India China Border Talks

What in news?

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The 20th round of the Special Representative (SR) talks between India and China on the border question was recently held.

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What is the significance?

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- India was represented by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and China was represented by State Councillor Yang Jiechi (member of the Polite Bureau).
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- Significantly, Polite Bureau is the chief decision making body in China and this is first time that an official of such high-rank spearheaded the talks.
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- This meet is also important as it comes after a long pause of 20 months after the previous round (usual gap is 1 year) and after the 70 day Doklam standoff.
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- Above all, they were guided by the Modi-Xi agreements of 2017, including the 'Astana consensuses' that "differences must not become disputes".
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What are the focus areas?

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- Agreement on "Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question" formulated in 20o5 is the key focus.
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- The three major parameters of discussion were
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- Defining the guidelines for the settlement of border disputes
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- Formulating a framework agreement on its implementation
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- Completing border demarcation
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- Notably, the SRs were given an extended mandate this year, and thus went well beyond the remit of merely discussing the resolution of boundary issues.
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- But despite all this bonhomie, there are multiple challenges that look difficult to resolve.
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What are the challenges?

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- Despite the signing of the 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement, there has been a steady decline in relations in all spheres.
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- The border has seen more transgressions, people-to-people ties have suffered amid mutual suspicion.
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- China’s forays in South Asia as well as India’s forays into South-East Asian sea lanes have increasingly become areas of contestation.
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- India sees China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its other forays into the Indian neighbourhood as an endeavour for total geo-political domination.
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- Furthering its concern is the intrusive “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” that runs through the disputed PoK, and Chinese hurdles for India in the NSG and UN Security Council Resolutions on Terrorism.
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- In turn, Beijing sees the U.S.-India defence agreements, the Quadrilateral engagement with Japan, Australia and the U.S., and Indian opposition to the

BRI as India’s anti-China attitude.
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What does the future hold?

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- The stand-off at Doklam highlighted the importance of settling the border question at the earliest.
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- The understanding reached earlier at Xiamen that India-China relations “are a factor of stability” in an increasingly unstable world needs to be strengthened.
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- Even if a complete and permanent settlement is elusive on the outstanding issues, reaching a workable compromise immediately is important.
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Source: The Hindu

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