

RUSSIA DIGEST



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75 YEARS OF
RUSSIA-INDIA
STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP



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The image displays three overlapping screenshots of the Sputnik news website interface. The top screenshot shows the homepage with a large headline: "Russia's Saint Petersburg Region to Export Local Goods to India" (Yesterday, 15:26). Below it, there's a "Trending Stories" section with items like "Delhi Women's Commission Questions Flipkart & Amazon Over Online Acid Sales" and "Nitish Kumar Voices Controversial Comment Amid Toxic Liquor Deaths". The middle screenshot features a "Sputnik Features" section with an article titled "Breakthrough Surgery of Indian Daily Wage Worker Who Lost His Arm & Legs" (Yesterday, 19:23). The bottom screenshot shows a sports section with a "2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar" live score and an "Explainers" section with the article "Who Are India's Pasmadana Muslims & Why Are They Considered a Backward Class?".

FOREWORD



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 5th special edition of the Russia Digest magazine!

While concluding the year 2022 that marked the 75th anniversary of Russian-Indian diplomatic relations, we place full confidence in the bright and progressive future of our bilateral ties and our strategic partnership which, by the way, was elevated to the level of a special and privileged one precisely on this day 12 years ago - on December 21, 2010.

The Russia-India multidimensional cooperation is one of the world's most elaborate ones with constantly maintained contacts on the highest levels, regular activities within the two inter-governmental commissions, sector-wise ministerial and senior officials' dialogue, foreign office consultations, and coordination in the global arena. These are well complimented by the diverse people-to-people and cultural ties, a brilliant manifestation of which we witnessed during the Festival of Russian Culture in India held in New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai between November 21-29, 2022.

It has been repeatedly proved by history itself that the Russia-India friendship is immune to the challenges of the ever-changing global environment. Both countries work closely at various platforms - the UN and the UNSC, G20, BRICS, SCO, RIC, etc. - to promote global peace, stability,

and sustainable development as well as to foster the establishment of just and equal multipolarity.

Our relations possess solid baggage of results of joint activities in strategic areas of cooperation. Those include our flagship initiatives such as the Kudankulam NPP in Tamil Nadu and advanced defence ties, which go in line with the 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives with the steadily increased level of newest technology exchanges and localisation.

It is noteworthy, that Moscow and New Delhi remain all set to boost trade and reach a volume of USD 30 billion by 2025. Focus on the potential of the two countries' markets as well as the factor of economic complementarity will undoubtedly contribute to reaching that aim. The main driver is, for sure, a significantly growing interest from the business communities of both countries. Promising prospects are there in the mining, metallurgical and chemical industries, mechanical engineering, infrastructure, agriculture, the timber industry, and many other areas. Further, work continues on expanding the payments in national currencies and adjusting inter-banking communications as well as increasing connectivity options by promoting the International North-South Transport Corridor and Vladivostok - Chennai maritime sea route.

Russia is ready to meet the rising Indian demands, including in hydrocarbon supplies, and to continue mutually beneficial investment in this area, particularly concerning the exploration of new fields and joint interaction in third countries. This is not just a matter of economic calculations, but more of the shared history of friendship as well as deep respect for the decisions taken by our leaders. Both countries have always given a shoulder to each other, in good times and bad. More to say, our collaboration stands on the solid base of the preserved tremendous potential of the Russian Federation, which despite the external odds, continues to strengthen following the long-term strategy of national development and has been successfully overcoming the sanctions pressure.

In India, we see not only a reliable partner in many areas and a like-minded state at many international fora but a soulmate with whom we share common values and principles. There is a very wise saying in India: "दोस्ती से ज्यादा कुछ भी नहीं होता" - 'There is nothing more important than friendship'. A very precise characteristic of our ties for which the only limit is the sky.

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AMBASSADOR SPEAKS



RUSSIAN-INDIAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IS NOT AGAINST ANYONE BUT IN FAVOUR OF ALL

RUSSIA AND INDIA STANDS FOR EQUAL MULTIPOLARITY, THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE UN, RESPECT FOR INTERESTS OF ALL COUNTRIES AS IMPORTANT PROVISIONS FOR GLOBAL AND REGIONAL STABILITY, STATED **RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR TO INDIA, DENIS ALIPOV**, IN A RECENT INTERVIEW

The best characteristic of our strategic partnership with India is that it is not against anyone but in favor of all. It stands for equal multipolarity, the central role of the UN, respect for interests and concerns of all countries as important provisions for global and regional stability. Our approaches to all major issues are similar or coinciding. We maintain comprehensive coordination on all levels starting with the highest one and extending to the heads of security councils, foreign ministers, permanent representatives in international organisations. We jointly contribute to the peace and diplomacy efforts to find commonly acceptable solutions to various turbulences as well as new challenges and threats. What we really are against is unilaterally imposed confrontational approaches, attempts to interfere in domestic affairs, promote exclusivity and exercise double standards, which in turn are the core roots of any geopolitical turmoil. Based on that, we work together in a dedicated manner to promote the agenda of the UN, G20, WTO, BRICS, the SCO and other important for a. I would like to specifically mention our strong interaction in the UNSC, where India is currently a non-permanent member. Our overall cooperation is exemplary, and we wish to have the same with all countries. Whatever differences we may have, we take advantage of our well-established trusted dialogue for mutual satisfaction.

Russia-India trade ties

We see the growing interest from both sides to further diversify cooperation

taking advantage of emerging opportunities. Not only have we increased exports of oil, gas and coal as well as fertilizers based on current and future long-term oriented agreements, but also distillates, diamonds, gold and metals along with high-tech equipment and chemical products. In return, India exports pharmaceuticals, IT and electronic equipment, automobile components, marine products. At the same time we focus on joint projects in metallurgy, refinery, rubber production, nuclear and green energy, civil aviation, shipbuilding, railways and infrastructure development, innovations and startups, ICTs, etc. The overall purpose is to supplement each other's economic strategies as both our countries aim to increase the level of self-reliance and are keen to explore new markets facilitated by sustained mechanisms of financial transactions and logistics. There is incredible potential opening up in Russia with huge space rendered vacant after the self-inflicted withdrawal of many Western companies for political reasons to the detriment of their business and to the benefit of those companies in India and elsewhere that are wise enough to think long-term.

Payment mechanism between India and Russia

We have several payment mechanisms in place. One of them is through the national currencies, which we started to use extensively since 2014. During recent years, the volume of trade in national currencies amounted to 40% and above. Importantly, it is a natural trend thanks

to the growing strength of our economies and payment systems, which are capable to ensure stable and secure cross-border transactions. There is an evident and increasing mistrust in the US Dollar, not only on the part of Russia. The US has made a huge and highly likely irreversible mistake by compromising the dollar as the main reserve currency through unilaterally misusing it and freezing assets for political reasons. Recently the Reserve Bank of India issued a special circular, which extends the use of Rupee in international trade. It is yet another step to support the option for trading community to exercise invoicing, paying and settling operations in national currencies. Secondly, there is a mechanism of using currencies of third countries with viable options offered by our partners in Asia and in the Middle East. We also see an immense potential in the establishment of the BRICS international reserve fund. Nevertheless, those Russian companies and banks, which are not sanctioned, can still operate in US Dollar and Euro.

Defence cooperation

We managed to successfully mitigate barriers created by negative external factors and adjust to new realities using alternative payments and logistics options. Some delays in delivery and payments are not critical. Both sides maintain real time communication to tackle those. Currently we note positive dynamics in the implementation of bilateral agreements and contracts, including on S-400 systems supplies, while Russia does its best to timely fulfill all its obligations.

SPOTLIGHT

'VALDAI DISCUSSIONS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE VARIETY OF ASSESSMENTS AND FORECASTS'

PRESIDENT PUTIN STRESSED ON RUSSIA'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA THAT HAS EMERGED OVER TIME OR WAS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF A VERY CLOSE ALLIANCE THAT EXISTED FOR MANY DECADES AND WHICH IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE AS WELL



The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, while sharing his views at the final plenary session of the 19th meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club on October 27, 2022, remarked: "We have used the Valdai Club platform to discuss, more than once, the major and serious shifts that have already taken place and are taking place around the world, the risks posed by the degradation of global institutions, the erosion of collective security principles and the substitution of 'rules' for international law. I was tempted to say 'we are clear about who came up with these rules', but, perhaps, that would not be an accurate statement. We have no idea whatsoever who made these rules up, what these rules are based on, or what is contained inside these rules.

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD RELY ON A DIALOGUE BETWEEN CIVILISATIONS AND SPIRITUAL AS WELL AS MORAL VALUES. A COMMON FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE CAN AND MUST BUILD OUR FUTURE IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT

Global power

It looks like we are witnessing an attempt to enforce just one rule whereby those in power - we were talking about power, and I am now talking about global power - could live without following any rules at all and could get away with anything. These are the rules that we hear them constantly,

as people say, harping on, that is, talking about them incessantly.

The Valdai discussions are important because a variety of assessments and forecasts can be heard here. Life always shows how accurate they were, since life is the sternest and the most objective teacher. So, life shows how accurate our previous years' projections were.

