

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-2142
ANSWERED ON- 21/12/2023

FOREIGN POLICIES OF GOVERNMENT

2142. SHRI BRIJ LAL
SMT. SEEMA DWIVEDI
SHRI SURENDRA SINGH NAGAR

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state :-

- (a) The details regarding 'Neighbourhood First Policy,' 'Act East Policy,' 'Think West Policy,' and the 'Connect Central Asia Policy'; and
- (b) Whether these policies contributed to the realisation of the Government's vision for SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region); and
- (c) If so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[DR. RAJKUMAR RANJAN SINGH]

(a to c) (i) 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 are guided by the 'Neighbourhood First Policy', 'Act East Policy', 'Think West Policy' and 'Connect Central Asia Policy' respectively. These policies seek to comprehensively enhance our engagement with relevant countries.

(ii) The 'Neighbourhood First Policy' accords institutional priority and centrality towards partners in India's immediate neighbourhood. It is guided by an approach that is consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented. It underlines the primacy that India seeks to attach to its neighbouring countries to comprehensively upgrade and strengthen the current relationship framework and achieve the goal of lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region. This policy has evolved into an institutional priority for all the relevant arms of the Government managing relations and policies with our neighbourhood.

(iii) 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, that includes physical, digital, economic, and people-to-people movement.

(iv) 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.

(v) The 'Connect Central Asia Policy' envisages a deep, meaningful and sustained engagement with the Central Asian region. This has been manifested 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.

(vi) 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 over-flight, 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, strengthening under water domain awareness, etc. in the Indian Ocean Region.
