning of the National Iranian Gas Company Hossein Ali Mohammad Hosseini in a meeting with the energy officials of the Russian Federation stressed the need to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the gas industry, Tasnim News Agency reported.

He said the two sides should identify the capacities and opportunities for more cooperation and coordination in the field.

Mohammad Hosseini pointed to the willingness of Iran to expand relations with Russia in the energy sector and said the country welcomes the suggestion of Russia's Ministry of Energy on setting up a specialized panel discussion in the fields of digitization, monitoring and analyzing data in the Russia Energy Week and also in Energy Congress in St. Petersburg.

The NIGC director emphasized the need for sharing common experiences in areas such as reducing the amount of gas loss, and improving gas installations' safety against sabotages and terrorist attacks and added that Iran enjoys significant capacities for exporting, importing, refining and transmitting gas and is ready to enhance its cooperation with Russia in this field.

The representatives and authorities of the Russian Federation emphasized the need to identify capacities and opportunities for more coordination. Setting up a joint research center in the gas sector and also a gas hub in northern Iran as well as trading in gas and electricity sectors were among the other topics discussed by the two sides at the meeting.

## Iranian port to become regional transit hub

# Tehran, New Delhi ink 10-year pact on Chabahar

Iran and India on Monday signed a long-term deal to operate the Shahid-Beheshti Port Terminal in Chabahar in the presence of their ministers, a major step to make the southeastern city a regional trade transit and connectivity hub.

The Indian delegation to Iran was led by Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal, while Minister for Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash was present from the Iranian side. During his visit to Tehran, Bazrpash and Sonowal oversaw the signing of a new 10-year contract between the Ports & Maritime Organization of Iran (PMO) and India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL).

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Bazrpash said Iran is a land of transit opportunities as the development of Chabahar port with access to rail and road routes can help India to access the market of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and even Russia.

Under the contract, IPGL will commit to further equipping and operating the port for the duration of the contract. At the end of the 10-year period, both sides would further extend their cooperation in Chabahar.

IPGL will invest approximately \$120 million in equipping the port. India has also offered an IN credit window equivalent to \$250 million, for mutually identified projects aimed at improving Chabahar-related infrastructure. Chabahar port is an Iran-India flagship project that serves as an important transit port for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, which are landlocked countries. India has been a key player in the development and operation of Chabahar port. The Indian government has invested in the port's infrastructure and has been involved in upgrading its facilities to make it a viable transit route for Indian goods bound for Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In August 2023, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Johannesburg on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit. Both leaders discussed the pending long-term contract on Chabahar, and gave a clear political direction to finalize and



Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash (r) shakes hands with India's Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on the sidelines of ceremony to sign a contract on the development of Chabahar port in Tehran on May 13, 2024.

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sign the deal.

Speaking at the meeting, Sonowal called this a "historic milestone" and stressed that it "symbolizes the enduring trust and deepening partnership between India and Iran."

"Today, India and Iran have reached a historic milestone in their longstanding relationship, driven by the visionary ideals of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" championed by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Under PM Modi's leadership, the momentous agreement that began on 23rd May 2016 is culminating today in a long-term contract, symbolizing the enduring trust and deepening partnership

between India and Iran," Sonowal said during his meeting with Bazrpash.

"Chabahar port is an India-Iran flagship project. Today, as we witness the signing of the long-term contract for operating the Shahid-Beheshti Port Terminal, I am confident that a firm, sustainable, and long-term roadmap for developing the port has been established," he added.

In August 2022, Sonowal visited Chabahar port in Iran to review its work progress and handed over six mobile harbor cranes to Indian Ports Global Chabahar Free Trade Zone (IPGCTFZ) at the port then.

During his meeting, the Indian minister further underscored India's vision of making the port an international hub of connectivity and how it has continued its outreach with regional countries to expand trade and transit through Chabahar port.

"We have continued our outreach to promote Chabahar Port and

also facilitate transit. In 2022, India organized the "Chabahar Day" in Mumbai with a focus on fostering closer cooperation between our countries and the wider region to enhance inter-regional trade and economic connectivity," he said.