Humankind is at a fork in the road: either keep accumulating problems and eventually get crushed under their weight, or work together to find solutions - even imperfect ones, as long as they work - that can make our world a more stable and safer place.

You know, I have always believed in the power of common sense. Therefore, I am

convinced that sooner or later both the new centres of the multipolar international order and the West will have to start a dialogue on an equal footing about a common future for us all, and the sooner the better, of course. In this regard, I will highlight some of the most important aspects for all of us.

Environmental issues

Current developments have overshadowed environmental issues. Strange as it may seem, this is what I would like to speak about first today. Climate change no longer tops the agenda. But that fundamental challenge has not gone away, it is still with us, and it is growing.

Alternative social models

A direct threat to the political, economic and ideological monopoly of the West lies in the fact that the world can come up with alternative social models that are more effective - I want to emphasise this, more effective today, brighter and more appealing than the ones that currently exist. These models will definitely come about. This is inevitable. By the way, US political scientists and analysts also write about this. Truthfully, their government is not listening to what they say, although it cannot avoid seeing these concepts in political science magazines and mentioned in discussions.

Development should rely on a dialogue between civilisations and spiritual and moral values. Indeed, understanding what humans and their nature are all about varies across civilisations, but this difference is often superficial, and everyone recognises the ultimate dignity and spiritual essence of people. A common foundation on which we can and must build our future is critically important.

Value system

Here is something I would like to emphasise. Traditional values are not a rigid set of postulates that everyone must adhere to, of course not. The difference from the so-called neo-liberal values is that they are unique in each particular instance, because they stem from the traditions of a particular society, its culture and historical background. This is why traditional values cannot be imposed on anyone. They must simply be respected and everything that every nation has been choosing for itself over centuries must be handled with care.



THE WORLD ECONOMY AND TRADE NEED TO BECOME FAIRER AND MORE OPEN. RUSSIA CONSIDERS THE CREATION OF NEW INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL PLATFORMS INEVITABLE; THIS INCLUDES INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONS TOO

This is how we understand traditional values, and the majority of humanity share and accept our approach. This is understandable, because the traditional societies of the East, Latin America, Africa, and Eurasia form the basis of world civilisation.

Respect for the ways and customs of peoples and civilisations is in everyone's interest. In fact, this is also in the interest of the 'West', which is quickly becoming a minority in the international arena as it loses its dominance. Of course, the Western minority's right to its own cultural identity - I want to emphasise this - must be ensured and respected, but, importantly, on an equal footing with the rights of every other nation.

Multipolarity

I will add that multipolarity is a real and, actually, the only chance for Europe to restore its political and economic identity. To tell the truth - and this idea is expressed explicitly in Europe today - Europe's legal capacity is very limited. I tried to put it mildly not to offend anyone.

The world is diverse by nature and Western attempts to squeeze everyone into the same pattern are clearly doomed. Nothing will come out of them. The conceited aspiration to achieve global supremacy and, essentially, to dictate or preserve leadership by dictate is really reducing the international prestige of the leaders of the Western world, including the United States, and increasing mistrust in their ability to negotiate in general.

They say one thing today and another tomorrow; they sign documents and renounce those, they do what they want. There is no stability in anything. How documents are signed, what was discussed, what can we hope for - all this is completely unclear.

Previously, only a few countries dared argue with America and it looked almost sensational, whereas now it has become routine for all manner of states to reject Washington's unfounded demands despite its continued attempts to exert pressure on everyone. This is a mistaken policy that leads nowhere. But let them, this is also their choice.

I am convinced that the nations of the world will not shut their eyes to a policy of coercion that has discredited itself. Every time the West will have to pay a higher price for its attempts to preserve its hegemony. If I were a Western elite, I would seriously ponder this prospect. As I said, some political scientists and politicians in the United States are already thinking about it.

SPOTLIGHT



Right to exist

Russia is not challenging the Western elites. Russia is simply upholding its right to exist and to develop freely. Importantly, we will not become a new hegemon ourselves. Russia is not suggesting replacing a unipolar world with a bipolar, tripolar or other dominating order, or replacing Western domination with domination from the East, North or South. This would inevitably lead to another impasse.

At this point, I would like to cite the words of the great Russian philosopher Nikolai Danilevsky. He believed that progress did not consist of everyone going in the same direction, as some of our opponents seem to want. This would only result in progress coming to a halt, Danilevsky said. Progress lies in 'walking the field that represents humanity's historical activity, walking in all directions', he said, adding that no civilisation can take pride in being the height of development.

I am convinced that dictatorship can only be countered through free development of countries and people; the degradation of the individual can be set off by the love of a person as a creator; primitive simplification and prohibition can be replaced with the flourishing complexity of culture and tradition.

New financial platforms

The world economy and trade also need to become fairer and more open. Russia considers the creation of new international financial platforms inevitable; this includes international transactions. These platforms should be above national jurisdictions. They should be secure, depoliticised and automated and should not depend on any single control centre. Is it possible to do this or not? Of course, it is possible. This will require a lot of effort. Many countries will have to pool their efforts, but it is possible.

This, rules out the possibility of abuse in a new global financial infrastructure. It would make it possible to conduct effective, beneficial and secure international transactions without the dollar or any of the so-called reserve currencies. This is all the more important, now that the dollar is being used as a weapon; the United States, and the West in general, have discredited the institution of international financial reserves. First, they devalued it with inflation in the dollar and euro zones and then they took our gold-and-currency reserves.

Transactions in national currencies

The transition to transactions in national currencies will quickly gain momentum. This is inevitable. Of course, it depends on the status of the issuers of these currencies and the state of their economies, but they will be growing stronger, and these transactions are bound to gradually prevail over the others. Such is the logic of a sovereign economic and financial policy in a multipolar world.

Furthermore, new global development centres are already using unmatched technology and research in various fields and can successfully compete with Western transnational companies in many areas. Clearly, we have a common and very pragmatic interest in free and open scientific and technological exchange. United, we stand to win more than if we act separately. The majority should benefit from these exchanges, not individual super-rich corporations.

Foreign tech policy

Technological development should not increase global inequality, but rather reduce it. This is how Russia has traditionally implemented its foreign technology policy. For example, when we build nuclear power plants in other countries, we create compe-

tence centres and train local personnel. We create an industry. We don't just build a plant, we create an entire industry. In fact, we give other countries a chance to break new ground in their scientific and technological development, reduce inequality, and bring their energy sector to new levels of efficiency and environmental friendliness.

Let me emphasise again that sovereignty and a unique path of development in no way mean isolation or autarky. On the contrary, they are about energetic and mutually beneficial cooperation based on the principles of fairness and equality. Developing common strategies

If liberal globalisation is about depersonalising and imposing the Western model on the entire world, integration is, in contrast, about tapping the potential of each civilisation for everyone to benefit. If globalism is dictate - which is what it comes down to eventually, - integration is a team effort to develop common strategies that everyone can benefit from. In this regard, Russia believes it is important to make wider use of mechanisms for creating large spaces that rely on interaction between neighbouring countries, whose economies and social systems, as well as resource bases and infrastructure, complement each other. In fact, these large spaces form the economic basis of a multipolar world order. Their dialogue gives rise to genuine unity in humanity, which is much more complex, unique and multidimensional than the simplistic ideas professed by some Western masterminds.

Unity among humankind cannot be created by issuing commands such as 'do as I do' or 'be like us'. It is created with consideration for everyone's opinion and with a careful approach to the identity of every society and every nation. This is the principle that can underlie long-term cooperation in a multipolar world.

Revision of UN

In this regard, it may be worth revising the structure of the United Nations, including its Security Council, to better reflect the world's diversity. After all, much more will depend on Asia, Africa, and Latin America in tomorrow's world than is commonly believed today, and this increase in their influence is undoubtedly a positive development.

SPOTLIGHT

The change of eras is a painful albeit natural and inevitable process. A future world arrangement is taking shape before our eyes. In this world arrangement, we must listen to everyone, consider every opinion, every nation, society, culture and every system of world outlooks, ideas and religious concepts, without imposing a single truth on anyone. Only on this foundation, understanding our responsibility for the destinies of nations and our planet, shall we create a symphony of human civilisation.

All countries must be guaranteed sovereign development, and any country's choice must be respected. This is also important, even in relation to the financial system. It should be independent, depoliticised, and, of course, it should rely on the financial systems of the world's leading countries.

And if this system is created (this will not be easy, it is a difficult process, but it is possible), the international institutions (they will need to be either reformed or recreated) helping those countries that need support will work more effectively. First of all, this new financial system should pave the way for education and technology transfer.

If we put this together, collect a palette of opportunities that need to be taken, then this economic model and financial system will meet the interests of the majority, and not only the interests of this 'golden billion', which we talked about.

Payments in national currencies

As a forerunner of this system, we certainly need to expand payments in national currencies. Given that the US financial authorities are weaponizing the dollar and creating problems with payments not only for us, but also for our partners and other countries, the striving for independence will inevitably promote settlements in national currencies.

