

India, Iran, Afghanistan to discuss Chabahar

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After signing the S-400 missile defence systems deal with Russia, India appears to be looking at the possibility of expediting the Chabahar Port project in Iran that provides it a critical transport link to Afghanistan, despite the threat of US sanctions against Tehran.

India, Iran and Afghanistan plan to hold a trilateral meeting on Chabahar towards the end of October to intensify cooperation on the port project, it is learnt.

A high-level Indian delegation, comprising officials from the Shipping, External Affairs and other key ministries will represent India at the meeting.

“We are currently waiting for Afghanistan’s nod for the meeting,” sources here said.

New Delhi wanted temporary and main contracts to be pursued more quickly so that economic cooperation with Iran



on the Chabahar Port was further promoted, sources added.

“All of us need to make efforts to quickly tackle the challenges, particularly those in the area of banking,” sources said. New Delhi, they said, was seeking to accelerate investment and augment its presence at the Chabahar Port, which provides India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.

The Chabahar Port project also faces the threat of punitive action by the US which has decided to target oil, infrastructure and other such sec-

tors in Iran in the second round of sanctions which come into force from 4 November. India, Iran and Afghanistan had held a meeting last month also to review the progress on completing the Chabahar Port. At this meeting, Afghanistan conveyed to both India and Iran its keenness on early completion of the project.

India has been under pressure from the US to reduce its trade and commercial links with Iran in view of American sanctions against the Islamic nation. New Delhi has, however, asked the US to

keep the Chabahar Port out of the sanctions' regime since the project is primarily aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to the war-affected people of Afghanistan.

In February this year, Iran signed an agreement to lease the operational control of phase one of the Chabahar Port to India for 18 months.

In fact, India has also been in touch with the Iranian authorities for the construction of the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link that would enable it to transport goods right up to the Afghan border.