Sonowal went on to say how this port is serving an important transit port with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries and how India has helped landlocked Afghanistan.

"Chabahar port is serving as an important transit port for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, which are landlocked countries. Afghanistan is passing through a difficult phase. Over the past few years, we have supplied 85,000 metric tons of wheat and 200 metric tons of pulses as humanitarian food assistance. We also sent 40,000 liters of pesticide Malathion to Afghanistan through Chabahar port," said Sonowal.

Terming the recent visit of a high-level delegation from Afghanistan to Chabahar port as "positive," the Indian minister underlined the need to facilitate trade for Afghanistan and help Afghan people to stand on their own feet.

Chabahar port, located in south-east Iran, is a key component of India's connectivity initiatives, holds immense significance as it provides a viable and shorter route for trade between India, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Chabahar is a deep-water port located in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province. It is the closest Iranian port to India, and is located in the open sea, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships.

During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Iran in May 2016, a trilateral agreement to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) was signed by India, Iran and Afghanistan.

## Strengthening India-Iran ...

India has always had strong maritime trade with countries of the Persian Gulf, including Iran. These strategic maritime corridors have also been the source of India's energy security in the modern age, and Iran has played a vital role. The partition of India disrupted our land-based trade with Iran and the landlocked countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan. Maritime connectivity between India and Iran is the only viable option for restoring these ancient trading linkages. Iran's strategic location also makes it ideally suited to facilitate India's trade with many European and Asian countries. All of this under-

scores the importance of the Chabahar port project.

With the signature of the long-term Chabahar Contract, we have laid the foundations for India's long-term involvement in the equipping and operation of the Chabahar port. The project, which is currently in its initial phase, aims to develop the port into a major regional transit hub. It includes the construction of new terminals, the installation of modern equipment, and the improvement of port infrastructure. We are confident that the long-term contract signed yesterday between India and Iran will have a multiplier effect on the viability and visibility of the Chabahar port. Over the coming

years, we hope to see a multi-fold increase in cargo traffic being routed through Chabahar, especially transit trade between India and landlocked countries like Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Chabahar is not only the closest Iranian port to India but is also an excellent port from a nautical point of view. It can host large cargo ships and is accessible from the open sea, thus free from the congestion of the busy waterway of the Hormuz Strait. It is also ideally located to connect India with Afghanistan and Central Asia. For all these reasons, India sees Chabahar as a vital connectivity hub. In addition to its economic potential, the Cha-

bahar port project also holds promise for catalyzing tourism and cultural exchange between our countries, further strengthening our historical and cultural ties.

The increased transit trade through Chabahar will also bring significant economic benefits to Iran. As the world's fastest-growing major economy, India's external trade is set to skyrocket in the coming decades. By becoming the primary hub for India's transit trade to Eurasia and Central Asia, Chabahar port can generate substantial revenues and create greater employment. This development will be particularly advantageous for the Sistan-Balochistan region of Iran, fostering economic growth and cultural exchange with India.

We recognize that fully realizing the potential of Chabahar port as a transit hub requires significant investment in connecting it to Iran's land neighbors. India would be happy to contribute to the construction of such connectivity infrastructure, further underscoring our commitment to the India-Iran partnership and our belief in its potential.

India and Iran have outlined an ambitious vision for regional connectivity through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal network that will connect the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran. It would be very beneficial if the Chabahar port could be integrated into the INSTC vision, which would help create synergies between

the diverse segments of the INSTC. In this context, yesterday's historic event assumes even greater significance.

Recently Iran celebrated the ancient festival of Nowroz, which marks the beginning of the New Year and new beginnings. It is a festival that is well-known in India, too, due to our beloved Parsi community. It is very good that we are making a new beginning to our shared connectivity vision early in this auspicious new year. To all my Iranian brothers and sisters, I want to convey warm greetings from more than 1.4 billion Indians. I also want to express my deep gratitude to the Iranian government and people for their invaluable support and cooperation in the Chabahar port project. Motashakkaram!