

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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Beijing says ready to work with New Delhi to enhance mutual trust and dispel doubts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

China is ready to work with India side by side to enhance “mutual trust and dispel doubts”, said the spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a day after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed willingness to take the relations forward.

“China stands ready to work with India to implement the important common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries, continuously enhance mutual trust and dispel doubts, properly handle sensitive



Reset efforts: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in New Delhi. PTI

issues, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, maintain the positive momentum of China-India relations, and jointly advance our respective modernisation processes,” said Lin Jian, spokesperson

of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, on Wednesday.

Earlier, Xu Feihong, Chinese Ambassador to India, said that in the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister Wang Yi had said, “China and India, as the two largest developing countries” should “play an exemplary role in promoting solidarity and self-reliance among Global South countries”.

‘Implement consensus’ Mr. Wang’s meeting with Mr. Modi took place soon after the visiting delegates who participated in the BRICS National Security Advisers’ (NSAs) meeting here on June 22-23, called on Mr. Modi on Tuesday.

“China will continue to support India in fulfilling its responsibilities as the BRICS rotating chair and work with India to promote solid progress in BRICS cooperation,” said Ambassador Mr. Xu. He said Mr. Wang had expressed willingness to work with India “to implement the important consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries”.

According to a Chinese readout of Tuesday’s meeting, the Prime Minister conveyed his greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang and expressed support for cooperation under the umbrella of BRICS.

GS 2: POLITY

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'Passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship'

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NEW DELHI

The Indian passport is a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document", a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

The purpose of the Indian passport is to help Indians transit and travel through foreign ports and territories and it should not be compared with other documents that are used to establish citizenship rights, the official said.

Highlighting the importance of passports in connecting the Indian workforce with the global economy, MEA officials said the government will intensify mobility engagements with western na-

tions and Japan in coming months to help citizens get secure employment opportunities in these industrialised economies.

Voter list exclusion

"Passport is a travel document, not a document of citizenship and theoretically speaking that distinguishes passport from other documents. Even though while travelling abroad, passport attests to your nationality, yet it is not a document of your citizenship," a senior official said, in response to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the Indian passport could be used to challenge an exclusion from the voter list through the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that



is currently under way in 16 States. Another MEA official said that the Indian passport is issued "after a lot of due diligence and we make sure that the person who gets it is actually entitled, and we also base ourselves on documents from several government agencies like the Aadhaar, PAN

card." The second official said that the MEA will host a major event on international mobility – the Human Resource Mobility Forum to be held in New Delhi from June 30 to July 1 – that will focus on countries like Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Denmark.

Ethical migration

A large number of recruitment agencies from across the country are expected to participate in the event that will highlight ethical migration and create awareness about how to avoid unscrupulous agents that use illegal means to send Indians to conflict zones and high risk areas.

"We have to demolish the myths that one can go to Italy or Greece using un-

fair means and then send home lots of money," the official said.

Speaking on the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas, marked on June 24, the official said that 27 countries have given visa-free entry status to Indian passport holders, while 47 countries offer visas on arrival and 66 countries provide electronic-visas (e-visas) to Indian passport holders. The MEA official said that around 10% of Indian passport-holders possess an e-passport, a chip-based document.

There are 545 passport seva kendras across the country catering to the needs of the growing number of passport applicants, and this passport network now covers almost every

Lok Sabha constituency.

In addition, one-stop centres for distressed women in the Indian diaspora have been opened in the Gulf countries and Singapore, supported by the Indian community. More such centres are expected to be established in other countries.

"Team MEA reaffirms its commitment to keep making passport services delivery faster, more transparent and accessible..." External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on the occasion of Passport Seva Divas, noting that chip-enabled e-passports and the opening of new passport seva kendras (PSKs) have contributed to ease of travel, helping Indians get global job opportunities.

