India and Its Neighbours

India has a long land frontier and coastline. It shares boundaries with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma) and Sri Lanka. India has official political relations with most nations. India is considered as the world's second most populous and democratic country. Foreign policy of India has always regarded the concept of neighbourhood as one of broadening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities.



India and China

In terms of geographic and demographic dimensions, skilled manpower, civilizational depth, China is the only country in the region which qualifies for comparison with India.The relation between these two nations are changeable. The two countries have a long history of civilisational links.

When the Communists came to power in China, India had welcomed the change and was one of the first countries to recognise her. She also advocated China's admission to the UN.

n 1954, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou-en-lai, had signed the "Panchsheel" agreement.

They adopted five principles:
1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

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2. Mutual non-aggression.

3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

4. Equality and mutual benefit.

5. Peaceful coexistence.

In spite of this, in 1962, China attacked India in the North-East and occupied a part of Indian Territory. The war ended soon but relations between India and China remained strained for a long time to come.

The visits of the Indian Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi (in 1988) and Narasimha Rao (in 1993) to China have improved the situation to some extent. Several trade agreements have also been signed. But it is not an easy task to restore peace and mutual trust between the two countries.

India wants good solution of the boundary issues. But China wants to delay solution to the border issue.

Since 2004, the economic growth of China and India has also helped furnace closer relations. Sino-Indian trade reached US$65.47 billion in 2013-14, making China the single largest trading partner of India. The growing economic reliance between India and China has also bought the two nations closer administratively, with both India and China excited to resolve their boundary dispute. They have also worked together on several issues ranging from WTO's Doha round in 2008 to regional free trade agreement.

Recently A Chinese road building project in the Himalayas has become the center of an escalating border dispute between India and China, with both sides accusing the other of territorial intrusions. the controversial road runs through the disputed Doklam Plateau, on the unmarked border between China and Bhutan.

Though not a part of Indian territory, the plateau holds immense strategic importance for Delhi and is vital to its geopolitical interests.

India and Bhutan have maintained historically strong relations. Bhutan co-operates closely with India in determining its foreign policy, and the Indian Army is involved in the training of its armed forces.

China, which does not have formal diplomatic ties with

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Bhutan, has denied that it has violated any treaties.

India and Afghanistan:

India's relations with Afghanistan are healthy and there is co-operation in economic, technical and cultural fields. India applauded the UN-sponsored Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan in 1988. India recapped its stand for an independent, non-aligned Afghanistan.

India offers aid programs for Afghanistan include infrastructure development, institutional capacity building, small development projects, as well as food security assistance in the form of ongoing deliveries of wheat to Afghanistan.

Despite many transit obstacles, the volume of Indo-Afghan trade stood at $680 million during 2013-2014, which is continually rising, following the full implementation of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement (APTTA).

Links between Afghanistan and India go beyond the traditionally strong relations at the government level. Since ancient time, the peoples of Afghanistan and India have interacted with each other through trade and commerce, peacefully coexisting on the basis of their shared cultural values and commonalities.

India and Bangladesh:

Indian government believe in maintaining good relations with neighbouring countries. Bangladesh is one of its close neighbour. India had recognised Bangladesh as a separate and independent state, did so on 6 December 1971. India fought together with the Bangladeshis to liberate Bangladesh from West Pakistan in 1971. Bangladesh and India share a common tradition. They are pleasant and both nations make great efforts to solve the problem of waters of Ganga at Farakka and Tin Bigha corridor in a spirit of give and take. India has helped Bangladesh in the recovery of cyclone victims in 1985. In broad sense, the relations between the two nations continue to be amiable. But major issues in relation with these two nation is that of about 145,000 Chakma refugees who crossed over to India. Bangladesh's relationship

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with India has been difficult in terms of irrigation and land border disputes post 1976. Nevertheless, India has maintained favourable relationship with Bangladesh during governments formed by the Awami League in 1972 and 1996.

Presently, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina have completed a revolutionary deal redrawing their disordered shared border and there by solving disputes between India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh and India have signed a historic agreement to simplify their border by exchanging more than 150 enclaves of land.

India and Bangladesh also have free trade agreement in June 7, 2015. Both nations solved its border dispute on June 6, 2015. To connect Kolkata with Tripura via Bangladesh through railway, the Union Government on 10 February 2016 sanctioned about 580 crore rupees. The funds were sanctioned for constructing the 15-kilometer railway track between Kolkata and Tripura. The project that is expected to be completed by 2017 will pass through Bangladesh. The Agartala-Akhaura rail-link between Indian Railway and Bangladesh Railway will reduce the current 1700 km road distance between Kolkata to Agartala via Siliguri to just 350-kilometer by railway. These projects are high level and on Prime Minister's 'Act East' Policy.

India and Bhutan:

Relations between India and Bhutan are friendly since past and it is strengthened recently. Co-operation in economic field between the two countries has advanced them. India has helped Bhutan in industry development such as in the field of telecommunications, hydel survey, education and forestry. Historically, there have been strong ties with India. Both countries signed a friendship treaty in 1949, where India would support Bhutan in foreign relations.

The Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 2007 supports Bhutan's position as an independent and sovereign nation. The hydropower sector is one of the main supports of bilateral cooperation. It demonstrates mutually beneficial synergy by providing clean energy to India and exports revenue to Bhutan

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(power contributes 14% to the Bhutanese GDP, comprising about 35% of Bhutan's total exports). Three hydroelectric projects (HEPs) totaling 1416 MW, (336 MW Chukha HEP, the 60 MW Kurichu HEP, and the 1020 MW Tala HEP), are already exporting electricity to India.

The First Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan was launched in 1961. Since then, India has been extending financial assistance to Bhutan's FYPs.

India and Burma/Myanmar:

India maintained political relations after Burma's independence from Great Britain in 1948. Burma is located to the south of the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India and the proximity of the People's Republic of China gives strategic importance to Indo-Burmese relations.

When serious turbulence erupted in Burma in 1988, India expressed sympathy for the democratic aspirations of the people in that country. Additionally, India allowed Burmese inhabitants to stay in camps in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

India offered good support when Burma struggled with regional rebellions.

India announced a plan to develop the Sittwe port, which enabled ocean access from Indian North-eastern states like Mizoram, via the Kaladan River.

India is a major purchaser of Burmese oil and gas. In 2007, Indian exports to Burma totalled US$185 million, while its imports from Burma were estimated US$810 million, consisting mostly of oil and gas. India has granted US$100 million credit to fund highway infrastructure projects in Burma, while US$57 million has been offered to advancement of Burmese railways.

India and Maldives:

India has retained cordial relations with Maldives. Maldives is located south of India's Lakshadweep Islands in the Indian Ocean. As friendly neighbours, India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity and enjoy cordial and multi-dimensional relations.

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