For example, with India, we are now making 53 per cent of mutual payments for exports in national currencies, and about 27 per cent for imports. Similar arrangements with other countries are being increasingly used. For example, with China, payments in yuan and rubles are expanding fast, and with other countries, too - I will not list them all now.

Supranational global monetary system

So, as for our own financial system, I believe the main way to proceed is to create a

supranational global monetary system that would be depoliticised and based on national currency systems. This system would certainly ensure payments and transactions. It's possible. In the end, one way or another, we have taken the first steps towards payments in national currencies, and then - steps at the regional level. I believe this process will continue.

India has come a long way from a British colony to its current state. Almost 1.5 billion people, and the noticeable results of development evoke universal admiration as well as respect for India from the whole world.



India's great future

Much has been done in recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is certainly a patriot of his country. And his 'Make in India' campaign has both economic and moral significance.

India has been making huge strides in its development, and it certainly has a great future. India not only has the right to be proud of being the largest democracy, in a good sense of the word, but also of the pace of its growth. This is an extremely important foundation for India's development.

We have a special relationship with India that emerged or was built on the foundation of a very close alliance that existed for many decades. We have never had any issues with India, I want to emphasise this, never. All we ever did was support each other. This is what is happening now, and I am sure it will continue in the future.

Fertiliser supply to India up

The pace of economic cooperation is growing today. Overall trade is growing. One example: Prime Minister Modi asked me to increase the supply of fertilisers, which is very important for Indian agriculture, and we did it. By how much do you think? The supply of fertilisers to India has increased by 7.6 times - not just by a fraction, but by 7.6 times. Bilateral trade in agricultural products has almost doubled.

India's role in international affairs

We continue to expand ties in military-technical cooperation. Prime Minister Modi

is one of the few people in the world who are capable of pursuing an independent foreign policy in the interests of his people. Despite any attempts to contain or restrict something, he's like an icebreaker, you know, just moving calmly in the direction that the Indian state needs.

I think that countries like India do not only have a great future, but also a growing role in international affairs.

To read the full report,
scan QR code



NEW LAUNCH

SPUTNIK LAUNCHES BRAND NEW WEBSITE FOR INDIA

SPUTNIK HAS LAUNCHED A NEW WEBSITE, SPUTNIK INDIA, WITH AN AIM TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL CONTENT TO A LARGER AUDIENCE IN THE COUNTRY

The international news agency Sputnik, has launched a brand new website; Sputnik India/ Sputnik भारत. Having offices in dozens of countries, the Sputnik agency provides 24/7 news coverage on a wide range of topics in more than 30 languages. In addition to breaking news and the latest developments, Sputnik has published analytical material and exclusive interviews, while also providing the reader with a variety of content: infographics, videos, photo reports, online broadcasts and online voting streams.

Sputnik news agency which is a part of international media group Rossiya Segodnya, has multifunctional press centers in 16 capitals around the globe - including New Delhi, which hosts hundreds of press events every year, including via videoconferencing.

With the latest development, however, readers from all parts of the world can access the latest news and top stories about India and the South Asian region via the separate news platform sputniknews.in, where users can easily switch from English to Hindi with just one mouse click.

The Sputnik India website will be covering events from India and its closest neighbors - Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and others, placing all sorts of news on the agenda. This includes the latest news and trending stories from a variety of sources, from business, politics and diplomacy to sci-tech, entertainment and sports (especially the much-beloved cricket). To make it look straightforward, the Sputnik India website is divided into sections devoted to specific topics and trending news.

A special focus, as expected, will be placed on Indo-Russia relations in a bid to further foster the cultural bridge between the Indian and Russian peoples, especially given the difficult geopolitical situation worldwide. Ties between India and Russia are time-tested and remain vivid and strong even in

times of Western politician pressure and economic sanctions, laying the basis for a close strategic partnership. In this regard, Sputnik India is keeping an eye not only on political and economical ties between the two nations, but rather tries to encompass as many topics of bilateral cooperation as possible.

For those who are more interested in content with a human touch, there is a Sputnik Specials section on the website, with stories based on comments provided by ordinary people. By introducing a 'human touch' approach, Sputnik India is trying to

SPUTNIK VALUES INDIA'S PERCEPTION OF CURRENT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND ITS UNWAVERING BID TO ENSURE THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF ITS PEOPLE, BOTH IN THE REGION AND BEYOND

provide inclusive and non-biased content by speaking to ordinary citizens about their needs and aspirations. In doing so, bit-by-bit, Sputnik is accumulating a true, colorful picture of India, which is a country proud of its diversity and cultural heritage.

The Domestic and regional focus, however, does not suggest Sputnik India is going to miss out on world events, especially what concerns India globally. Taking into account the rapidly developing and unstable geopolitical situation today, Sputnik India will be paying attention to major developments not only in the Indo-Pacific region, but also on a global scale. As a Russian news agency, Sputnik values India's perception of current international affairs and its unwavering bid to primarily ensure the country's national interests and the needs of its people -- both in the region and beyond. In this regard, Sputnik is covering India's relations with its

friends and foes both regionally and globally, but values diplomacy and a neutral, respectful stance on all sensitive issues.

In the meantime, the Sputnik India team is trying to keep up with latest developments both on social media and offline to follow what readers from India are more keen to know about. Sputnik India will be launching polls both on the website and its social media handles and ensure that these very topics also find their place on Sputnik India to attract as large audience as possible, no matter their age, sex or cultural background.

Sputnik India correspondents are based both in India and Russia, working hard to provide well-balanced and non-biased content to readers, 24/7. What's more, Sputnik India is eyeing to expand its correspondent base by employing more journalists with the knowledge of not only Hindi, but also India's local languages with the aim of grasping a wider image of the events and reaching out to a larger audience in the country.

Sputnik's global mission is to provide objective coverage of events. Sputnik India correspondents not only approach experts and political analysts for comments, but also attempt to discover original human stories that other news agencies missed out on or deliberately chose to ignore.

We tell the untold and offer a platform for different voices so that our audiences can draw their own conclusions.

To read the full report,
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HOTSPOT

NOVGOROD REGION DELEGATION MEETS INDIAN PARTNERS IN BUSINESS, NUCLEAR INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

SUMMING UP THE VISIT, GOVERNOR ANDREI NIKITIN NOTED THE MUTUAL INTEREST OF THE RUSSIAN AND INDIAN SIDES TO ESTABLISH COOPERATION AND JOINTLY DEVELOP INTERACTION IN VARIOUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPHERES



REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVEN NOVGOROD ENTERPRISES HAD VERY PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH THEIR POTENTIAL PARTNERS, WHILE NOVGOROD STATE UNIVERSITY FORMALISED AN INTENTION TO COOPERATE WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF KERALA

- Andrey Nikitin emphasised.

Novgorodians are confident that the partnership with the Indian side would be very fruitful and are ready to expand the scope of interaction.

Delegation from the Novgorod region headed by Governor Andrey Nikitin has completed its working visit to India. In several days, Novgorodians held a number of meetings with Indian colleagues engaged in business, nuclear industry, science and education. They also visited the Kudankulam NPP - Novgorod enterprise "Splay" supplies fittings to the construction site.

Representatives of seven Novgorod enterprises had very productive discussions with their potential partners, while Novgorod State University formalised an intention to cooperate with the University of Kerala.

Summing up the results of the trip, Andrei Nikitin noted mutual interest of the Russian and Indian sides to establish cooperation and jointly develop interaction in various socio-economic spheres.

"Each of the Novgorod entrepreneurs who came here with a mission have found an Indian partner for cooperation, and more than one. Upon returning to Veliky Novgorod, we will continue to cooperate

with new contacts. Together with our Kerala colleagues, we agreed to build cooperation in business, education, and environmental issues. University of Kerala is seriously engaged in radio electronics. Our university has the same specialization. I think that important scientific and educational contacts and student exchanges await us in near future. There is also an interest from the Indian side to train doctors, and at our medical faculty we can assist with that,"

"There are specific areas that are equally relevant and mutually beneficial for both sides - medicine, radio electronics, joint scientific developments, as well as the creation of joint ventures and products that we currently lack. For Novgorod companies in almost all industries, the time has come for growth and development," - the governor said.



SPOTLIGHT

SCO ADOPTS STATEMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABLE & DIVERSIFIED SUPPLY CHAINS, GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL ENERGY SECURITY

THE HEADS OF STATE COUNCIL OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION ALSO ADOPTED A DECISION TO SIGN A MEMORANDUM BETWEEN THE SCO SECRETARIAT AND THE UNITED NATIONS ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE (2023-2027) AT THE SAMARKAND SUMMIT



The expanded format meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council was held at Samarkand on September 16, 2022. Following the summit, the leaders signed the Samarkand Declaration and adopted a package of documents. Among others, the summit was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council adopted statements in response to climate change, on ensuring reliable, sustainable and diversified supply chains, and on ensuring global food security and international energy security.

