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India, China must resolve trust-deficit in their ties says thinker and historian Tansen Sen

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MELBOURNE: India and China must resolve the trust-deficit in their ties and invest in creating awareness about each other for a mutually beneficial relationship, a leading thinker and historian has said.

Tansen Sen, associate professor of Asian history and religions at Baruch College in New York, said "There is a lack of mutual awareness, trust and understanding. We don't understand China and Chinese don't understand us."

Sen while speaking on 'Neither Friends Nor Rivals: The complexities of Contemporary India-China relations' at the Melbourne-based Australia India Institute examined various aspects of Sino-India ties.

Sen said a negative perception was growing about India-China ties despite efforts by the two sides to arrest that perception.

He added that in his view even if the border issue gets resolved, there would be lingering problems if left unattended.

Sen said even the trade between the two economies was "quite small" at \$65 billion, considering their size.

He, however, expressed hope that the new Narendra Modi-led government would accelerate India's foreign policy on China.

The historian pointed the sustained negative portrayal by media on both sides, which he opined, had played a role in shaping the relationship.

"Negative stories about China make front page stories in Indian newspapers...while few stories were about partnership and relationship."

Sen said the attitude of Indians towards China was largely based on the 1962 war when India suffered a humiliating defeat.

"Few people in China know about India and they don't understand how the 1962 war impacted the Indian mindset. This is something that has built in our mind from that generation to present generation that Chinese betrayed us," he said.

Other issues that could help improve the Sino-India can be easy visa approval for Chinese people, including students, to visit India so as to promote people-to-people contacts.

"There is a very limited flow of sharing of information that goes on because of limited people to people contact," Sen said.

"Beyond trade there were several other disputes happening between Indian and Chinese governments that were because of lack of awareness and knowledge of each other," said Sen.