
AFGHANISTAN SEEKS SPEEDY DEVELOPMENT OF IRANIAN PORT

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Afghanistans foreign minister asked India on Monday to expedite development of a strategic port in Iran to bolster a trade route for land-locked Central Asian countries that would bypass Pakistan.

The port would allow India to transport goods to Afghanistan by sea. Pakistan currently does not allow India to transport through its territory to Afghanistan.

Last year, India committed up to \$500 million for the development of the Chabahar port along with associated roads and rail lines.

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj responded that India would speed up the port development and begin supplying wheat to Afghanistan within weeks through Chabahar.

In his new Afghanistan strategy unveiled last month, U.S. President Donald Trump asked India to do more to help Afghanistans development.

Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani also asked India to expand an air freight corridor introduced between the two countries in June to provide greater access for Afghan goods to the Indian market.

Swaraj, who hosted Rabbani in New Delhi, told reporters that India and Afghanistan jointly agreed to embark on a new development partnership in keeping with Afghanistans priorities.

She said more than 100 new development projects would be implemented jointly.

She said India will assist in a drinking water supply project for Kabul, low-cost housing for returning

refugees, a water supply network for Charikar city, and a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif.

India will also help Afghanistan build human resource capacities and skills, especially in education, health, agriculture, energy, administration and resource management, Swaraj said.

The Afghan foreign minister said the two countries reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen their security and defense cooperation, but did not give any details.

India already has donated three multirole Mi-35 helicopters to Afghanistan, and trains Afghan security forces and police personnel.

Kaynak/Source: