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Putin's Visit to India: Reaffirming old ties and strong bond

Russian President Vladimir Putin's first visit to India since the 2022 Ukraine invasion received an unprecedented red-carpet welcome from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, complete with an airport embrace and private dinner, signalling that two significant powers remain as close friends. Against the backdrop of global shifts, the 23rd annual summit celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership".

Substantive outcomes were modest: a labour-mobility pact to send Indian skilled workers to Russia, thirty-day e-visa provision, joint ventures on fertilisers, maritime and customs agreements, and further progress on national-currency trade. Defence announcements were conspicuously absent, marking a clear pivot from traditional arms-centric ties to economic diversification and people-to-people links. Both leaders pledged uninterrupted energy supplies and a \$100bn trade target by 2030.

The visit served multiple purposes: for Putin, a political lifeline and proof of legitimacy; for Modi, a vivid demonstration of strategic autonomy and value for old friendship. Unlike many modern partnerships driven by short-term gain, India and Russia have sustained a bond forged through shared experiences, mutual respect and political consistency across generations.

Op-Eds	Key Takeaways
Putin's India Comeback: The Summit the U.S. Tried to Kill <i>Russia Today</i> <i>By Sergey Strokan</i> <i>November 19, 2025</i>	<p>Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov met with India's Minister of External Affairs, Jaishankar, in Moscow on November 17, ahead of President Putin's early-December state visit to New Delhi, the first since Russia's 2022 Ukraine invasion. Preparatory diplomacy intensified despite U.S. pressure, including Trump's 25 percent tariffs and threats of 500 percent secondary sanctions on countries buying Russian oil.</p> <p>The summit will address trade imbalances, labour mobility, logistics, payments, and blocked dividends. Both sides insist that U.S. interference will not derail the <u>25-year-old Strategic Partnership</u>.</p>
Russia and India Update their Relationship <i>Gateway House</i> <i>By Lydia Kulik</i> <i>December 03, 2025</i>	<p>President Putin's visit to India on December 04-05, 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership, uniquely upgraded to <u>Special and Privileged status</u>. The summit will advance economic cooperation as the new priority, aiming to diversify and balance trade, boost Indian exports, and further national-currency payments (already >90%).</p> <p>Defence collaboration continues through technology transfer and joint production (BrahMos, S-400/500, Su-57), with a new emphasis on localisation for civil aviation. Discussions will also cover BRICS initiatives and regional security, reinforcing the relationship's adaptability and mutual support in a multipolar world.</p>
Putin and Modi to Meet Amid Politically Treacherous Times for Russia and India <i>The Guardian</i> <i>By Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Pjotr Sauer</i> <i>December 04, 2025</i>	<p>Vladimir Putin's December 2025 visit to India occurs amid a transformed global landscape: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Trump's punitive 25 percent tariffs on Indian imports over Russian oil purchases, and stalled peace efforts. The warm reception signals defiance of U.S. pressure and <u>reaffirms the enduring partnership</u>.</p> <p>For Russia, it counters isolation; for India, it hedges against a semi-isolationist America and an assertive China, while sustaining critical defence supplies and seeking to limit Moscow-Beijing closeness. Oil trade continues despite sanctions, and defence diversification proceeds cautiously.</p>
Russian President Putin Flags Double Standards as U.S. Buys Russian Reactor Fuel But Targets India with Tariffs	<p>During his visit to India, President Vladimir Putin, in an India Today interview, <u>defended Russia-India energy ties</u>, accusing "certain actors" of creating artificial obstacles to curb New Delhi's growing global influence. He highlighted U.S. double standards, Washington still buys Russian nuclear fuel while penalising India with 25 percent</p>