THE SCO IS NOT MARKING TIME BUT IS CONTINUING TO DEVELOP ITS ROLE IN ADDRESSING INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES AND MAINTAINING PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY THROUGHOUT THE EURASIAN SPACES

SCO Heads of State Council decisions

In particular, the adopted documents include the decisions of the SCO Heads

of State Council on the 2023-2027 Comprehensive Action Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the SCO Treaty on Long-term Good Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation; on the SCO Concept of Cooperation for the Development of Connectivity and the Creation of Efficient Transport Corridors; and on the Roadmap for the Gradual Increase in the Share of National Currencies in Mutual Settlements.

In addition, decisions were made to sign the Memorandum of Commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran so that the country can obtain the status of a member-state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; to initiate the procedure for admitting the

Republic of Belarus as a member of the SCO; and to grant the status of a SCO dialogue partner to the Republic of Maldives, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates and the State of Kuwait.

The SCO Heads of State Council also adopted a decision to sign the Memorandum between the SCO Secretariat and the United Nations on education, science and culture (2023-2027).

Speaking on the occasion, President Putin said, "The SCO has become the largest regional organisation in the world. As previous speakers have pointed out, over half of the world's population lives in SCO member-states, which account for about 25 per cent of global GDP and have a powerful intellectual and technological potential and a considerable part of global natural resources.

Maintaining security & stability

At the same time, the SCO is not marking time but continues to develop and build up its role in addressing international and regional issues and maintaining peace, security and stability throughout the vast Eurasian space. Colleagues, this is especially important in the current complicated international situation, about which we have talked in detail during our restricted-attendance meeting.

However, I would like to repeat that global politics and economy are about to undergo fundamental and irreversible changes. The



growing role of new centres of power is coming into sharp focus. Interaction among these new centres is not based on some rules, which are being forced on them by external forces and which nobody has seen, but on the universally recognised principles of the rule of international law and the UN Charter, namely, equal and indivisible security and respect for each other's sovereignty, national values and interests.

It is on these principles, which are devoid of all elements of egoism, that the joint efforts of SCO member-states are based in politics and the economy. This opens up broad prospects for continued mutually beneficial cooperation in politics, the economy, culture, humanitarian and other spheres.

Key areas of concern

Fighting terrorism and extremism, drug

trafficking, organised crime and illegal armed formations remains a priority of our cooperation. Other key areas include providing assistance in the political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts along our external borders, including in Afghanistan.

Strengthening economic cooperation has traditionally been a critical part of the SCO's activities. Our joint efforts are designed to expand trade and investment exchanges, carry out mutually beneficial business projects in various industries, and to increase the volume of settlements in national currencies.

Economic cooperation

As noted above, including by the President of Kazakhstan, we are open to working with the whole world. The SCO is a non-bloc association. We help addressing the energy and food problems that are growing globally as a result of certain systemic errors in the world's leading economies in the field of finance and energy. Our policy is not selfish. We hope that other participants in economic cooperation will build their policies on the same principles and stop using the tools of protectionism, illegal sanctions and economic selfishness to their own advantage.

The European Commission's decision to lift sanctions on Russian fertilisers is a vivid example of such selfish behaviour. We are aware of the fertilisers' important role in overcoming the food problem. Of course, we welcome the decision to lift the sanctions. But it turns out that, in accordance with the clarification of the European Commission of September 10, these sanctions were lifted only for EU countries.



SPOTLIGHT



It turns out that they are the only ones who can purchase our fertilisers. What about the developing poorest countries around the world?

Access for Russian fertilisers

Taking advantage of the presence of UN Under-Secretary-General Rosemary A. DiCarlo, I would like to ask the UN Secretariat - I discussed this matter with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres the day before yesterday - to use its influence on the European Commission's decision not in word, but in deed and to demand that they, our colleagues from the European Commission, lift these clearly discriminatory restrictions on developing countries and provide access for Russian fertilisers to their markets.

Also, the day before yesterday I apprised Secretary-General Guterres of the fact that 300,000 tones of Russian fertilisers are stocked at the EU seaports. We are ready to make them available to developing countries for free.

Russia increases grain exports

I would also like to note that Russia is increasing its grain exports to international markets. This year, it is going to be 30 million tones, and next year it will be 50 million tones with 90 per cent of our food exports going to the markets of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Undoubtedly, the ongoing summit's decisions and documents to improve the efficiency of international transport corridors, to expand intraregional, to advance industrial and scientific and technical cooperation, and to introduce high-tech solutions in agriculture and

THERE ARE MORE COUNTRIES DESIROUS OF COOPERATING WITH THE SCO IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES. APPLICATIONS FROM OTHER STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS DESERVE ATTENTION AND FAVOURABLE CONSIDERATION

healthcare, will promote further development of business ties within the SCO. It is also important to advance cultural and humanitarian cooperation within the SCO.

Tourism, museology pacts

Agreements and memorandums on cooperation in tourism and museology that will be signed during today's meeting will serve as the next step forward on this path. It appears that opportunities are good for stepping up sports cooperation and potentially holding major sporting events with SCO sponsorship. To do this, we could think about creating an association of sports organisations under our association.

Iran accession into SCO

It was noted earlier today during the restricted-attendance meeting that the SCO states focus on expanding cooperation with countries that seek to establish an open and equal dialogue with our organisation and are interested in joining it. In this context, Russia, no doubt, favours the earliest possible accession of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the SCO, which is what

the documents and the memorandum that will be signed today are designed to accomplish.

We are convinced that Iran's full-fledged participation will be beneficial for the association, as that country plays an important role in the Eurasian region and the world at large.

We also fully stand behind the decision submitted for approval by the Heads of State Council to start the process of admitting the Republic of Belarus as an SCO member. Let me be clear that we have always advocated that Belarus, which is Russia's strategic partner and closest ally, should participate fully in the SCO. This will undoubtedly improve our ability to advance unity in politics, the economy, security and a number of humanitarian matters.

SCO dialogue partner status

Of course, we welcome the granting of SCO dialogue partner status to Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as the commencement of the procedure for obtaining this status by the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Republic of Maldives, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and the United Arab Emirates. Notably, there are more countries desirous of cooperating with the SCO in various capacities, and applications from other states and international associations deserve our utmost attention and favourable consideration.

In closing, I would like to thank President Shavkat Mirziyoyev for the hospitality and excellent organisation of our work, and to congratulate Uzbekistan on its successful SCO chairmanship. I would like to wish every success to our Indian friends who are taking over the chairmanship today."

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'RUSSIA-INDIA ACTIVELY COOPERATING ON INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS, DISCUSSING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS'

FOR RUSSIANS, THE RICH HISTORY AND ANCIENT CULTURE OF INDIA ARE TRADITIONALLY OF GREAT INTEREST, AND LIKEWISE, PRESIDENT PUTIN PROPOSED INTENSIFYING TALKS ON VISA-FREE TOURIST TRAVEL AGREEMENTS. HOLDING CROSS YEARS OF RUSSIA AND INDIA IN 2024 WAS ALSO DISCUSSED



Close on the heels of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Samarkand, Russian President Vladimir Putin had a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 16, 2022.

In his speech, President Putin said: "First of all, I want to start our meeting by personally congratulating you and the entire friendly nation of India on the holiday you celebrated last month: I mean the 75th anniversary of Independence of the Republic of India. I wish India all the best.

I also know that tomorrow is your birthday, my dear friend. According to Russian tradition, you are not supposed to wish anyone an early happy birthday, therefore I can't do it. But I would like you to know that we remembered, we know about it and wish you all the best anyways, to you as well as to the people of India; we wish prosperity to the friendly country of India that you lead.

Bilateral relations can be characterised

as a privileged strategic partnership, and they continue to develop actively. We are actively cooperating on international platforms and discussing all global developments, including unfavourable ones at times.

Views on Ukraine conflict

I know your position on the conflict in Ukraine and the concerns that you constantly express. We will do our best to make it stop as soon as possible. However, unfortunately, the opposing side, the leadership of Ukraine, announced that it was abandoning the negotiation process and declared that it wants to achieve its goals by military means, 'on the battlefield', as they say.



Nevertheless, we will always keep you informed of what is happening there.

SCO summit

We are actively working at the SCO, and today's summit of the SCO heads of state, which I believe was very successful, is the best proof of it. It is important that we constantly coordinate our positions despite coronavirus-related restrictions: we had telephone conversations four times, and our staff are always in touch. I would like to thank you for your video greetings for the participants of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.

I fondly recall my own visit to New Delhi last December and my fruitful talks with you. I would like to use this occasion to invite you to visit Russia.

Economic ties

Clearly, constructive relations are developing in the economic sphere. Trade is growing, including due to additional deliveries of Russian fertilisers to the Indian market, as you asked. The volume of fertilisers delivered from Russia to India increased by more than eight times - not by some percentage, but by more than eight times. I hope that this will help Indian farmers to manage the difficult challenge of providing food for the country's population.

Travel & Tourism

Large joint projects in the oil and gas sector and in the nuclear power industry are being consistently implemented. For Russians, the rich history and ancient culture of India are traditionally of great interest, and in this regard, we propose intensifying the talks on an agreement on visa-free tourist travel. We could also think about holding cross years of Russia and India in 2024."

