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Neighbourhood First Policy

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Why is in news? India's 'Neighborhood First Policy' has strengthened the country's global image, says EAM Jaishankar

Under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India is committed to **developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbours**.

India is an active development partner and is involved in several projects in these countries.

India's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' **focuses on creating mutually beneficial, people-oriented, regional frameworks for stability and prosperity**.

India's engagement with these countries is based on a consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach, which focuses on delivering benefits like greater connectivity, improved infrastructure, stronger development cooperation in various sectors, security and broader people-to-people contacts.

Features of the Neighbourhood First Policy:

Immediate priority to neighbours: Priority is to improve the relations with immediate neighbours as peace and tranquillity in South Asia is essential for realizing development agenda. The neighbourhood first policy of actively focuses on improving ties with India's immediate neighbours.

It focuses on **vigorous regional diplomacy** by engaging with neighbouring nations and building political connectivity **through dialogue**. First initiative in this direction was extending an invitation to all heads of government of SAARC countries for the oath taking ceremony of the Prime minister in 2014.

Focus is on **resolving bilateral issues** through mutual agreement. For instance, India and Bangladesh have signed a pact to operationalise the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).

Connectivity: India has entered into MoU with members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These agreements ensure a free flow of resources, energy, goods, labour, and information across borders.

It focuses on **enhancing trade ties with neighbours**. One such example is the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping for energy development i.e. motor vehicles, waterpower management and inter-grid connectivity.

The policy put emphasis on **technical cooperation**. Recently a dedicated SAARC satellite was developed to share the fruits of the technology like tele-medicine, e-learning etc. with the people across South Asia.

India's **offer cooperation on disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting and communication** and also capabilities and expertise in disaster management for all South Asian citizens.

India is also **focusing on deepening security** in the region through military cooperation. Various exercises like Surya Kiran with Nepal, Sampriti with Bangladesh aim to strengthen defence relations.

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Also, India has committed to play a greater role in capacity building of the Afghan National Army by providing training to them.