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<i>The Swarajya</i> <i>Arun Dhital</i> <i>December 05, 2025</i>	<p>tariffs on Russian oil purchases.</p> <p>Putin stressed that bilateral cooperation targets no third country, over 90 percent of transactions are now in national currencies, and praised Modi for resisting pressure.</p>
India's Elaborate Welcome of Putin Strains Western Ties <i>DW</i> <i>By Murali Krishnan</i> <i>December 05, 2025</i>	<p>President Putin concluded his December 04-05, 2025, India visit, pledging uninterrupted energy supplies and hailing the partnership as “<u>steady like the North Star</u>.” Amid U.S. tariffs and Western calls for India to help end the Ukraine war, the summit delivered modest agreements on labour mobility, fertiliser production, shipping, and health, while pushing national-currency trade (now 96 percent) and a future Eurasian FTA.</p> <p>The exceptionally warm protocol underscored India’s defiance of external pressure, reaffirmed strategic autonomy, and visibly prioritised Russia despite strained U.S. ties, shifting focus from defence to economic diversification and people-to-people links.</p>
Navigating the Tightrope: Why Putin's Visit is a Masterclass in India's Foreign Policy <i>NDTV</i> <i>By Shashi Tharoor</i> <i>December 06, 2025</i>	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi for the 23rd <u>India-Russia Annual Summit</u> reinforced the enduring 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' amid global tensions. Key outcomes included a Vision 2030 trade-technology roadmap, the RELOS defence logistics pact, expanded energy and nuclear cooperation, and agreements on labour mobility and de-dollarised payments.</p> <p>The summit highlighted India's strategic autonomy and multi-alignment, balancing ties with Russia and the West. Western sanctions inadvertently strengthened India-Russia trade, particularly in discounted oil. At the same time, bolstering defence (60-70 percent Russian-origin hardware) and economic pillars, aiming to reach US\$100bn in bilateral trade by 2030.</p>
Putin, Modi Agree to Expand and Widen India-Russia Trade, Strengthen Friendship <i>Reuters</i> <i>By Shivam Patel and YP Rajesh</i> <i>December 06, 2025</i>	<p>During Putin’s two-day visit, India and Russia signed multiple agreements and <u>adopted a 2030 economic cooperation programme</u> aimed at achieving US\$100bn in balanced trade. Putin pledged uninterrupted fuel supplies and expanded nuclear ties, while Modi described the partnership as a “guiding star” resilient to external pressure.</p> <p>India remained cautious on oil imports amid U.S. tariffs and sanctions, with energy firms citing market dynamics. Deals covered defence joint production, labour mobility, fertilisers, agriculture, healthcare, and shipping.</p>

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For Putin, a Political Win; For India, a Stable Partner <i>The Indian Express</i> By Shyam Saran December 06, 2025	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded a warmly received <u>two-day</u> visit to India, personally welcomed at the airport by Prime Minister Modi and driven to his residence – rare courtesies that underscore Russia’s continued international legitimacy despite Western sanctions and the ongoing Ukraine war.</p> <p>For Putin, the optics and substantive outcomes provide valuable domestic political capital. For India, the high-profile summit highlights the growing strain on its long-standing policy of strategic autonomy, as traditional assumptions of a stable multipolar order face unprecedented challenges amid Russia’s isolation.</p>
Modi’s Moscow Magnetism: Unwinding the Matryoshka of the Putin Meet <i>The KBS Chronicle</i> By KBS Sidhu December 06, 2025	<p>PM Modi portrayed Vladimir Putin’s December visit as a <u>triumph of India’s strategic autonomy</u>, securing discounted Russian oil, sustained defence spares, and a US\$100 bn trade target while deepening ties with the West. Domestically, it is sold as shrewd personal diplomacy that keeps fuel and fertiliser prices low and projects India as a great-power equal.</p> <p>In reality, the summit masks enduring dependence: Russia still equips most of India’s legacy military and now dominates energy imports. Genuine autonomy, the article argues, will be measured not by warm optics with Putin today, but by whether India can diversify away from Russian hardware and hydrocarbons tomorrow without external coercion.</p>
What did Putin’s Visit to India Achieve? Explained <i>The Hindu</i> By Suhasini Haidar December 07, 2025	<p>The symbolic warmth of Putin's reception by Modi contrasted sharply with the limited substantive deliverables, underscoring the ceremonial rather than transformative nature of the summit. The agenda marked a decisive <u>shift from traditional defence-centric cooperation</u> to economic and people-to-people ties, reflecting both changing priorities and the constraints imposed by Western sanctions.</p> <p>Amid strained India-U.S. relations and punitive American tariffs, India used the high-profile visit to reaffirm its strategic autonomy by visibly prioritising the Russia partnership. Trade diversification and labour exports emerged as new pillars in a complex geopolitical environment.</p>