

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-157  
ANSWERED ON- 02/02/2024**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY**

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**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-**

- (a) whether the Government proposes to focus on capacity building to promote India's interest on the global stage;**
- (b) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken for the same;**
- (c) the details of the 'Neighborhood First Policy', Act East Policy, Think West Policy and the connect Central Asia Policy;**
- (d) the extent to which these policies have helped the Government's vision of SAGAR;**
- (e) whether our country has achieved the tangible and intangible benefits due to the successful culmination of G-20 Presidency; and**
- (f) if so, the details thereof?**

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(DR. RAJKUMAR RANJAN SINGH)**

**(a & b) Yes. The Government focuses on capacity building for countries of the Global South and other partner-nations, to promote India's interest on the global stage through our comprehensive development partnership initiatives, which form a core element of our foreign policy. Our development cooperation is based on the principles of South-South cooperation and is marked by our focus on need-based human-centric development. Capacity building assistance is an important strand of India's development partnerships and is delivered under the flagship Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme. Around**

**160 countries avail these scholarships annually. More than 14,000 training slots are offered each year for both civilian and defence courses. More than 300 short-term fully funded courses are offered every year through a wide range of general as well as customized courses as per the specific requests of partner countries. Training slots on a regional basis are also offered to Secretariats of regional organizations to nominate candidates from their member countries. Further, as part of a renewed impetus, for the first time in 2023-24, ITEC has developed region-focused packages of capacity building courses. The two most prominent packages are the SAGAR AMRUT package developed for Pacific Island Countries and the Quad Infrastructure Fellowships (QIF) package focusing on infrastructure development related capacity building programmes for countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The Government is committed to enhance our capacity building outreach as per the requests and requirements of partner countries.**

**(c to f) A key focus of India's foreign policy remains its immediate and extended neighbourhood. India's historical and civilizational ties with countries in the region continue to guide our approach to our neighbourhood and beyond. The 'Neighbourhood First Policy', 'Act East Policy', 'Think West Policy', 'Connect Central Asia Policy' and the vision of SAGAR, which is, Security and Growth for all in the Region, respectively seek to comprehensively enhance our engagement with relevant countries. The details of these policies are placed at Annexure A.**

**India's G20 Presidency imparted a new dynamism and momentum to G20 and built consensus among developing countries and advanced economies on a wide range of global issues. During India's G20 Presidency, over 220 meetings in 40 different mechanisms were successfully held in 60 cities across India, covering all States and Union Territories. Delegates from G20 member countries, Guest countries and invited International Organizations participated in these meetings. Unique experiences showcasing India's diversity, inclusive traditions and cultural richness were also a part of the delegates' programme in these meetings.**

**India also amplified the voice and concerns of the Global South and developing countries in shaping the agenda and deliberations of the G20 Summit. India strongly advocated for the membership of the African Union and consequently the African Union was inducted into the G20 as a permanent member at the New Delhi G20 Summit in September 2023. The G20 New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration (NDLD) was adopted**

**unanimously at the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on 09 September 2023 and the Declaration addresses a wide range of issues of concern to countries from across the world, including those of the Global South. The Declaration also noted India-led initiatives such as the Global Biofuels Alliance, aimed at facilitating cooperation and intensifying the use of sustainable biofuels, including in the transportation sector and One Future Alliance a voluntary initiative aimed to build capacity, and provide technical assistance and adequate funding support for implementing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.**

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**Neighbourhood First Policy**

**India's 'Neighbourhood First policy' guides its approach towards the management of relations with countries in its immediate neighbourhood, that is, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The Neighbourhood First policy, inter alia, is aimed at enhancing physical, digital and people to people connectivity across the region, as well as augmenting trade and commerce. This policy has evolved into an institutional priority for all the relevant arms of the Government managing relations and policies with our neighbourhood.**

**Act East Policy**

**With the objective to further strengthen ties with countries of the Southeast Asian region, India's 'Look East Policy' launched in 1992, was upgraded to the 'Act East Policy' in 2014, with proactive and pragmatic focus on the extended neighbourhood in the Indo-Pacific region. The objective of India's Act East Policy is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and developing strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The 'Act East Policy' recognizes connectivity, in its broadest sense, as the key for growth and prosperity of the region, which includes physical, digital, economic, and people-to-people movement. India's relationship with the Association of South-East Nations (ASEAN) is at the core of India's 'Act East Policy'. Further, along with strengthening bilateral ties with the countries of the region, India has also enhanced its engagement in various multilateral and plurilateral institutions in the region, such as, ASEAN, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting plus, ASEAN Regional Forum, Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, QUAD, among others.**

**Think West Policy**

**India's outreach to the Gulf and West Asian countries has become an increasingly important pillar of its foreign policy. This region has traditionally been important for India's energy security. The welfare of the Indian Diaspora in the region is also a high priority. Under the 'Think West Policy', India's ties with these countries have moved beyond conventional areas of cooperation. Relations with countries in West Asia have continued to deepen through sustained high-level visits, increased trade and investment and strengthening of relations in areas including energy, security, defence, culture, education, health, and enhanced investments.**

## **Connect Central Asia Policy**

**The ‘Connect Central Asia Policy’ envisages a deep, meaningful and sustained engagement with the Central Asian region. This has been implemented by the continuous efforts taken in this direction, in particular, the institutionalization of the ‘India-Central Asia Summit’ mechanism. The ‘Connect Central Asia Policy’ also focuses on leveraging India’s historical and civilizational connections with the Central Asian region and strengthening strategic and security cooperation, capacity building, economic and commercial cooperation, enhancing connectivity, and people-to-people ties.**

## **SAGAR**

**The ‘Security and Growth for All in the Region’ (SAGAR) concept was first articulated by the Prime Minister in Mauritius in 2015. Under this concept, India envisages a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, one which is built on a rules-based international order, sustainable and transparent infrastructure investment, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, mutual respect for sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes, as well as equality of all nations. Guided by SAGAR, India is making concrete contributions in connectivity, capacity building, disaster management, enhancing people to people exchanges, promoting sustainable development, creating awareness on illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, enhancing maritime safety and security as well as strengthening underwater domain awareness in the Indian Ocean Region.**

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