

India-China to revive maritime dialogue soon

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India and China are set to revive their maritime dialogue as part of the measures initiated by the two countries to build mutual trust following the informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Wuhan in April in mutual trust.

Official sources on Wednesday said a maritime dialogue was also proposed to be held between India and Russia. India has already held such a dialogue with France and Indonesia.

The dates for Chinese Defence Minister Gen Wei Fenghe's visit to India were also being finalised by the two sides, sources said while pointing out that a high-level People's Liberation Army (PLA) delegation, led by Lt Gen Liu Xiaowu, was

currently visiting India. The Chinese delegation had on Tuesday held talks with senior Indian military officials at Sukna in West Bengal. Official sources here said the maritime dialogue with China at the level of senior officials would cover all issues pertaining to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea on which the two countries have differing perceptions.

The two countries had initiated the maritime dialogue in 2016 but could not sustain it due to some unsavoury developments in bilateral ties, especially the military stand-off at Doklam last year.

Sources said the dialogue would provide an opportunity to Indian policy-makers to know as to why Chinese forces have increased their manoeuvres and activities in the Indian Ocean area. India would also like reiterate its stand that there

should be freedom of navigation in the South China Sea in view of the growing Chinese assertiveness in the disputed sea. At the same time, New Delhi believes China would highlight its concern over the quadrilateral security dialogue that has been started by India, Japan, Australia and the United States. Beijing sees this dialogue forum as an attempt to counter its influence in the region. However, India has already clarified that the quadrilateral forum was not aimed against anyone and its only objective was to enhance cooperation among the four countries on maritime issues.

Sources disclosed that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued licence to the Bank of China to open its branch in India after China recently announced certain measures to bring down the trade gap between the two countries.