SECURITY MATTERS

CSTO MEMBERS' JOINT WORK GAINED MORE DYNAMICS

INTERACTIONS WITHIN THE JOINT MECHANISM OF THE FOREIGN AND DEFENCE MINISTRIES, THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND PARLIAMENTS BECAME MORE INTENSIVE THIS YEAR



Russian President Vladimir Putin shared his views at the restricted meeting of the Council on Collective Security of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) on November 23. Here are the excerpts:

“The dynamics of our joint work in the organisation have become more intensive this year. CSTO members are interacting within the joint mechanism of the foreign and defence ministries, the security councils and parliaments.

The CSTO regularly meets to draft coordinated positions on political and military-strategic issues and urgent matters on the regional and international agendas. It continues upgrading its collective rapid deployment and

MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MEMBER-STATES IS EXPANDING. THE CSTO INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR MILITARY-ECONOMIC COOPERATION, FORMED AT RUSSIA'S INITIATIVE, IS PUTTING EFFORT INTO THIS

rapid reaction forces and collective aviation and peacekeeping units. There are regular exercises to maintain combat readiness, improve the control system and upgrade the qualifications of military personnel.

The efficiency of these measures was evidenced by the CSTO's peacekeeping operations in Kazakhstan in January, which prevented the seizing of power by extremists and helped stabilise the internal political situation in the republic. Mr Tokayev expressed his gratitude for the help and support. Using this opportunity, I would like to congratulate him again on his convincing victory in the elections and wish him success in implementing his ambitious plans to transform the political, social and economic life of the country.

It is satisfying to note that we, the CSTO Secretariat, have analysed the valuable practical experience gained during the peacekeeping mission in Kazakhstan. Russia will certainly support the important proposal submitted for our consideration

SECURITY MATTERS

on arming the CSTO peacekeeping forces with modern weapons, military and special equipment, as well as special means.

Russia definitely supports the decision we are to make today to improve the CSTO communications system, to create a joint radiological, chemical, and biological defence and medical support force, and a unified technical system for railway security in the CSTO.

I would also like to mention that military-technical cooperation between the member-states of our organisation is expanding. The CSTO Interstate Commission for Military-Economic Cooperation, established at Russia's initiative, is putting a lot of effort into this. Special services and law enforcement agencies are carrying out joint operations to combat terrorism and extremism, transnational crime, illegal migration, drug trafficking, and to ensure disaster relief in cases of natural and man-made emergencies.

And of course, all of us rally together to preserve the memory of the common history of our states, of the fact that our people won in the 'Great Patriotic War' together. We are constantly working on this and I am sure we are paying the necessary attention to these issues.

We are certainly aware of not only our achievements, but also our common problems. Our colleagues have spoken about this today, and we will talk about it in more detail later today -without the cameras, I think. In any case, it is obvious that cooperation in the CSTO format yields tangible, practical results and helps us ensure the protection of our countries' national interests, sovereignty and independence.



The issues related to reaching a comprehensive settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan certainly require further attention - I agree with my colleagues who have already spoken about this. Of course, this urgent issue calls for our attention.

In this context, we positively assess the summit of the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia that took place in Sochi in late October in the presence of yours truly, the President of Russia. The talks held there created a good foundation for future compromises on principal issues. Importantly, the joint statement confirmed the commitment to the top-level trilateral agreements that were achieved before - in 2020 and 2021. It also reaffirmed the key role of our joint format of interaction in ensuring peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

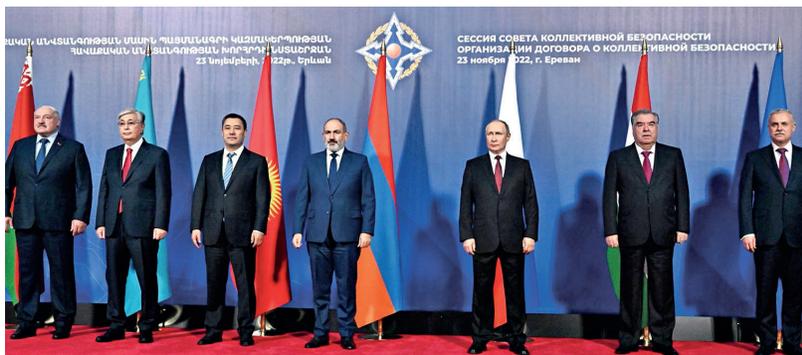
It is only possible to achieve sustainable normalisation in relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan by consistently fulfilling these agreements on delimiting the border, unblocking the transport connections and resolving the humanitarian problems. We

hope this will eventually allow Yerevan and Baku to sign a peace treaty. We have already exchanged these considerations briefly with the Prime Minister of Armenia and will certainly talk about this in more detail at our bilateral meeting today.

I share the concerns of my colleagues who spoke about the situation in Afghanistan - it certainly remains complicated. The threat of militants from different international terrorist organisations penetrating the CSTO member states' territories remains high. The spread of extremist ideology among the people of the Central Asian countries promotes the risk of increased activity of the radical underground in the region. In effect, this concerns all our countries.

We consider further close coordination within the CSTO framework on all key aspects of Afghanistan's problems to be extremely important. Our competent services must continue working tightly on identifying the threats of terrorism, extremism and drug crimes quickly. Naturally, it is necessary to neutralise these threats through joint special operations and the rapid response measures that have proven their efficiency.

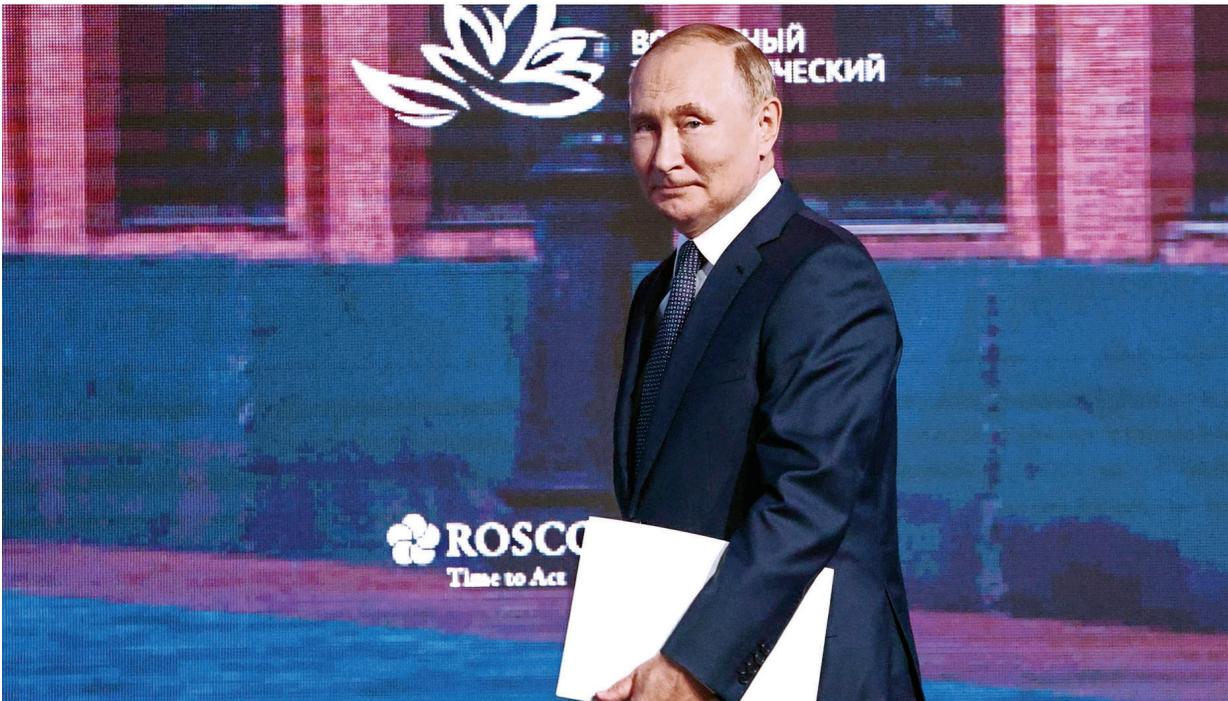
We will facilitate stabilisation in Afghanistan through other multilateral mechanisms as well. I would like to tell you that last week the Russian capital hosted a meeting of the Moscow format consultations. The priority task at this point is to ensure the formation of a truly inclusive Afghan government that would involve all ethnic groups at the necessary levels."



ECONOMY

'RUSSIA COPING WELL WITH ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL AGGRESSION OF THE WEST'

TO PROMOTE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAR EASTERN REGIONS, BY USING NEW ADVANCED STATE SUPPORT MEASURES AND BY CREATING THE BEST AND HIGHLY COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT, IS HIGH ON RUSSIA'S AGENDA



The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, while speaking at the plenary session of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) on September 7, 2022 greeted all participants and guests. "I am delighted to greet all participants and guests of the Eastern Economic Forum. Russia and Vladivostok are again hosting a forum of business leaders, experts, politicians, public figures and members of government from dozens of countries across the world. Video addresses have been sent to us by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi; Prime Minister of Malaysia, Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Prime Minister of Vietnam, Pham Minh Chinh. I am delighted that they have made time to take part in this plenary session."

