

In major breakthrough, India and China agree on border patrolling arrangements

KEY DEVELOPMENT. Move to help India play down anti-China sentiments, boost economic engagement: Experts

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In a significant breakthrough, India and China have reached an agreement over patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that would lead to disengagement and resolution of the long-running conflict that began in 2020, said Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

“Over the last several weeks, Indian and Chinese diplomatic and military negotiators have been in close contact with each other at a variety of forums. As a result of these discussions, an agreement has been arrived at on the patrolling arrangements along the LAC, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in 2020. We will be taking the next steps on this,” Misri told a press briefing on Monday ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Kazan in Rus-



SIGNS OF A THAW. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri at a press conference in New Delhi on Monday PTI

sia for the 16th BRICS Summit on Tuesday and Wednesday.

ECONOMIC TIES

The latest development could help India push the anti-China sentiments, which had escalated after the Galwan face-off in 2020, onto the back burner and move towards greater economic engagement, according to some experts.

The LAC breakthrough is a good development achieved through patient

and persevering diplomacy, said S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs. “We reached an agreement on patrolling, and we have gone back to the 2020 position. With that, we can say the disengagement with China has been completed. Details will come out in due course,” Jaishankar said at a media event in New Delhi.

In 2020, relations between China and India nose-dived following the violent Galwan valley face-off that resulted in fatalities of soldiers on

both sides. The border tension not just strained political relations between the two countries but also hit the economic ties, with India imposing curbs on investments by Chinese companies.

CHINESE INPUTS

“Realpolitik influenced by economic dimension seems to have played an important part in the resolution. We have moved away from the anti-China rhetoric that started in 2020. There is a recognition that we need Chinese inputs and investments. Over a period of time, it is necessary to reduce dependence but we cannot take a sudden decision to decouple from China,” said Biswajit Dhar, Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development.

KEY IMPORT SOURCE

“India needs Chinese investments in critical sectors such as EVs and the thawing of political relations can help

improve economic ties,” a Delhi-based trade expert said.

China was India’s top import source in 2023-24 with goods inflows worth \$101 billion despite the strained relations as the imports include items that are crucial inputs for Indian manufacturers.

So far, the military talks and Foreign Office discussions have resulted in disengagement at five friction points including the Pangong Tso’s north and south banks, Patrolling Points 15 and 17A at the Gogra-Hot Springs area, and Galwan. But there has been no progress in the stand-offs in two critical areas, including the Depsang Plains and Demchok in eastern Ladakh.

India has been firm on its demand of achieving pre-April 2020 *status quo ante* (the state of affairs that existed previous to that date) while Beijing had been calling for ‘normalisation’ of ties beyond the border dispute.