

Focus will be on developmental cooperation, say Chinese experts

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WUHAN : The informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping is likely to contribute to deepening communication between the leaders and different levels of the two governments, Chinese experts said at the end of the two-day meet.

The meeting, though unexpected, was necessary to reduce mistrust and suspicion following last year's tense military stand-off, the academics said.

Neither Indian nor Chinese officials directly talked about the standoff but it was evident the 73-day face-off at Doklam was weighing down ties.

"I hope following the face-to-face informal exchange between the two top leaders, the two governments will focus on development. Development is the priority among priorities. Hopefully, the governments will now focus on developmental cooperation. Through more developmental cooperation, we can dilute the negative impact of differences," said Hu Shisheng, director of the Institute of South and Southeast Asian and Oceania Studies.

Another academic said it was important that the two leaders focussed on broader issues.

"Without dialogue there is no chance to improve relations. Exchanges on education and culture can foster better understanding. Focussing on these soft issues could help ties," said Lu Yang, South Asian scholar at the Institute of the Belt and Road Initiative at Tsinghua University.

The Chinese president too said on Friday that informal summits could help take ties to the next level. There was word of caution for India as well from academics.

Victor Shih, associate professor at the school of global policy and strategy at the University of California, San Diego, said India should be prepared for more challenges with Xi becoming more powerful. "After consolidating power, he will focus on his strategic vision of making China into a superpower... The emergence of a leader with such a focus on superpower status at India's doorstep will be a challenge to its government..." Shih said.