



Potential of academic partnership between India, Iran

In a rapidly changing global landscape, collaboration and partnerships between nations have become increasingly important for economic and social development. Academic partnerships, in particular, play a crucial role in fostering innovation, research, as well as knowledge and technology exchange. India and Iran, two ancient civilizations with rich cultural heritage and strong academic traditions, have the potential to greatly benefit from closer collaboration in the field of education.

ITEC program

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, initiated by the Government of India in 1964, has been instrumental in promoting technical cooperation and capacity building with partner countries. Iran has been a long-standing participant in the ITEC program, sending professionals and students to India for training in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, information technology, and



healthcare.

The ITEC program has played a significant role in strengthening ties between India and Iran by facilitating knowledge exchange, cultural understanding, and networking opportunities. By expanding and diversifying the scope of the ITEC program, both countries can leverage their respective strengths in academia to address common challenges and opportunities.

One area where India and Iran can benefit greatly from collaboration is in the field of science and technology. Both countries have a strong research base and a growing focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. By fostering academic partnerships in areas such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence, India and Iran can leverage their respective expertise to drive technological advancements and economic growth.

Skilled professionals

Furthermore, collaboration in the field of higher education can help address the growing demand for skilled professionals in both countries. By sharing best practices in academic curriculum development, faculty training, and student exchange programs, India and Iran can enhance the quality of education and improve graduates' employability in a competitive global market.

Another area with tremendous potential for academic partnership between India and Iran is cultural exchange and language studies. Both countries boast rich cultural heritage and diverse linguistic traditions. By promoting academic collaborations in areas such as literature, history, and language studies, India and Iran can deepen their cultural understanding and foster cross-cultural dialogue.

The benefits of academic partnership between India and Iran are not limited to the academic domain alone. Collaborations in education can also facilitate people-to-people ties, promote tourism, and enhance

diplomatic relations between the two nations. By investing in academic exchanges, research partnerships, and joint academic initiatives, India and Iran can build a strong foundation for long-lasting cooperation and friendship.

Academic MoUs

In recent years, the governments of India and Iran have taken several initiatives to strengthen academic ties between the two countries. The signing of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between universities, research institutions, and educational bodies has paved the way for enhanced collaboration in areas such as joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and student scholarships.

Recently, Climate Change and Health Research Centre of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) inks a pact with Edward and Cynthia Institute of Public Health (ECIPH), Mangaluru, India to promote academic and policy-based research centered around public health consequences of climate change and human health interactions.

The two institutions will be pursuing academic and policy-based initiatives wherein the health systems convergence and impact is ascertained pertaining to climate change risks in the region and also cascading risks around disaster management and sustainable development.

The cooperation will be further nurtured through joint research, policy briefs, seminars, exchange program for faculties, researchers, students and co-creation of knowledge products that influence and impact global health diplomacy and strengthen bilateral public health cooperation between Iran and India.

The MoU was signed on April 23 by Abbas Ostad Taqizadeh, dean of the center at TUMS and Edmond Fernandes, director of ECIPH.

In March 2023, Iranian and Indian officials in the field of publication and international book exhibitions signed an MoU.

The MoU was signed in the presence of the head of the National Book Union of India and the managing director of Iran Book and Literature House.

According to the MoU, publishers of Iran and India take part in the exhibitions of the two countries and will present their works, which will facilitate the cultural interactions between the two countries.

Other initiatives

Initiatives such as the India-Iran Joint Working Group on Education and the establishment of academic chairs and centers of excellence have provided platforms for sustained engagement and collaboration in the field of education. By leveraging these initiatives and building on existing partnerships, India and Iran can unlock the full potential of academic collaboration for mutual benefit.

As India and Iran look towards a brighter future of academic partnership, it is essential to address challenges and barriers that may hinder effective collaboration. Issues such as visa restrictions and bureaucratic hurdles can impede the flow of students, scholars, and researchers between the two countries. To overcome these challenges, both nations need to streamline visa processes, promote language training programs, and facilitate academic exchanges through joint programs and scholarships. By addressing these barriers and creating a conducive environment for academic partnership, India and Iran can maximize the potential of collaboration and unlock new opportunities for innovation and growth.

Stronger India-Iran relations with Chabahar development amid US sanctions threat

Despite the looming threat of US sanctions, both Tehran and New Delhi are steadfast in their commitment to the development project of Chabahar port, recognizing the significance of the oceanic port as a key trade gateway in the region.

Located on the southeastern coast of Iran, Chabahar port is strategically positioned to serve as a major hub for shipping and trade in the region. The port provides India with a vital link to Afghanistan and Central Asia, along with offering a shorter and more cost-effective route for trade and commerce.

For Iran, Chabahar port presents an opportunity to enhance its maritime trade capabilities and boost economic growth.

The Chabahar development project has been a focal point of collaboration between India and Iran, with both countries investing significant resources to expand and modernize the port infrastructure. The construction of new terminals, roads, and railway lines at Chabahar Port is expected to enhance connectivity and facilitate smoother trade flows between India, Iran, and other countries in the region.

Despite the US threat of sanctions, India and Iran have remained committed to the development of Chabahar, recognizing its potential to strengthen economic cooperation and bolster strategic interests. The project holds strategic importance for India as it provides access to landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia, reducing dependence on traditional trade routes through Pakistan.

Furthermore, Chabahar port offers India an alternative route for trade with Europe and Africa, diversifying its trade options and reducing reliance on congested transit routes. By investing in the development of Chabahar port, New Delhi aims to enhance its regional influence and expand its economic footprint in the strategically important region.



For Iran, the development of the port is a key component of its broader strategy to diversify its economy and reduce dependence on oil revenues. By expanding its maritime trade capabilities and attracting foreign investment through projects like Chabahar Port, Iran aims to boost economic growth and create new opportunities for trade and investment.

The US threat of sanctions on Iran has raised concerns about the future of the Chabahar port project, given the potential impact on foreign investment and trade activities in the region. However, both India and Iran remain committed to the project, viewing it as a crucial component of their respective economic development and strategic interests.

India has reiterated its support for the development of Chabahar port, highlighting the importance of the project for enhancing regional connectivity, promoting economic growth, and expanding trade opportunities. The Indian government has continued to invest in the project and explore avenues for further cooperation with Iran in order to realize the full potential of Chabahar port.

"Any entity, anyone considering business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions," US State Department spokesman Vedant Patel has told reporters.

Indian authorities, however, have downplayed the tensions, with Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar telling reporters that New Delhi would "communicate the benefits" of the deal to the US and urge countries not to "take a narrow view of it".

Despite the challenges posed by the US sanctions threat, India and Iran have demonstrated resilience and determination in advancing the development of Chabahar port. Both countries have reaffirmed their commitment to the project and are working together to overcome obstacles and ensure its successful implementation.

India has signed a 10-year agreement to develop and operate Iran's strategic Chabahar port. "It [the port] serves as a vital trade artery connecting India with Afghanistan and Central Asian Countries," India's Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, as New Delhi attempts to strengthen ties with an important Middle Eastern nation.

India Port Global Limited (IPGL) and the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran signed the long-term deal, which will allow New Delhi to upgrade and operate one terminal at Chabahar port over 10 years.

Chabahar port consists of two separate ports — Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti. India will operate a terminal in Shahid Beheshti, and as per the agreement, invest \$120m into equipping it. An additional \$250m loan credit facility for related projects in the port brings the contract's value to \$370m.

The two countries first started talks on the project back in 2003 but a barrage of US sanctions targeting Iran prevented any real developments. Tehran and New Delhi revived the talks again after Washington eased sanctions under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.