31% of Rajya Sabha MPs have declared criminal cases: report

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Around 31% of Rajya Sabha members have declared criminal cases against themselves, of whom 16% have declared serious criminal cases, according to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms and National Election Watch.

The analysis covered 226 of the 233 MPs. In the current Rajya Sabha, four seats from West Bengal are vacant. Three MPs were not analysed as their affidavits were unavailable.

According to the report, one sitting Rajya Sabha member has declared cases related to murder, four have declared cases related to attempt to murder, and four have declared cases related to crimes against women. Among parties, 28 (26%) of the 107 BJP MPs, 12 (41%) of the 29 Congress MPs, two (22%) of the nine MPs from the Trinamool Congress, two (25%) of the eight DMK MPs, and two (50%) of the four MPs from the Samajwadi Party have declared criminal cases.

A total of three of the four Rajya Sabha MPs from the TDP, all three MPs from the BRS, all three MPs from



The analysis covered 226 of the 233 Rajya Sabha members. FILE PHOTO

the CPI(M), two (67%) of the three MPs from the RJD, one (25%) of the four MPs from the AIADMK, one (25%) of the four MPs from the NCP, and one (33%) of the three MPs from the AAP have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits. Of the MPs analysed, 31(14%) are billionaires. Among major parties, seven (7%) of the 107 Rajya Sabha MPs from the BJP, six (21%) of the 29 MPs from the Congress, two (50%) of the four MPs from the YSRCP, two (50%) of the four MPs from the TDP, two (67%) of the three MPs from the BRS, and two (50%) of the four MPs from the NCP have declared assets worth more than ₹100 crore.

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PACOM, the deeper meaning behind a dropped prefix

The decision by the United States military to change the name of its naval command in the region from “US INDOPACOM” to “US PACOM” – United States Indo-Pacific Command to United States Pacific Command – reverting to its original name that was changed in 2018 can be dismissed as superficial, even trivial. Many have already responded with the Shakespearean “What’s in a name?”, even as the U.S. Department of War pointed out that US PACOM’s area of responsibility, from “the waters off the West Coast of the United States to the western border of India” or what had once been described as “Hollywood to Bollywood, from polar bears to penguins”, has never changed. In 2018, U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said that the name INDOPACOM was a recognition of the “growing significance” of the Indian Ocean, the Indian subcontinent, and India itself, and the U.S. dropped the term “Asia-Pacific” to “Indo-Pacific”.

Current U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth gave the signal, on May 30, that this understanding has now changed, at his speech at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore – compared to more than 30 references to the “Indo-Pacific” in his speech in 2025, his speech this year contained not a single reference to the Indo-Pacific region or strategy.

Given the centre stage that the U.S.’s Indo-Pacific policy has had in India’s strategic calculus since 2018, it is necessary, therefore, to go beyond the superficial to the subterranean or submarine, in this case. New Delhi must study how broader trends in U.S. policy are attempting to recast both the region and India’s position within it in terms of three broader geographies.

U.S.-China ties and the Quad

The first, is the U.S.’s outreach to China, and concurrently diminishing salience of the Quad (India, Japan Australia, the U.S.), which Beijing has always protested as an “exclusive clique” or derisively as “ocean foam”. In the long term, the U.S. and China cannot shy away from the fierce rivalry between them, but it is clear that in the immediate term, Trump 2.0 has decided to play nice.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit to Beijing in May 2026 and Chinese President Xi Jinping’s upcoming visit to the U.S. on September 24, indicate that the two sides do not want their differences to overcome the relationship, and the U.S. is tiptoeing around the Taiwan issue. Mr. Trump’s references to a “G-2”, including during a press availability with Mr. Modi on the sidelines of the 52nd G-7 summit in France (June 15 to 17), are an early warning of a plan to recast the world into “spheres of influence”, where China would be the predominant power in the continent, not as one pole in a multipolar Asia, as India envisions.



