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## Hum SAARC SAARC hain

**NDA's foreign policy has gone into an overdrive to reach out to member countries from South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC). dna asks readers if this move will help integrate the countries in the South Asian region?**

### Speak Up



If we don't make an effort, others will take advantage

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Among our neighbouring countries, India is the biggest economy wise, so it has to play a role of big brother to maintain peace and harmony within the region. If we take the initiative through our foreign policy to reach out to our neighbours, it will surely help us integrate and propel our regions economy. Our neighbours like Nepal, Bhutan etc are prospering because of our trade relations. As much as we want them they also want our involvement for economic prosperity within the region. Keeping India aloof and lonely will never help in its economic growth. Modi's invitation to Nawaz Sharif during the swearing in ceremony was a strategic move to extend a friendly hand. We should strengthen our relationship with our neighbours or others will do so. Modi is doing well on foreign policy acting responsible. The Modi you see on national platform is different from when he was at state level.

—Ateeque Shaikh, Member, Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace & Democracy

India's dented image needs resurrection...

Mega infra projects funded (mostly loaned) by China are going on in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. With Pakistan we have a different kind of problem concerning territorial issues. Due to this rapid development combined with our pathetic leadership and dented international image due to scams, these tiny nations have progressed at a far better rate than ours over the last ten years. If India wishes to grab a piece of China's pie it has no option but to extend a hand of trade friendship to its neighbours. Reason? Such investment helps to buck up the economy of the donor and recipient nation alike. A win-win situation. It will also enhance our international image of being a lead nation; a responsible big brother, so to speak, which in turn will attract foreign investment into India. And this is precisely what Modi governments publicised agenda is; image makeover, economic boost and job creation.

—Girish Deshpande,

Citizen Activist – Local Governance

To win the fort, win nearby villages...

India has always adopted a war policy based on those followed by many of the European countries. We have to take example of 'Shivaji the Maratha warrior', whose strategy was that if you have to win a fort first you have to win the villages around the fort. Till now our foreign policy especially with our neighbouring countries was not good enough and Modi seems to be rectifying that approach. We can never fulfill our dream of becoming a super power unless we improve our relationships with neighbouring countries. Instead of concentrating on anti-China policy India should concentrate on becoming pro Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We should strengthen our relationship on the basis of our culture, tradition and trade. It is high time that India gives up its highhanded attitude and has a liberal foreign policy that encourages open minded

relationship with neighbouring countries. We should never get into the race of fighting the might of China.

—Sanjay Nahar, Founder President, Sarhad

India being 'big brother', should act with responsibility...

India is a stable country in terms of its culture, defence and trade. Because of its land area and easily available resources, India has a responsibility to maintain friendly relations with the neighboring countries and the member countries. The small countries look forward to India for peace and better relations. By reaching out to the countries, Modi has taken a step to be a responsible head and a partner in mutual understanding amongst the member countries and will help in development of these countries in trade, commerce and defence.

—Group Captain (retd) Shrikant Walwadkar (Advocate)

We need a better future for South Asian region...

I think its a good thing to reach out to neighbouring countries and it is extremely necessary for India. India is such a big country, there has been a certain amount of jealousy and suspicion about its growth and prosperity by the other countries. When Atal Bihari Vajpayee had come in power, he had taken certain measures to have friendly relations with the neighboring countries. He had taken steps to have better relations in trade, commerce and culture. And there was an introduction of 'common currency unit' for SAARC members. Then UPA came and no steps as such were taken by them. Now that NDA has come with Modi, they are taking steps towards having good relations with the other countries. Other countries should demand peace and co-operation from India for better future of South Asia.

—Rajas Parchure, Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics & RBI Professor of Finance

We should resolve issues with our neighbouring countries...

The geo-political issues on water should be resolved with countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh. They can adopt measures for solving mutual problems and India being a powerful country has Modi who has a good attitude towards other countries. His visit to countries like US has not only surprised the people of this country but also the whole world. It is a great step towards mutual cooperation. Bhutan is completely dependent on India. Extra efforts by us should be made towards Nepal, Bhutan, Burma etc. If we do not do something, China already has posts there, so they will lure the small countries. Therefore, the steps taken by India are definitely positive and will help maintain mutual good relations with other countries.

—Col (retd) Kiran Kanade



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