"As per tradition, the programme of the EEF includes discussions on the projects and

AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF ASIA-PACIFIC NATIONS REJECT THE DESTRUCTIVE LOGIC OF SANCTIONS. THEIR BUSINESS RELATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON MUTUAL ADVANTAGE, COOPERATION AND JOINT USE OF ECONOMIC CAPABILITIES

initiatives that are extremely important for the development of the regions in Russia's Far East and for strengthening Russia's cooperation and production ties with the Asia-Pacific countries, both our old, traditional partners and countries that are only developing dialogue with Russia in a broad range of areas and business projects. Of

course, this meeting in Vladivostok is a good opportunity to once again review the situation in the global economy and to exchange views on its main trends and risks," remarked the Russian President.

He went on to say: "The entire system of international relations has recently undergone irreversible, or should I say tectonic, shifts. Emerging states and regions around the world, primarily of course, in the Asia-Pacific region, now play a substantially bigger role. Asia-Pacific countries emerged as new centres of economic and technological growth, attracting human resources, capital and manufacturing.

Despite all that, the Western countries are seeking to preserve yesterday's world order that benefits them and forces everyone

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to live according to the infamous 'rules', which they concocted themselves. They are also the ones who regularly violate these rules, changing them to suit their agenda depending on how things are going at any given moment. At the same time, other countries have not been forthcoming when it comes to subjecting themselves to this dictate and arbitrary rule, forcing the Western elites, to put it bluntly, to lose grip and take short-sighted, irrational decisions on global security, politics, as well as economics. All these decisions run counter to the interests of countries and their people, including, by the way, the people in those Western countries."

"Russia is coping well with the economic, financial and technological aggression of the West. I am talking about a real aggression; there is no other word for it. Russia's currency and financial market has stabilised, inflation is going down, as I have already mentioned, and the unemployment rate is at an all-time historical low of less than 4 per cent. The assessments and forecasts of our economic performance, including by business people, are more optimistic now than in early spring.

I would like to say that our economic

situation has stabilised overall, but we also see a number of problems in some sectors, regions and individual enterprises, especially those that relied on supplies from Europe or supplied their products there.

It is important to continue working with businesses to take prompt decisions and launch effective targeted support mechanisms. I would like to ask the Government Commission to increase the sustainability of the Russian economy under the sanctions to keep track of the situation. It is true that we are doing this almost on a daily basis. Nevertheless, despite the evidence of stabilisation I have mentioned, we are also aware of the risks and so we must keep an eye on them.

Russia is a sovereign state. We will always protect our national interests while pursuing an independent policy, and we also appreciate this quality among our partners, who have demonstrated their reliability and responsible attitude in the course of our trade, investment and other types of cooperation over many years. I am referring, as you are aware, to our colleagues from the Asia-Pacific countries.

An absolute majority of Asia-Pacific countries

reject the destructive logic of sanctions. Their business relations are focused on mutual advantage, cooperation and the joint use of our economic capabilities to the benefit of our countries' citizens. This adds up to a huge competitive advantage of the regional countries and a guarantee of their dynamic long-term development, which has been growing faster than the world's average for a long time."

"We will continue to promote the priority development of the Far Eastern regions by using new advanced state support measures and by creating the best and highly competitive business environment. For example, we intend to continue adjusting the mechanism of priority development areas for modern and joint projects with other countries, to create the best possible business climate for attracting the most advanced technologies to Russia and for manufacturing high value-added goods in the Far East.

Events of this year confirm the special significance of such a factor as accessible and affordable raw materials without which it is impossible to organise any production process or to set up co-production chains. Russia is just about the only country that is



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completely self-sufficient in terms of natural resources, and the Far East plays a substantial role here. This region is a highly important supplier of crude oil and natural gas, coal, metals, timber and marine biological resources to the domestic market and our foreign partners.

We are staking on the prudent and rational development of Russia's natural riches under the most stringent environmental standards. First of all, we will refine all extracted raw materials domestically as much as possible. We will also use these raw materials to strengthen the sovereignty of this country, to ensure industrial security, to raise incomes and to develop the regions.

We have already protected the resource extraction industry from unfriendly actions.

aircraft manufacturing and other industries, as well as in new energy storage and transmission technologies. I would like to separately ask the government to have a look at the bioresources harvesting sphere, where we have a mechanism of investment quotas. Here, it is important to achieve balanced growth and full utilisation of production capacities, as well as to ensure the harmonious development of the regions' infrastructure.

I would like to stress that the funds the state receives from the utilisation of water bioresources must above all be allocated for developing the infrastructure of rural areas, employment support, and increasing incomes of local residents. I ask the government to take specific measures on this. We have discussed this many times.

At the same time, Far Eastern ports are seeing a real logistics boom. The volume of cargo transshipment and container handling is such that specialists are working 24/7 to handle the workload. In a word, no matter how much someone might like to isolate Russia, it is impossible to do it, as we have always said so. It is enough just to look at the map.

We will use natural competitive advantages to build up our further transport capabilities, expand the road and railway network, build new access roads to sea terminals and expand their capacity.

I mentioned earlier that our focus is on building the eastward infrastructure and developing the North-South international corridor and ports of the Azov-Black Sea basin which we will keep working on. They will open up more opportunities for Russian companies to enter the markets of Iran, India, the Middle East and Africa and, of course, for reciprocal deliveries from these countries.

The total volume of freight and cargo transportation along these routes and arteries will be able to grow by about 60 per cent by 2030. We are absolutely realistic about our predictions, and this is how it will be. To achieve these numbers, the government has drafted specific 'roadmaps' in the three areas I outlined earlier, which will enable us to make this work consistent, consolidate and coordinate our efforts in terms of deadlines and capacity to break up the bottlenecks and upgrade border checkpoints and related infrastructure.

In addition to our plans to expand transport corridors, it is important to put in place new rolling stock and railway traction vehicles, to provide Russian shipyards with orders for modern high-quality tankers, dry cargo ships and container vessels, including ice-class ships, for the further expansion of the Northern Sea Route as a potent transport corridor of national and global importance with, I want to stress this, year-round navigation. The state-of-the-art icebreakers that we are designing and building make it possible for us to do this already now.

This year, a container vessel made its first run between Murmansk and Kamchatka along the Northern Sea Route to reaffirm the reliability and safety of shipping operations in the Arctic zone.



From now on, only companies with Russian jurisdiction have the right to develop natural resources in Russia.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, together with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and leading business associations, has determined the national economy's demand for strategic raw materials. This information will become the foundation of the revised 'Strategy for the Development of Russia's Mineral Resources Base' with an extended planning horizon up to 2050.

At the same time, special focus should be placed on geological exploration and processing of rare raw materials (such as titanium, manganese, lithium, and niobium), which are used in metallurgy, medical and chemical industries, microelectronics,

Next, over the past years Russia has implemented big plans for the development of transport infrastructure, railways and roads, seaports and pipelines. These timely decisions have made it possible for businesses to quickly rebuild logistics in today's conditions, and redirect cargo flows to those countries that are ready and willing to trade with Russia and prefer civilised and predictable business relations.

It is noteworthy that despite the attempts of external pressure, the total cargo of Russian seaports has only slightly decreased over the seven months of this year; it has remained at the same level as a year earlier, which is about 482 million tones of cargo. Last year, there were 483 million tones, so the figure is practically the same.



Notably, the point is not just about authorising the passage of ships in the Arctic or simply connecting two destinations. What we need to do is make sure that ships are properly serviced and cargo is properly handled at each port along the route, and the traffic schedule is sustainable, predictable and reliable. Then, every Northern Sea Route waypoint and region will benefit from the logistics corridor. That is what we should be striving for. The government has approved a development plan for the Northern Sea Route until 2035 with plans to allocate 1.8 trillion rubles from various sources to implement it. As forecasted, the cargo traffic along this corridor will go from the current 35 million tones per year to the targeted 220 million tones per year.

The availability of freight vehicles is certainly a key factor in the transportation of goods to and from the Russian Far East. This means we need to offer economically justified and competitive freight rates. I am asking the government to study all these issues carefully.

Aviation is a special issue for the Far East. Here, the availability of flights from the European part of Russia to the Far East is not the only issue, but connectivity between the Far Eastern regions themselves also matters - air services should cover as many destinations, cities and regions of the Far East as possible.

ENVIRONMENT, TOGETHER WITH THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE AND LEADING BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, HAS DETERMINED THE NATIONAL ECONOMY'S DEMAND FOR STRATEGIC RAW MATERIALS

That is why we have established a single Far Eastern airline. It offers almost 390 destinations, some of them subsidised by the state. In the next three years, this airline's traffic should increase, and the number of destinations will exceed 530. And as we could see after those flights were opened, these destinations are in great demand.

To implement these plans, we need to expand the company's fleet, to make sure it has modern aircraft, including small aircraft. A decision has been made in this regard, and I ask the Government to strictly implement it.