Suhasini Haidar

counter to China in the region, appears to be floundering. The U.S.’s National Defense Strategy released in January 2026 does not mention the Quad even once. In terms of substance, the Quad’s combined agenda has been pared down to four areas of cooperation – maritime security, economic prosperity, critical and emerging minerals technology and disaster responses. Even within these limited objectives, there have been setbacks, such as over Artificial Intelligence cooperation. Despite Quad countries signing on to Pax Silica, and Critical Minerals Initiative Framework with the U.S., the Trump administration ordered Anthropic to end access to its latest models for all non-Americans.

Another question concerns the Quad Summit, which India has unsuccessfully sought to host since January 2024. During U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s visit to Delhi in May 2026, he offered no firm commitment that Mr. Trump would visit Delhi this year, amid indications that the Quad may be relegated to a Foreign Ministers’ level grouping. The U.S. Navy’s reported actions involving Iranian ship *IRIS Dena* (March 2006) and recent attacks on three ships in which three Indians were killed underscore maritime security and domain awareness concerns within the Quad framework. In July, when he hosts Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and travels to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi must discuss alternative maritime coalitions and revive the Australia-India-Japan trilateral.

The U.S.-Iran MoU and West Asia

The second geography of concern is West Asia. The U.S. ceasefire with Iran, after just a few months of a surprisingly badly planned war, is indicative of a general fatigue in Trump 2.0 with U.S. friends and allies in the region. The situation is even more volatile today than it was prior to February 28, especially given the short shrift Israel has received in negotiations with Iran, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s defiance over the ceasefire for Lebanon.

A closer look at the 14-paragraph “Islamabad MoU” released by Iran reveals several signals for the region. Paragraph four states that the U.S. commits to “remove its forces from the proximity of the Islamic Republic of Iran” within 30 days after the final deal. Paragraph five says that, after the Hormuz Strait is demined, Iran and Oman will define the Strait’s future administration in consultation with Persian Gulf littoral states.

Paragraph 6 stipulates that the U.S., along with regional allies, will provide at least \$300 billion for Iran’s reconstruction. These provisions imply commitments on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) states while giving Iran leverage on key issues – military, connectivity, and economic security.

before and have been part of the Pakistan-led mediation process, while countries such as Saudi Arabia are seeking new security arrangements with Türkiye, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

India’s policy towards the region requires a rapid revision in light of the post-war, post-deal power structure. What was once a finely balanced approach now appears tilted towards Israel and the United Arab Emirates. New Delhi must also urgently reconsider its compliance with U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil and the Chabahar port, given Washington’s shifting positions.

The U.S. and South Asia

Finally, India must study the implications of U.S. foreign policy decisions in its neighbourhood. The appointment of Sergio Gor as both U.S. Ambassador to India and Special Envoy for South and Central Asia signals Washington’s growing regional ambitions. New Delhi has pushed back on attempts by the U.S. to become a supra entity in South Asia, as well as its efforts to resolve intra-regional conflicts between India and Pakistan. This ambition was hinted at during Operation Sindoor (May 2025), and repeated by Mr. Trump over the past year, especially as he met the Pakistani leadership many times in this period.

Mr. Gor’s recent travels to Kathmandu, Thimphu, Dhaka and Colombo indicate that the U.S. is keen to broaden its efforts across the region. In the absence of effective pan-regional frameworks such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) – both are constrained by New Delhi’s political tensions with Islamabad and Dhaka – it is clear that the U.S. is entering into competition with China for influence in South Asia.

Beijing has already built several mechanisms for cooperation with South Asia, and both powers side-stepping India. India, as chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and with Mr. Modi due to attend the planned BIMSTEC summit in Bangladesh and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Pakistan next year, has an opportunity to reassert its regional leadership. Given the opportunities, a revival of the SAARC grouping and other pan-regional initiatives must be considered.

