

India, China hold talks ahead of SCO summit

Preparing the way: Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Friday.PTIPTI

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale has held across-the-board talks with top Chinese officials on advancing ties between India and China, which have encountered several points of friction.

Mr. Gokhale's visit is also seen as part of preparations for talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at the June summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Chinese coastal city of Qingdao. The Foreign Secretary met Politburo member and State Councilor Yang Jiechi, China's top foreign policy official, as well as Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Vice-Foreign Minister Mr. Kong Xuanyou.

Last year, Prime Minister Modi and President Xi met in Xiamen on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in September to revive ties that had been hit by the Doklam border crisis. As a follow-up to these talks, Mr. Yi and Mr. Yang visited New Delhi in December.

"During the consultations, the two sides reviewed recent developments in bilateral relations, including high-level exchanges, and discussed the agenda for bilateral engagement in the coming months," an Indian Embassy press statement said.

India's concerns regarding China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean have been rising, and have peaked after the pro-China President of Maldives Abdulla Yameen declared a state of Emergency on February 5 in the island nation.

Without making any specific reference to the Maldives, the statement said the "two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest".

Building convergence

The statement noted the necessity of building on "convergences" between the two countries. It stressed that Beijing and New Delhi should "address differences on the basis of mutual respect and sensitivity to each other's concerns, interests and aspirations".

In the past, Indian officials have pointed to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) as an infringement of India's sovereignty.

China's decision to come in the way of a UN ban on Masood Azhar, head of the Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM), and Beijing's objections to India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group emerged as additional points of abrasion in ties.

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