

CHINA FLOATS BRICS 5G BASE AS INDIA MULLS BAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

China has proposed the creation of what it calls a 'BRICS innovation base' to take forward 5G and Artificial Intelligence (AI) cooperation among the five countries, as their industry ministers met virtually on Monday.

China's Minister of Industry and Information Technology Xiao Yaqing "urged fellow nations, including India, to boost cooperation in areas including 5G and AI", Chinese media reported, adding that China was "actively considering the establishment of a BRICS innovation base in China, in order to strengthen practical cooperation with the BRICS".

The move could pose an awkward question for India, which is the only country in the grouping that is leaning towards excluding Chinese participation in the roll-out of its national 5G network.

Russia has said it would work with China on 5G, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying this month they were open to working with Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei, which has been largely banned by the United States.

South Africa, Brazil

In South Africa, Huawei is providing services to three of its telecom operators in the roll-out of their 5G networks. Brazil has allowed participation in trials but is yet to take a final call, although Vice President Hamilton Mourao indicated they would likely allow Huawei considering that "more than a third" of Brazil's 4G network operators use Huawei equipment. "Huawei has capacity above its competitors and we do not yet see U.S. companies capable of defeating international competition," he said.

India is unlikely to allow Chinese participation in 5G, particularly in the wake of recent moves to tighten investment from China and to ban 59 Chinese apps, citing national security concerns. The ban, which followed the June clash in Galwan Valley, cited a "threat to the sovereignty and integrity of India" posed by the apps.

Possible military ties

Indian intelligence assessments have also expressed concerns on the possible direct or indirect links of several Chinese companies, including Huawei, with the Chinese military.

India has made clear a return to normalcy cannot be possible while tensions along the Line of Actual Control remain unresolved.

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