

Wuhan Meet -Hopes Brighten for the Asian Century

What is the issue?

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- PM Modi and President Xi seem to have changed the tenor of India-China ties.

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- They must now build on it to evolve a mutually beneficial geo-political space.

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How has the Wuhan meet proceeded?

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- The current Wuhan meet seems largely informal and unstructured, and both the premiers were accompanied only by their translators the entire time.

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- Press statements issued denote that both leaders held discussions that were wide in their scope, and covered “bilateral, regional and global issues”.

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- An understanding had been reached to strengthen communication lines between both militaries to avoid Doklam like standoff in the future.

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- Indo-China bilateral trade currently stands at \$84 billion per annum and India faces a massive trade deficit of about \$52 billion with China.

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- The leaders have pledged to better balance this deficit by enhancing China’s import of Indian goods in key sectors like agriculture and pharmaceuticals.

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- An attempt has been made to address the international irritants in the relationship like

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- China’s blocking of “India’s NSG membership bid” and “terror designation for Pakistan-based groups”.

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- India's opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and tacit pampering of the Tibet issue.

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- Additionally, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi discussed a joint project in Afghanistan, which is a very significant step for the entire south Asian region.

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What is the larger message?

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- **Past** - Despite hundreds of years of engaging each other, the two neighbours have been to war only once.

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- Since the signing of the 1993 "Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity", neither side has fired a weapon against the other.

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- This is very significant as the 3500 Km long border is largely not demarcated.

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- Also, despite both countries possessing atomic weapons, parleys have never carried even a hint of the nuclear overhang.

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- **Currently** - In the run up to Wuhan, there was a conscious toning down of rhetoric by both sides, after the high reached during the Doklam standoff.

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- This has set out a strong message that India and China can work together on peaceful terms despite bilateral and geopolitical differences.

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- While much else remains to be done, Wuhan has definitely set the tone for a mutually beneficial and sustained Asian Century.

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Source: The Hindu

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