

# China and India seek reset in talks, but fault lines remain

**Beijing stresses partnership and multilateralism, while Delhi underscores stability on border issue**

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Senior diplomats from China and India met in New Delhi on Tuesday for what Beijing described as a new round of strategic dialogue, emphasising the need to view each other as partners rather than competitors amid shifting global dynamics.

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri hosted China's Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, who was in the country for the Brics Sherpa Meeting from Sunday to Tuesday.

The two sides' readouts of the meeting, however, revealed a persistent gap in how the neighbours continue to frame their relationship.

While Beijing appeared to promote a vision of "partnership" aimed at drawing New Delhi closer, India remained focused on practical and incremental stabilisation, reflecting lingering mistrust after the 2020 border clashes and a need to balance ties with both China and an increasingly transactional United States.

China's foreign ministry readout portrayed the exchanges as "friendly, candid and in-depth", underscoring a shared view that the two countries should treat each other as "partners rather than competitors" and as "mutual development opportunities rather than threats".

Beijing's statement called for enhancing "mutual trust, expanding cooperation, properly handling differences, and promoting the healthy and stable development of China-India relations".

It also pledged reciprocal support for each other's Brics leadership roles. India is the Brics chair this year. The leaders' summit is expected to take place later this year in New Delhi.

Brics is a political and economic coordination forum of major emerging economies that includes both India and China and is widely seen as a challenge to Western dominance in global institutions.

According to the Chinese readout, both sides agreed to support each other in upholding multilateralism, the United Nations' central role, Global South solidarity, international fairness, multipolarity and peace in Asia and globally.

India's readout also pointed to discussions on long-standing multilateral issues, including New Delhi's push for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

However, the tone was more subdued from New Delhi, which has just secured a hard-fought tariff deal with US President Donald Trump and is facing domestic criticism over concessions to Washington, even as it navigates the "America first" leader's threats against Brics as an

"anti-American" grouping. According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the discussions spanned bilateral, regional and international affairs, with a primary focus on recent progress in stabilising and rebuilding ties.

Both sides stressed the importance of maintaining peace along the border for broader progress in relations and committed to following their leaders' guidance, including adopting a "political and strategic direction" to address bilateral trade concerns.

The Indian side highlighted practical steps forward, such as the successful resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a pilgrimage significant to Hindus – the largest base of support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi – and expressed hope for its expansion.

Talks covered the need for an updated Air Services Agreement, visa facilitation measures and boosting people-to-people exchanges.

This follows the October 2025 resumption of direct flights, initiated by IndiGo's service to Guangzhou, which ended an aviation freeze in place since the pandemic and the 2020 border stand-off.

While China has long been viewed as the principal obstacle to India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the Indian readout noted that Ma conveyed that Beijing "understands and respects" India's aspirations for permanent membership.