

Shipping Minister to assess progress of Chabahar port as India looks to formalise cargo movement

Sarbananda Sonowal embarks on four-day visit to Iran and the UAE

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India is looking to formalise trade and cargo movements through Iran's Chabahar port, and the Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, is visiting the Sistan-Balochistan province to review the progress of the project's first phase.

The project, jointly developed by the India, Iran and Afghanistan, aims to further trade ties between the countries and land-locked central Asian region.

Chabahar is India's first overseas port project. The loading and unloading capacity of the Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar is currently at 8.5 million tonnes, which will be enhanced to 15 million tonnes, on completion of Phase I.

Due to the pandemic, there were fewer visits from

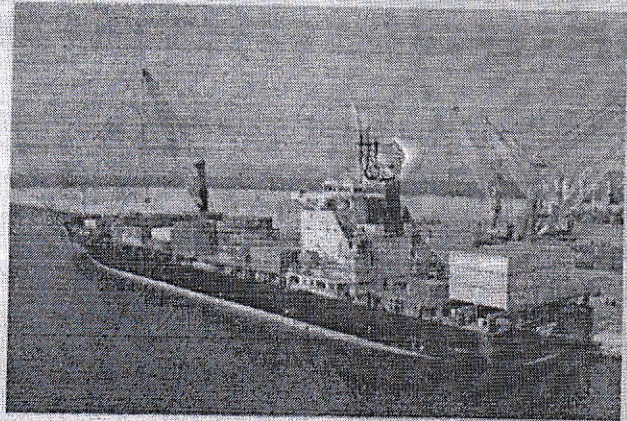
India to Iran and vice-versa. "This Ministerial visit will strengthen ties and maritime relationship between the two nations," said a statement by the Ministry.

According to officials, the visit highlights the importance of Chabahar as a gateway for Indian trade with Europe, Russia and CIS countries.

Sonowal, during his four-day visit, will also take part in bilateral meetings with the Ministers of Road & Urban Development and Health & Medical Education of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Other meetings

According to a Ministry statement, Sonowal, "embarked on an official visit to Iran and UAE beginning August 18". During his visit, the Minister will also visit the Jebel Ali Port in the UAE. Round table



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meetings with the heads of Shipping and Freight Companies in the UAE are also scheduled.

Meetings with the Ambassadors of CIS countries based in Teheran are also expected.

Officials told *BusinessLine* that India and Uzbekistan have agreed to do a pilot container cargo ship movement (from Tashkent) using a hybrid route - land and sea both - with the cargo moving

from Chabahar to JNPT in Mumbai.

Those tracking the development said Chabahar Port has a strategic advantage. There have been some talks to include this in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The INSTC is a regional connectivity project that aims at reducing transport time for goods from Russia, Europe and Central Asia.