

India, Iran, Afghan discuss Chabahar port project

New Delhi: India, Afghanistan and Iran on Tuesday held their first trilateral meeting on Chabahar port project during which they reviewed its implementation.

The meeting assumes significance as the strategically-located port on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast was coming under the ambit of US sanctions on Tehran.

"Detailed discussions were held between the three sides on full operationalisation of the trilateral Agreement for international transit and transport through Chabahar port," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan had signed a pact which entailed establishment of a transit and transport corridor among the three coun-

tries using Chabahar Port as one of the regional hubs.

"All sides shared the view that full operationalisation of trilateral Chabahar initiative will promote connectivity and economic development of Afghanistan and the region," the MEA said in a statement.

It said the meeting decided to constitute a follow-up committee that would hold its first meeting within two months in Chabahar port.

It said the committee would discuss and aim to finalise protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs and consular matters for making the route attractive and decrease logistic costs.

The Indian delegation at the trilateral meeting was led by TS Tirumurti, Secretary (Economic Relations). The Afghan and Iran delegations

were led by respective deputy ministers of Transport.

"It was decided to hold the next meeting of the coordination council in the first half of 2019 in India," the MEA said.

The Chabahar port is being considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries.

The port is being considered crucial for trade among the three countries in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to India.

With the US bringing the ports in Iran under the sanctions regime against the Gulf nation, New Delhi has conveyed to Washington the importance of the Chabahar project, saying it can be a major link for trade with war-ravaged Afghanistan. **PTI**