

India-Russia Bilateral Brief

Russia has been a longstanding and time-tested partner for India. Development of India-Russia relations has been a key pillar of India's foreign policy. Since the signing of the “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership” in October 2000 (during the visit of President Putin), India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas, including political, security, defence, trade and economy, science & technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.” Under the Strategic Partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms operate at both political and official levels to ensure regular interaction and follow-up on cooperation activities.

Political relations

2. The Annual Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between India and Russia. So far, 21 Annual Summits have taken place alternatively in India and Russia. The last Summit was held on December 6, 2021 in New Delhi. During the last Summit, 28 MoUs and agreements were signed. A Joint Statement titled “India-Russia Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity” was also adopted. The two leaders had most recently met on the sidelines of the SCO Summit on September 16, 2022 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

3. The two leaders maintain regular contact through telephone conversations. They had three telephone conversations in 2021: on April 28, August 24 and December 20. In 2022 so far, the two leaders have held four telephone conversations, three of which (February 24, March 2 and March 7) were focused on evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine, among other issues. During the fourth conversation held on July 1, the two leaders reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during President Putin's visit to India in December 2021 and exchanged ideas on how bilateral trade in agricultural goods, fertilizers and pharma products could be encouraged further.

4. EAM and FM Lavrov too maintain regular contact through meetings, telephone conversations and exchange of letters. In 2022, EAM and FM Lavrov have held five meetings so far: on April 1, 2022, during FM Lavrov's visit to

New Delhi when he also called on PM; on July 8 in Bali on the sidelines of G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting; on July 28 in Tashkent on the sidelines of SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in New York on September 24 on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, and in Moscow on November 8.

5. RM and Defence Minister Shoigu-led India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) is another high-level bilateral mechanism whose 20 meetings have been held so far. Their last meeting was held on December 6, 2021, preceding the first ever 2+2 Format meeting between India & Russia with the participation of Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries. Recently, the Ministers held a telephone conversation on October 26, 2022, and discussed bilateral defence cooperation as well as the situation in Ukraine.

6. Other high level recent visits include visit of NSA Sh. Ajit Doval to Moscow on August 16-17, 2022 and Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Sh. Mansukh Mandaviya, to St. Petersburg on June 15-17, 2022, where he led the Indian delegation to St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF-2022) and held a number of meetings.

Foreign Office Consultations

7. During the 19th Annual Summit (2018), the two sides concluded a Protocol for Consultations between the foreign ministries for the period 2019-23.

8. On February 17-18, 2021 FS visited Moscow for Foreign Office Consultations with DFM Igor Morgulov. He also called on FM Lavrov and met with DFM Sergey Ryabkov. He gave a speech at the Diplomatic Academy and interacted with experts from leading Russian think tanks over a breakfast meeting.

9. On February 16, 2021, FOC on UNSC issues was held in Moscow between JS (UNP) and Director, International Organisations Department, MFA. Simultaneously, on February 16, 2021, an FOC on foreign policy planning was held in Moscow between JS (PP&R) and Acting Director, Foreign Policy Planning Department, MFA.

10. On January 31, 2022, DFM Sergei Vershinin visited New Delhi for consultations on UNSC-related issues with Secretary (West). He also called on Foreign Secretary following the consultations.

11. On July 28-29, 2022, Secretary West visited Moscow for consultations with DFM Sergei Vershinin. He also met with DFM Oleg Syromolotov to discuss issues of mutual interest in the sphere of counter-terrorism. He also held consultations on Arctic-related issues with Amb. Nikolai Korchunov, Ambassador-at-Large on Arctic issues.

12. On November 17, 2022, DFM Sergei Vershinin visited New Delhi for consultations on UN and multilateral issues with Secretary (West). DFM also called on Foreign Secretary to brief him on Russia's position on UN related issues.