I would like to note that in general, Russian air carriers will soon be thoroughly re-equipped. Our airlines, including Aeroflot, have placed the largest order package in modern history, for about 500 Russian-made mainline aircraft. By the way, as far as I know,

the United Aircraft Corporation and Aeroflot have signed a respective agreement on the sidelines of this Eastern Economic Forum, and the figures in there are quite impressive - over a trillion, I think. This high demand should become a powerful incentive for aircraft factories and design bureaux, for many related industries, including electronics and aircraft components, and, of course, for the schools training professional personnel including engineers and skilled blue-collar workers in the aviation industry.

I would like to add that a decision has been made on another sensitive issue for the Far East. It is the development of air medical services and increasing the availability of medical care for people living in remote areas. Starting next year, we will more than double federal funding for these purposes, which means that the number of flights will also increase, and there will be faster and better provision of healthcare in the region."

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BANKING & FINANCE

DUMA BRINGS CHANGES TO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT, CREATES DEFENSE AGAINST SANCTIONS



RUSSIA'S FINANCIAL SYSTEM CAME UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE FROM SANCTIONS RECENTLY. YET, ITS OPERATIONS CARRIED ON UNINTERRUPTED, AND CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES CONTINUED TO OBTAIN CREDIT RESOURCES, SAID THE RUSSIAN BANK GOVERNOR AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE STATE DUMA IN NOVEMBER

"This summer, we had to make major changes to our regulatory environment, aiming at creating a working defence against sanctions. In the spring session alone, the Duma passed as many as 39 laws related to the Central Bank's mandate. Before I present our forecast, let me briefly comment on the outcomes of this extremely non-standard year. Between the end of winter and early spring, our financial system came under enormous pressure from sanctions. And yet, its operations carried on uninterrupted, and consumers and businesses continued to obtain credit resources.

Enablers behind sanctions resistance

Three enablers are behind that system resistance, we believe.

- One is inflation targeting and a floating exchange rate.

We were able to check the uptick in inflation early in the year, making a rapid decision to raise the key rate. As we put the economy on a surer footing and head off the risks of inflation spiralling out of control, we acted equally rapidly to reduce the key rate at the several extraordinary board meetings we held for that purpose.

This now takes our current inflation to a level close to that of our peers, even though the shocks we had to withstand were much more massive. Speaking of the key rate, it is now down two percentage points from early February, and this comes at a time global central banks are implementing monetary tightening through rate rises.

Bringing down inflation

We are working to set inflation on a path to gradual decline. We recognise that the effects of this inflation stance take time to show, and price growth may remain persistently high for a while. Our target for inflation is

4 per cent in 2024. A floating exchange rate is known for the major benefits it brings for the economy. As it did in past crises, it takes the brunt of the shocks, helping the economy adjust to changing external conditions, and still is.

Towards global cooperation

The major risk in early spring was a sharp decline in imports, shortages of consumer goods, equipment and components. Businesses struggled to secure new supply channels and find new partners in countries new to them. As the ruble strengthened in the second quarter, it put consumer and investment imports on course for recovery, in defiance of the added costs of logistics and the higher output prices. In other words, it is working to guide the economy towards a new geography of global cooperation, akin to a safety valve activated in response to product-supply restrictions.

- Enabler two is financial stability.

The sanctions were meant to push our financial system into a free-fall collapse. Making preparations for such non-economic risks as sanctions is no easy thing, and mathematical models fail to price them in - which was exactly the calculation. However, we had made consistent efforts to strengthen the resilience of the financial system to overall shocks, and the efforts helped.

Solid pace of credit expansion

Our policies worked to free the market of persistently unsteady banks that would collapse under such pressure and cause knock-on effects. This is another reason why banks had to create so-called capital buffers - essentially a capital cushion for a rainy day. In the course of the pandemic, we released those buffers; thereafter banks were able to restore their safety cushions

to resort to them again in the spring. With banks being stable, we can see a solid pace of credit expansion consistent with increased needs of the economy.

- The third enabler is a self-sufficient financial infrastructure.

The National Payment Card System enables card payments in both Mir and the global payment systems that exited Russia. The Bank of Russia's Financial Messaging System is our SWIFT equivalent that provides uninterrupted services to banks domestically. The system has been fully operational for several years. This year, its traffic is up almost a quarter and counting, following the disconnection of some banks from SWIFT, and the system's capacities are all set to sustain such growth.

Own rating industry

Russia now boasts its own rating industry and a national reinsurance company. I have to admit that the exit of international companies in these sectors was certainly a nuisance. But it will have no devastating effects; nor will it cause a shutdown of capital markets or disrupt the regulatory system.

Consistent efforts

Evidently, all these safety factors in the financial system and the economy that protect against sanctions came about as a result of consistent and long-term efforts. At a time when the economy is undergoing transformation, it is imperative to adhere to the principles, the basic approaches, that deliver and show a way out of what seems to be a deadlock. Certainly, we responded to the crisis with special measures, namely, the aforementioned sharp increase in the key rate to counter inflation and financial stability risks.

Capital controls were enacted in response to the freeze of our foreign currency

reserves, in an effort to stabilise the foreign exchange market. Thereafter, however, we scaled back the all-out measures involving tight limits. Partners and investors in the countries we will be cooperating with and - more importantly - our citizens and investors will show more confidence in us if we save administrative measures for only urgent need.

Regulatory relaxations

To help the financial system adjust, we introduced a package of unprecedented regulatory relaxations. That helped the financial market weather the first storm. Many relaxations are to be rolled back by the end of the year. This is also very important. If regulation ignores real risks or a change in conditions, it becomes an internal factor of instability in itself. We cannot let that happen. We did not hesitate to use our toolkit to help banks' clients and made the payment holidays option available again to a wide range of borrowers. We also enabled the preferential refinancing facility for banks issuing SME loans to support lending to small businesses. The anti-crisis package and current policies has brought about a more acceptable level of interest rates, a decline in inflation, and a well-functioning financial sector that meets the needs for credit resources and boasts a whole set of stock market tools.

Credit expansion

The slowdown in inflation and a lower key rate has paved the way for credit expansion. The corporate loan portfolio - loans to businesses - is growing at a pace that is close to last year's. Credit is now needed for business transformation. Banks can ramp up lending thanks to their capital stock. This is where tangible support also comes from the Government's programmes.

Mortgage loans have added about 12% this year. This is a solid figure in the context of a drastically changed geopolitical environment when people tend to postpone decisions to buy an apartment. Mortgage loan disbursements declined in March, which hardly came as the result of the high rate alone: in October, when the rates were unchanged, disbursements also dropped 20% on September. Mortgage loans are now beginning to show an improvement, though.

Controlling risks in market

While its growth falls short of the past year's 21% expansion driven by subsidised mortgages, signs emerged at some point of an overheated market. They are gone by now, but we are concerned about developer-subsidised mortgages that even come with seemingly zero rates. But our analysis shows that such mortgage products have a 20-30% premium on a flat price. The resulting overpayment is even larger than the reduction in interest. More so, the flat will never sell at that price in the secondary market. This creates risks for both borrower and bank given the inflated price of the asset used as collateral. We have designed policies to control risks in this sector, and we expect them to be in place early next year.

Monetary policy forecasts

Now on to our forecast which underlies our monetary policy. Our basic forecast assumes that current trends in global economic development will be sustained. In an effort to tame inflation, central banks across the world are raising policy rates. Under the baseline scenario, higher rates are set to hold back growth, but we will escape a large-scale global crisis and the global financial system will remain resilient.

Stability in GDP rates expected

Our forecast assumes a 3-3.5% decline in the national economy this year. It is to resume growth in the second half of next year. GDP growth rates are expected to stabilise at 1.5-2.5% over the next two years. Its subsequent growth will depend on the success of the economic transformation programme. And this programme needs financial stability. The transformation process will surely slow because of growth in inflation. We expect inflation to decelerate to 5-7% in 2023 to return to the 4% target in 2024. The key rate in the baseline forecast will be 6.5-8.5% next year, 6-7% in 2024, and 5-6% in 2025. Lending to the economy will grow at a pace of 8-13% next year and slightly higher thereafter in 2024.

Period of transformation

Russian business models will undergo a transformation in the years ahead as companies will shift away from selling commodities to manufacturing products with a higher degree of processing, changing the geography of relations with customers and suppliers. Importantly, this process will apply to all sectors. Some industries and

companies will find the process easier, and some, more difficult. This will depend on how damaged foreign economic relations are, whether new ties prove tenable, and whether companies succeed in making forays into global and domestic markets.

Accelerated adjustments

The second scenario is called Accelerated Adjustment. It assumes that companies can secure such relations faster and can sustain their new footing in the markets. Here, growth resumes as early as next year, inflation movement to target is faster, and monetary policy looser.