Concerns over the U.S.’s moves across India’s geographies may seem contrary to the bonhomie at the Modi-Trump meeting at the G-7 meet in France, and the red carpet for Mr. Rubio’s India visit. Shorn of the rhetoric, however, the trends in U.S. policy are clear, and New Delhi must plan accordingly, acknowledging that the shifts run far deeper than the ripples on the surface caused by a dropped prefix.

The U.S.’s reversion from INDOPACOM to PACOM suggests that its regional shifts run deeper than a simple

GS 3: ECONOMY

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India can attract FDI. The harder task is retaining it



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That requires a predictable policy environment, greater investor confidence and deeper integration into global value chains

INDIA ATTRACTED gross FDI of \$94.53 billion in 2025-26. That appears encouraging for an economy aspiring to become a global manufacturing hub. Yet the headline conceals a less comforting reality. Net FDI — after accounting for outflows — stood at only \$7.65 billion, barely 8 per cent of gross inflows. If this were a temporary fluctuation, it would not be especially troubling. But the trend appears structural rather than cyclical.

FDI has long been regarded as the most desirable form of external capital for developing economies. Unlike portfolio flows, which can enter and exit quickly in search of short-term gains, FDI is assumed to reflect long-term confidence. It brings capital, technology, managerial expertise and access to global markets. That is why net FDI matters more than the gross figure. It captures what remains after repatriation, disinvestment and outward investments. On this measure, the picture is sobering.

In 2020-21, India's net FDI inflows were around \$44 billion, equivalent to nearly 54 per cent of gross inflows. Over the next four years, they fell steadily, reaching less than \$1 billion in 2024-25. Although there was a modest recovery in 2025-26, it was driven largely by higher gross inflows rather than a reversal of the underlying trend. Part of the decline reflects growing outward FDI by Indian firms. In principle, overseas investment can be a sign of corporate confidence. Yet the prominence of jurisdictions such as Singapore, Mauritius, the UAE and the Netherlands among both India's inward and outward FDI flows raises questions about whether all such transactions represent genuine productive investment.

More worrying is the scale of foreign investor exits. Global conditions have undoubtedly played a role. Higher interest rates, weaker growth and geopolitical uncertainty have dampened investment flows across the world. But those explanations are only part of the story. According to World Bank data, India's net FDI inflows declined by around 39 per cent between 2021 and 2024, while Vietnam recorded an increase of roughly 29 per cent. Looking back to 2014, the contrast is even sharper: India's net FDI fell by nearly 21 per cent while Vietnam's rose

by about 119 per cent. India's FDI challenge predates current global uncertainties and is indicative of something more.

The "China Plus One" strategy helps explain why. As multinationals sought to diversify supply chains away from China, many expected India to be a major beneficiary. Yet the gains have been more modest than anticipated. The reason lies in India's limited integration into global value chains in areas where China dominates. The sectors that have benefitted most from supply-chain diversification — electronics, electrical machinery, mechanical equipment, automobiles — are deeply embedded in international production networks. China dominates these sectors not simply due to scale but due to the dense ecosystems of suppliers and manufacturers that support them.

India has made progress, particularly in electronics. Incentives have helped attract firms like Apple and Samsung. But attracting final assembly operations is only the beginning. The larger challenge is developing domestic supplier networks and component manufacturing ecosystems that anchor production locally. In contrast, Vietnam is deeply integrated into global manufacturing chains and exports far larger volumes in several key sectors. The difference is not one of market size but of integration.

India's current account has long remained in deficit, making stable capital inflows essential. Pressure on the rupee and periodic intervention by the RBI underline that reality. Gross FDI numbers may appear healthy, but when a growing share simultaneously leaves the country, the cushion becomes much thinner than it seems. This is particularly worrisome as foreign companies are known to prefer retained earnings to borrowings to fund expansion.

India's challenge is no longer simply attracting FDI; it is retaining it. That requires a predictable policy environment, greater investor confidence and deeper integration into global value chains. Investors are still coming to India. The concern is that too many are also finding reasons to leave.

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