Security Council Cooperation

13. India and Russia maintain close cooperation between the Security Council secretariats led by NSA from the Indian side and Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Mr. Nikolai Patrushev, from the Russian side. They hold regular bilateral consultations, besides meeting on the sidelines of various multilateral events. On August 16-17, 2022, NSA paid an official visit to Moscow and held consultations with his counterpart Mr. Nikolai Patrushev on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues. Likewise, the two sides also maintain close cooperation at the level of Dy. NSAs.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

14. The primary mechanism at the government level for enhancing trade and economic cooperation is the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific & Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), co-chaired by EAM from the Indian side and Mr. Denis Manturov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry & Trade, from the Russian side.

15. India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue (IRSED) is another G2G mechanism co-chaired by Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog on Indian side and Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

16. Intensifying the trade and economic relations has been identified as a priority area by both the leaders, as is clear by the revised targets of

increasing bilateral investment to \$50 billion and bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025. As per figures of Department of Commerce, bilateral trade during during FY 2021-22 amounted to \$13.2 billion. Indian exports amounted to \$3.26 billion, while imports from Russia amounted to \$9.86 billion. In April-August 2022, the bilateral trade has soared to an all-time high of \$18.23 billion with India's imports of \$17.23 billion, while India's exports to Russia amounted to \$992.73 million.

17. Major items of export from India include electrical machinery, pharmaceuticals, machinery and mechanical appliances, organic chemicals, iron & steel, while major items of import from Russia include oil and petroleum products, fertilizers, mineral resources, precious stones and metals, vegetable oils, etc.

18. Bilateral trade in services has remained stable during the last 5 years with trade balance in Russia's favor. It amounted to \$1.021 billion for the year 2021.

19. Bilateral investments between the two countries remain strong and surpassed the previous target of \$30 billion in 2018, leading to revised target of \$50 billion by 2025. The major bilateral investments by Russia in India are in the oil and gas, petrochemicals, banking, railways and steel sectors, while Indian investments in Russia are mainly in oil and gas and pharmaceuticals sectors.

Regional Engagements

20. In follow-up to PM's visit to Vladivostok in 2019, efforts have been made to further develop cooperation with the Russian Far East region. Likewise, efforts have been made to strengthen commercial relations with other regions outside Moscow and St. Petersburg, including Krasnoyarsk, Buryatia, Astrakhan, Krasnodar, Chechnya, Irkutsk, Volgograd, Kalmykia, Murmansk, Khanty-Mansyisk, Kurgan, etc.

21. Ambassador visited a number of regions, including Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok, September 5-8, 2022) and Kamchatka Krai (September 9, 2022) to further expand India's cooperation with these regions, besides meeting Governors of a number of regions on the sidelines of various events.

International/Multilateral Organizations and Connectivity Projects:

22. **BRICS:** Notable engagements in 2022 were as follows:

- 8 April 2022: First BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting of 2022 was held in Virtual format under Chinese chairship
- 10 May 2022: 12th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting was held in virtual format. The Minister for Health & Family Welfare led the Indian delegation.
- 19 May 2022: EAM led the Indian delegation at the virtual meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations
- 20 May 2022: Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change participated in the 8th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting and a joint statement was adopted
- 23 May 2022: 6th BRICS Industry Ministers Meeting was held virtually in which Minister of State of Commerce and Industry led the Indian delegation
- 24 May 2022: Minister of State for Culture and External Affairs participated virtually in the 7th BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting. The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Agreement between the Governments of the BRICS States on Cooperation in the field of Culture (2022-2026) was agreed and signed at the meeting.
- 26 May 2022: 9th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education was held virtually where a joint declaration was adopted.
- 6 June 2022: The second BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting was held virtually where the Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs and Governor, Reserve Bank of India participated. A joint statement was issued for consideration at the 14th BRICS Summit.
- 8 June 2022: 12th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture was organized in virtual format and the Minister of State for Agriculture participated in the meet. The meeting also announced the establishment of a BRICS forum on agriculture and rural development as a new institutional platform to further exchanges and cooperation among BRICS countries.
- 9 June 2022: 12th Trade Ministers' Meeting was held in virtual format.
- 15 June 2022: NSA participated in the 12th Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisers and High Representatives on National Security, held in virtual format.

