

China says ties with India continue to grow

China on Thursday lauded Indian and Chinese leaders for demonstrating a “strategic vision” which had helped defuse last year’s Doklam crisis, and acknowledged that ties between the two countries were poised for a rapid transition.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at an annual press conference that India-China ties were seeing a turnaround.

“Despite some tests and difficulties, the China-India relations continue to grow.” Mr. Wang stressed that China was keen to forge closer India-China ties, cemented by a focus on greater dialogue-based on “mutual trust”.

In response to question on the flurry of visits by the Chinese and Indian officials after the Doklam standoff in the Sikkim sector, Mr. Wang said: “The Chinese dragon and the Indian elephant must not fight each other but dance with each other. If China and India are united, one plus one will not only include two, but also 11.”

Mr. Wang and Chinese state councilor Yang Jiechi had visited India in December, in the backdrop of the post-Doklam meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the September summit of the BRICS countries in the Chinese coastal city of Xiamen.

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale had visited China last month for talks with top officials.

“Through Mr. Gokhale’s visit, we wanted to demonstrate that we were as keen as China in rebuilding post-Doklam ties,” a diplomatic source told *The Hindu*. A spate of track-1 meetings are now in the pipeline, including the China-India strategic economic dialogue next month, which is likely to be preceded by visits to India of Chinese Commerce Minister Zhong Shan and of Guo Yezhou, Vice Minister in the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Mr. Wang stressed that “more far-sighted leaders” have come to realise that as the largest two developing countries each with a population of more than a billion, “China and India must do everything to empathise with and support each other and avoid mutual suspicion and attrition”.

The Foreign Minister, however, stressed that New Delhi and Beijing must focus on building “mutual trust”, which would be the key for the further advancement of the relationship. He pointed out that “mutual trust is the most precious commodity in the India-China relations”.

Political trust

“With political trust, not even the Himalayas can stop us from friendly exchanges. Without it, not even level land can bring us together.”

Mr. Wang underscored the urgency of Beijing’s readiness to befriend India. “Let me put this to our Indian friends: our shared understandings far outstrip our differences. Our interests far outweigh the frictions. China is ready and willing... ready to inherit and take forward traditional friendship, and be a friend and partner of the Indian people,” he observed.

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