

WUHAN SPIRIT SHOULD SPUR INDIA TO JOIN BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: CHINA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

China on Monday called India its “natural partner” in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and advocated better ties between New Delhi and Islamabad within the Eurasian framework.

At a media conference on the BRI, Zhang Jun, China’s assistant minister of foreign affairs threaded India and China’s deep bonds established during their far history with recent diplomatic initiatives, including the Wuhan summit in April between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Asked to respond to India’s objections to the China-Pakistan Economic Project (CPEC) on grounds of sovereignty, Mr. Zhang focused on the big picture. He signalled that differences between New Delhi and Beijing on the project were overridden by the rapid turnaround in their ties after the Wuhan summit.

The Chinese official stressed that, “CPEC is an economic initiative. Implementing CPEC does not jeopardise China’s position on Kashmir.”

Mr. Zhang spotlighted that India-China ties, had “entered a new phase of development” since the Wuhan informal summit.

Xi-Modi meetings

Citing the summit and the follow up meetings between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi, as benchmarks of the shift in the relationship, Mr. Zhang said: “I think we can all recall that since April, it has been only three months, President Xi and Prime Minister Modi met in Wuhan, in Qingdao, and in Johannesburg in South Africa.”

“(These are) three important meetings of the two leaders and they have reached important understandings which (have) added fresh and strong impetus to our bilateral ties.”

Refusing to accept India’s permanent exclusion from the BRI in the post-Wuhan scenario, Mr. Zhang said that “historically India was an important country on the ancient Silk Road, and it is fair to say that India was a natural partner on the ancient and (is one) in the Belt and Road Initiative.”

Separately, the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday welcomed India and Pakistan’s joint participation in a Eurasian counterterrorism military exercise under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

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