

TAPI (Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India Pipeline)

The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI), also known as Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline, is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Galkynysh – TAPI Pipeline Company Limited with the participation of the Asian Development Bank.

TAPI is an important topic in the international relations segment of the IAS Exam.

History of TAPI

TAPI began to take form when a memorandum of understanding was signed on 15 March 1995 regarding a pipeline between the governments of Pakistan and Turkmenistan. The Central Asia Gas Pipeline (CentGas for short), LTD was formed in August 1996 for the construction of the pipeline. It was incorporated through formal signing ceremonies in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan by several international oil companies with the Government of Turkmenistan.

A new deal was signed on 27 December 2002 by the governments of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2005, the Asian Development Bank submitted the final version of a feasibility study designed by British company Penspen. The project has drawn strong US support as it would allow the Central Asian republics to export energy to Western markets "without relying on Russian routes".

India, Pakistan and Afghanistan came to an agreement to buy natural gas from Turkmenistan. The agreement between them was signed on April 24, 2008, in Ashgabat. Although by 2012, the governments of India and Afghanistan had yet to decide on the transit fee for the gas passing through Afghan territory. This was the same problem with the Indian and Pakistani governments regarding the transit fee for the pipeline passing through Pakistani territory as the fee structure would be modelled on the basis of an Indo-Afghan agreement.

Construction on the project started in Turkmenistan on 13 December 2015 and was completed by mid-2019. Construction on the Afghan side started on February 24, 2018, while construction on Pakistan began to start by October 2019 and is on schedule.

General Information about TAPI

A general overview of TAPI along with its technical information is given in the table below:

Overview of TAPI

Location	Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India
General Direction	North-South
Start location	Galkynysh gas field, Turkmenistan
Passes through	Herat - Kandahar - Quetta - Multan
End location	Fazilka, India
Type	Natural Gas
Length	1,814 km (1,127 mi)
Maximum discharge	33 billion cubic metres per annum (1.2 trillion cubic feet per annum)

Conclusion

It is widely believed that TAPI is a lucrative deal for all the nations involved, with the potential to create additional sources of revenue.

As mentioned earlier, TAPI has enjoyed much unilateral support from the U.S. as it circumvents the dependency of Central Asian Countries for Russian oil. It is also in the U.S interest to safeguard strategic locations in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a whole so that the entire project comes to fruition.

The project is believed to create about 12,000 jobs and above along with access to cheap energy for both India and Pakistan. But the politics of South Asia is myriad of mistrust and suspicion with the TAPI project must navigate through in order to be of any use to all the stakeholders involved. Until such choppy waters can be navigated through, it is only prudent to wait and watch how much of a benefit (or drawback) will the scope of the project yield in the long run.