India-Afghanistan air corridor

Why in news?

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The India-Afghanistan air corridor has been hit by a shortage of cargo planes.

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What is the importance of Air corridor?

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- Afghanistan is a land-locked country & trade connectivity trough road has to pass through an unwelcoming Pakistan.
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- The air corridor project was proposed during the ‘Heart of Asia’ summit in Amritsar in December 2016.
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- It was inaugurated few months ago & the political commitment shown by both sides was remarkable.
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- The Afghan government also heavily subsidises the transit for its traders.
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What is the recent problem?

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- Currently, it is fruits season in Afghanistan.
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- There is also a high demand for cargo (to other countries).
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- The lack of a secured provider for chartered flights in Afghanistan had caused recent disruptions.
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- On the Indian side, traders worry about clearing the perishable goods quickly through Indian customs as the process is yet to be streamlined.

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- Due to this, tonnes of perishable produce are not being able to make it to their destined markets in time.
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- Officials insist though, that it will be resolved soon.
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What are the other projects that enhances connectivity to the west?

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- India has committed $2 billion in development aid to Afghanistan.
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- Zaranj Delaram highway (which connects to Iran), the Herat dam (Friendship Dam), the Doshi-Charikar power project, and the construction of Afghanistan’s parliament complex are completed.
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- India’s plans for the Chabahar port in Iran and the trilateral agreement to develop transit trade is being worked on.
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- It is yet to be ratified in Iran.
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- Tenders by India Ports Global Limited to develop berths as well as the railway line connecting Chabahar to the Afghan border at Zahedan (first planned in 2011) continue to be delayed.
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- Similarly, there has not been sufficient follow-through on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline after its inauguration in 2015.
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What should be done?

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- India’s dealings with both Afghanistan and Iran are not just about circumventing Pakistan.
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- They should open up important new connectivity and commerce avenues, as well as develop markets in Central Asia and through them to Russia and Europe.

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- A focused commitment with appropriate follow up should take precedence that the grandeur of announcements & ribbon-cutting.
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Source: The Hindu

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