

## India, China set to restart air travel after 5 year break

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New Delhi: India and China have agreed to resume direct air services after nearly five years, the Indian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday.

This move signals a thaw in relations between the two nations following a deadly 2020 military clash along their disputed Himalayan border.

The two sides will soon meet to negotiate a framework for the flights, with the meeting scheduled for an "early date," the ministry added, following talks between India's top diplomat and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Tensions between the two nations escalated after the 2020 clash, leading India to impose restrictions on Chinese investments, ban hundreds of popular apps, and sever passenger routes. However, direct cargo flights continued to operate between the countries despite the

strained relations.

Relations have improved over the past four months with several high-level meetings, including talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Russia in October.

On Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing that the two countries should work in the same direction, explore more substantive measures and commit to mutual understanding.

"Specific concerns in the economic and trade areas were discussed with a view to resolving these issues and promoting long-term policy transparency and predictability," the Indian foreign ministry statement said in a statement.

Their meeting was the latest between the two Asian powers following a milestone agreement in October seeking to ease friction along their frontier.

Reuters reported in June that China's government and airlines had asked India's civil aviation authorities to re-establish direct air links, but New Delhi resisted as the border dispute continued to weigh on ties.

In October, two Indian government sources told Reuters that India would consider reopening the skies and launch fast-tracking visa approvals.

Both nations have also agreed to resume dialogue for functional exchanges step by step and with an early meeting of the India-China Expert Level Mechanism, India's foreign ministry said.

China and India should commit to "mutual support and mutual achievement" rather than "suspicion" and "alienation," Wang said during the two officials' meeting, according to the Chinese foreign ministry's readout.

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