- 23-24 June 2022: PM led India's participation at the 14th BRICS Summit on 23 June. The High-level Dialogue on Global Development, non-BRICS engagement segment of the Summit, was held on 24 June. 'Beijing Declaration' was adopted at the summit.
- 6 July 2022: 8th Communications Ministers' Meeting was held in virtual format.
- 13 July 2022: Anti-Corruption Ministerial Meeting was held in virtual format. BRICS Anti-Corruption Ministerial Communique was endorsed.
- 14 July 2022: Minister for Labour & Employment attended the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in virtual format where the BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Declaration was adopted.
- 22 September 2022: EAM participated in the meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

23. **SCO:** Notable engagements in 2022 were as follows:

- 8 April 2022: Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Science and Technology & Earth Sciences addressed the SCO meeting of Science & Technology Ministers in virtual mode
- 19 May 2022: Minister of State for Culture participated in the 19th Culture Ministers' meeting of SCO Member States in Tashkent.
- 15 July 2022: Minister of Heavy Industries, participated virtually in the meeting of SCO Industry Ministers.
- 29 July 2022: Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Tashkent.
- 15-16 September 2022: PM attended the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Samarkand. 'Samarkand Declaration' was adopted at the summit. The city of Varanasi was nominated as the first-ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2022-2023.
- 1 November 2022: EAM attended the 21st Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government. A Joint Communique of SCO Heads of Government was adopted at the conclusion of the meeting.

24. **RIC:** The 18th RIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on November 26, 2021 under India's chairmanship in DVC format. At the end of the meeting, a Joint Communique was adopted. The last Summit of RIC at leaders' level was held in June 2019 in Osaka on the sidelines of the G20 Summit.

25. **UNSC:**

- Russia continues to support India's candidacy for the permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council.
- In relation to the conflict in Ukraine, India has been consistently calling for complete cessation of all hostilities and has advocated the path of peace, dialogue and diplomacy. India has also reaffirmed, repeatedly, that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, international law and respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of states.

Defence Cooperation

26. India has longstanding and wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence. India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved from a buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research, development and production of advanced defence technologies and systems. The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) is co-chaired by Russian and Indian Defence Ministers and meets annually. Its last meeting was held in New Delhi on December 6, 2021.

Important events/engagements in the defence sector:

27. On August 16, 2022 Raksha Manti took part in the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security and virtually addressed the Plenary Session on the topic "Global Security in a Multilateral World".

28. Chief of Defence Staff Late General Bipin Rawat visited Russia on September 22-24, 2021 to attend the conference of the Chiefs of General Staff of the SCO member states in Orenburg. He also witnessed the final validation exercise of multi-nation Exercise Peace Mission 2021 of SCO countries at Orenburg.

29. Indian contingent participated in International Army Games held in August 2022 and Exercise Vostok-2022 held in September 2022 in Russia.

Nuclear Energy

30. Russia is an important partner for India in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy. Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) is a flagship

project between India and Russia in this sphere. KNPP Units 1 & 2 have already become operational and construction of Units 3 & 4 and 5 & 6 is going on.

Space Cooperation

31. India-Russia cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of outer space dates back to about four decades. The two countries are cooperating closely under India's first human spaceflight program "Gaganyaan".

Science & Technology

32. India and Russia have a long history of cooperation in the field of science and technology. The new Roadmap for Bilateral STI Co-operation has been developed and agreed by both sides to replace the erstwhile ILTP co-operation program. It focusses on a variety of new engagements to promote co-innovation and exchanges and will be in-force for next 5 years.

Other important events:

33. On April 13, 2022, an event was organized in the Embassy to commemorate 75 years of India-Russia diplomatic relations with the participation of then Deputy FM Igor Morgulov, former Russian diplomats with ties to India and representatives from MFA, Indologists, prominent think tanks, journalists, etc.

