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First Bilateral meeting between Foreign Secretary of India and Afghanistan

Published On: 09-01-2025

Context: The **First Bilateral Meeting** between India's Foreign Secretary and Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister took place on **January 9, 2025**. This was the highest level of engagement between the two countries since the



1. Humanitarian Assistance:

- The two sides evaluated ongoing **Indian humanitarian assistance programs** in Afghanistan, which include aid like wheat supplies to drought-affected areas.

1. Chabahar Port Agreement:

- They agreed to use the **Chabahar Port** (in Iran) for trade and commercial activities. This is significant as it provides Afghanistan an alternative route to the sea, bypassing Pakistan.

1. Background of India-Afghanistan Relations:

- India and Afghanistan share a long history of cooperation, symbolized by the **Friendship Treaty of 1950**.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477** / Whatsapp : **09710729833**

- Despite not officially recognizing the Taliban, India continued humanitarian engagements, including a **technical team** at the Indian Embassy to assist with aid and maintain contact with the Afghan people.

1. Importance of Afghanistan for India:

- **Geostrategic Location:** Afghanistan's position at the "**Heart of Asia**" has historically been a key route for trade and cultural exchanges between India and Central Asia.
- **Security and Stability:** Engagement with Afghanistan is crucial for addressing regional challenges like **terrorism, extremism, and separatism**.
- **Central Asia:** Afghanistan's location at the crossroads of **Central Asia and South Asia** makes it strategically important for India.
- **Soft Power:** India's **humanitarian assistance** and projects like the **Afghan-India Friendship Dam** and **Zaranj-Delaram Highway** help strengthen India's soft power in the region.

1. Rising Role of China:

- China is becoming more active in Afghanistan, taking up **urban development projects** in Kabul and engaging diplomatically through **ambassadorial visits**.

This meeting underscores the continuing strategic importance of Afghanistan for India, with a focus on humanitarian aid, regional security, and infrastructure projects, despite the political changes since the Taliban's return to power.