

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4771**

**ANSWERED ON- 28/03/2025**

**RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

**†4771. SHRI AMRA RAM**

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

- (a) the efforts being made by the Government of India to improve relations with the neighbouring countries; and**
- (b) whether relations with neighbouring countries have improved or deteriorated during the last ten years?**

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**(SHRI PABITRA MARGHERITA)**

**(a) & (b) Government's approach on building bilateral relations with immediate neighbourhood is driven through the 'Neighbourhood First' policy. It essentially focuses on creating mutually beneficial, people-oriented, regional frameworks for stability and prosperity, including through the building of physical, digital and people to people connectivity. India engages with these countries on a consultative, non-reciprocal and**

**outcome-oriented basis, driven by the principles of Samman (respect), Samvad (dialogue), Shanti (peace), and Samriddhi (prosperity).**

**The Government has been extending developmental assistance and capacity building initiatives, as per needs and aspirations of the neighbouring countries, thereby contributing towards their holistic economic development. Under this approach, India has been assisting neighbouring countries on development of large scale infrastructure to community related provisioning of assets and platforms, augmentation of capabilities and extending financial, budgetary and humanitarian assistance.**

**A very large number of initiatives and programmes have been undertaken by India within the ambit of this policy. Among them are:**

- (i) humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in the form of food and medical aid, as well as scholarship schemes for Afghan students;**
- (ii) several development cooperation and connectivity projects in Bangladesh in the areas of cross-border power, energy and transport linkages;**
- (iii) assistance to Bhutan for capacity building and in the development of its hydropower resources, as well as cross-border connectivity linkages, including energy, rail links, road, trade infrastructure and digital connectivity;**

**(iv) Development partnership, capacity building, defence and security cooperation, economic linkages and people-to-people ties are among the key pillars of India's relationships with Sri Lanka and Maldives. India has also adopted a joint vision for a "Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership" with Maldives and "Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future" with Sri Lanka to deepen bilateral relations with these countries.**

**(v) assistance to Myanmar for several connectivity infrastructure development projects and capacity building, besides humanitarian relief and aid to help it recover from natural disasters;**

**(vi) an elaborate programme of development cooperation with Nepal aimed at promoting connectivity, and developing economic, energy, digital and cultural ties, including through the implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) in building hospitals, schools, colleges, drinking water facilities, sanitation, drainage, rural electrification, hydropower, embankment and river training works, so as to improve the overall quality of life at the local level.**

**Further, BIMSTEC represents the intersection of India's 'Neighbourhood First' outlook, the 'Act East Policy' and the 'SAGAR' vision with a specific focus on the Bay of Bengal region. Through BIMSTEC, India has been strengthening its regional cooperation with the member**

**states on a large spectrum of issues including enhancing security, trade facilitation, improving people to people contact, establishing connectivity, promoting institution building, collaboration in health and education, digital public infrastructure, capacity building, etc.**

**India's assistance under its Neighbourhood First policy is regarded as valuable by our neighbours, ensuring a sustainable basis for these assistance programs to continue despite changes in these countries. India's comprehensive and longstanding ties with its neighbouring countries also stand on their own footing and are independent of the relations of these countries with third countries. Government keeps a vigilant watch on all developments which have a bearing on India's national security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it. India is confident about the strength and enduring nature of its bilateral ties with the neighbouring countries and will continue to work together with them towards advancing bilateral ties for mutual benefit as well as safeguarding India's interests in the region.**

**\*\*\*\*\***