Cultural cooperation

34. There is a strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia. Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre (JNCC), Moscow, maintains close cooperation with leading Russian institutions. About 20 Russian institutions, including leading universities and schools, regularly teach Hindi to about 1500 Russian students. Apart from Hindi, languages such as Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit and Pali are taught in Russian Institutions. There is a strong interest among Russian people in Indian dance, music, yoga and Ayurveda. JNCC conducts classes in yoga, dance, music and Hindi for approximately 500 students every month.

35. Russia has been an active partner country for ITEC scholarship. The number of ICCR scholarships has been steadily growing every year.

36. 8th International Day of Yoga (2022) was celebrated in 33 regions of Russia. In Moscow's Muzeon Park of Arts (June 19) more than 500 persons participated in Yoga demonstration and master classes on Ayurveda and meditation. As a precursor to the event master classes of Yoga were organised in some of the leading parks in Moscow from 13 to 17 June 2022. On June 21, Yoga day was also celebrated in Moscow as a part of the Guardian Ring of Yoga with the backdrop of the iconic location of Red Square & Kremlin.

37. A number of events have been organised to mark the 75th anniversary of Independence Day - Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, including lighting up of the iconic Evolution Tower in Moscow in the colors of Indian tricolour on August 15, 2021 and other iconic buildings in Moscow on August 15, 2022. Some of the other AKAM events included:

- On the occasion of National Youth Day and Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (January 12, 2022), MoS Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi's video message was played, and Ambassador addressed more than 100 Indian students from universities all over Russia through VC, and JNCC presented specially crafted cultural performance.
- On June 28, 2022, as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations of India-Russia, Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Moscow, organized a book release ceremony at the D P Dhar Hall, Embassy of India, Moscow. The Russian translation of the book 'The Heritage of Buddhist Pala Art' was released by the Ambassador along with the author of the book Dr Sudhakar Sharma, former Secretary, Lalit Kala Akademi, Dr Yuri Rodichev, Chairman, Centre for Spiritual Culture, Samara and Bator Lama, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow from Republic of Buryat.
- 76th Independence Day was celebrated in the Embassy of India in Moscow on August 15, 2022, with the Ambassador paying floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, hoisting the Indian flag and reading out the President's message in the presence of Indian community members.
- On October 31, Rashtriya Ekta Diwas commemorating the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was celebrated in the Embassy. The celebrations included screening of a short film and a display of

photo-exhibition showcasing the contribution of Sardar Patel in Indian independence movement and integration of the country.

Cooperation in the fight against Covid-19

38. Vaccines: India and Russia cooperate closely in the sphere of vaccine production. SPUTNIK-V received DCGI approval for emergency use in India on April 13, 2021, making it the first foreign-made vaccine to be permitted for use in India, and third overall.

39. During the peak of pandemic, the two countries provided timely assistance to each other. India ensured supply of critical medicines, including paracetamol, hydroxychloroquine, and certain antibiotics during the first phase in Russia and Russia assisted in providing ventilators, oxygen concentrators and other critical equipment during India's second phase of COVID-19.

40. More than 11,000 passengers were evacuated from Russia, aboard about 54 flights during COVID-related lockdown in 2020. India and Russia are currently discussing draft agreement for mutual recognition of Vaccine Certificates which can help in facilitation of movement of people between the countries.

Awards & Honours

41. On April 12, 2019, President Putin signed the Executive Order awarding PM with Russia's highest civilian honour, the "Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First". The order was presented to PM for his distinguished contribution to the development of Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between India and Russia and friendly ties between the peoples of both countries.

42. Prof Boris Zakharin was awarded the ICCR World Sanskrit Award and Irina Glushkova was presented the ICCR Distinguished Alumni Award. The presentation ceremony was presided over by Hon'ble President of ICCR Dr Vinay Sahasrabuddhe during his visit to Moscow on September 13, 2022.

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