Global crisis

The third scenario is Global Crisis. The name is self-explanatory. It is likely if the central banks of advanced economies were forced to raise rates, to fight inflation, to a level that triggers a recession and even problems in the financial system. Their economies have accumulated massive debts, which pose a threat if the monetary policy stance is tight and policy rates are high in these countries. Another factor may further complicate the problems - stronger geopolitical tensions and new sanctions on Russia. This will add to fragmentation in the global economy. In this scenario, these factors combine to cause a decline comparable to 2008-2009. The scenario suggests a longer downturn in the national economy global demand and potential new sanctions. Growth does not resume until 2025. Inflation is higher, and a tighter monetary policy is needed. We would not bring inflation to target before 2025. The pace of structural adjustment and balanced growth in the future will mainly depend on external conditions. And yet, they depend on us first. The Bank of Russia's policy will be designed to ensure the financial system meets the changing needs of the national economy."

Source: Bank of Russia

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ENERGY

RUSSIA TO ENSURE STABLE ENERGY SECURITY AND EXPAND TIES WITH THE INTERESTED COUNTRIES

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S REMARKS AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE RUSSIAN ENERGY WEEK INTERNATIONAL FORUM HELD ON OCTOBER 12, 2022 HIGHLIGHTS RUSSIA'S ROLE IN OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION, EXPORTS AS WELL AS ELECTRICITY GENERATION AND COAL MINING. EXCERPTS FROM HIS SPEECH



"I would like to welcome all the participants and guests of Russian Energy Week, a respected and recognised platform for dialogue on key global energy topics. Such direct and transparent communication is essential now, when the global economy in general, the fuel and energy sector, are in the middle of, let me be direct, an acute crisis.

This is due to unstable price dynamics of energy resources, an imbalance in supply and demand, and the overtly subversive actions of individual market participants, who are guided solely by their own geopolitical ambitions, who resort to outright discrimination in the market, and

THE LNG SEGMENT IS MAKING STRIDES. ITS PRODUCTION IN RUSSIA INCREASED BY ALMOST 60 PER CENT IN AUGUST. THE UNPARALLELED YAMAL LNG PLANT LOCATED IN THE ARCTIC LATITUDES IS OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY

if that does not work, they simply destroy the infrastructure of their competitors. Russia is one of the key participants in the global energy market and among the world leaders in oil and gas production

and exports, as well as electricity generation and coal mining.

Despite the sanctions and sabotage of infrastructure, we do not intend to cede our positions. We will continue to ensure stable energy security and expand ties with countries that are interested in this.

Oil production in Russia has already recovered and is even slightly higher than last year. We plan that by 2025, our total oil exports, as well as production, will remain approximately at today's level.

There is something I would like to note. In recent decades, Russian oil production

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has been largely dependent on foreign equipment and services, but by 2025, we plan to increase the share of domestic equipment in the industry to 80 per cent. That is, despite the Western companies leaving the Russian market (they are only making it worse for themselves), we will be able to ensure oil production at the required level.

As for Russian gas, we will certainly take our product to the international markets. Projects, such as Power of Siberia and TurkStream, have proven their effectiveness. We have the Blue Stream for Turkiye's domestic market, and 14 billion cubic metres of gas are in transit to Europe via TurkStream. Not a lot, but still something.

Here is what I would like to say in this regard. We could move the lost volume of transit through the Nord Stream pipelines along the bottom of the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea region and thus

make Turkiye the main route for the supply of our fuel, our natural gas to Europe and create a major gas hub for Europe in Turkiye, if, of course, our partners are interested in seeing this happen. It is an economically viable project with much higher safety levels as can be seen from recent events.

The high-tech LNG segment is making strides. Its production in Russia increased by almost 60 per cent in August. In particular, the unparalleled Yamal LNG plant located in the Arctic latitudes is operating successfully. Our systematic measures to develop the Arctic's resource base, the Northern Sea Route and the transport and icebreaker fleet have yielded good results.

We will continue to increase energy exports to fast-growing markets. Of course, we will be expanding the geography of our deliveries, identifying key pieces of infrastructure for doing

so and building them, including promising projects such as Power of Siberia-2 and its Mongolian section Soyuz Vostok, as well as lining up the Asian and European segments of the national gas transmission system. We will continue to support LNG terminal projects. All of the strategic and very specific goals in this area have been set before the Government of Russia. I am sure they will be fulfilled.

We will continue the transition to settlements in national currencies when delivering Russian energy resources. I have already mentioned one such instance where Gazprom and its Chinese partners decided to switch to the ruble and the yuan in equal proportions when paying for supplied gas. Some European partners have also transitioned to payment in rubles for our gas, which you are well aware of as well.

No doubt, Russia has been and will remain one of the global energy market's major



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participants. However, our key goal is to make sure that the domestic fuel and energy complex works for the benefit of the national economy, primarily, its competitiveness, the development and betterment of our regions, urban and rural areas, and improvement of the quality of life of our citizens.

Increasing the volume of raw material processing is a separate strategic goal. We are already implementing ambitious plans in this regard, including projects in the Far Eastern Federal District to develop large and small-scale oil and gas chemical plants. The number of such projects will increase markedly in the years to come.

The social programme for connecting households to the gas distribution system is gaining momentum. I am referring to towns and villages where the gas network is available. By the beginning of October, over 300,000 addresses had been connected.

At the same time, the cost of gas equipment and installation is a heavy burden on many Russian families; we have already spoken about this. First of all, we are talking about large families, veterans, people with disabilities, and low-income families. We definitely need to help them, and we will. What kind of help are we talking about? I ask the regional authorities to ensure the provision of subsidies for the purchase and installation of gas equipment to those who cannot afford it. The subsidy should be at least 100,000 rubles per connection.

I am aware that different regions have different financial means, so these subsidies in regions with a low level of budget security will be supported by federal resources.

I ask the government to monitor the implementation of this measure to support families and assess whether any additional steps are needed.

We have made one more decision - we agreed to include schools in the social programme to link them to the gas distribution system. I think that the government and Gazprom should add medical facilities, such as outpatient clinics, hospitals and rural health centres to the programme in the near future - it would be the right thing to do.

This will ensure that the key social facilities in the regions - medical and educational centres - have a source of cheap and environmentally friendly energy, which is especially important for rural areas.

Overall, taking into account the number of new applications from households and the growing number of newly connected facilities, I ask the government to extend this social programme beyond 2022.

One more thing. Despite the difficult economic situation and the external restrictions, the Russian energy system continues to be updated. This year, facilities with a total capacity exceeding 2000 megawatts were built or modernised.

Due to this systematic approach, we have been able to keep electricity prices in Russia at the lowest level in Europe. Let me remind you that energy prices in the EU have increased several times over this year alone.

Particular attention should be paid to improving the reliability of the electric grids. Special programmes have been launched this year to support the regions where the situation is the most difficult, and I ask the government to start implementing them as soon as possible.

The global energy industry is now facing unprecedented challenges and problems. The short-sighted and erroneous actions by a number of Western countries have been pushing the international community into this situation for years - I have already mentioned this, and I think I was quite convincing.

Effective and constructive ways out of the situation should certainly be the subject of thorough, professional, and depoliticised discussions, including at Russian Energy Week.

Russia is ready for a trust-based partnership in the energy sector that serves the interests of our countries' sustainable development and their reliable access to affordable energy. And we know that this approach is shared by the overwhelming majority of our partners and countries around the world."

BRICS MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED HELP IN AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST

THE BRICS MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HELD THEIR ANNUAL MEETING ON THE MARGINS OF THE 77TH SESSION OF THE UNGA ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2022. THE MEETING CHAIRED BY SOUTH AFRICA, IN ITS CAPACITY AS THE INCOMING BRICS CHAIR FOR 2023 DISCUSSED FUTURE PROSPECTS OF TIES

The BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations held their annual meeting on the margins of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 22, 2022, chaired by South Africa, in its capacity as the incoming BRICS Chair for 2023.

The ministers exchanged views on major global and regional issues on the United Nations (UN) agenda in the political, security, economic, financial and sustainable development spheres, as well as on intra-BRICS activities. The ministers discussed the possibilities for mutual support of their initiatives at the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). They expressed support for continued cooperation of BRICS members in areas of mutual interest, including through regular exchanges amongst their Permanent Missions to the UN.

UNGA resolution

The ministers acknowledged the annual UNGA resolution on 'Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.'

They also reiterated their commitment to multilateralism through upholding international law, including the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter as its indispensable cornerstone, and to the central role of the UN in an international system in which sovereign states cooperate to maintain peace and security, advance sustainable development, ensure the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.



THE MINISTERS EXCHANGED VIEWS ON MAJOR GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES ON THE UN AGENDA IN THE POLITICAL, SECURITY, ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SPHERES, AND ON INTRA-BRICS ACTIVITIES

The ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening and reforming the multilateral system, especially of the UN and its principal organs, in order to make the institutions and instruments of global governance more inclusive, representative, participatory, reinvigorated and democratic and to facilitate greater and more meaningful participation of developing and least developed countries, especially in Africa, in global decision-making processes and structures and make it better attuned to contemporary realities.

Role of G20

They emphasised the importance to ensure inclusive and effective work of the global governance system and the role in this regard of the G20 as a premier multilateral forum in the field of economic cooperation that comprises major

developed and developing countries on an equal and mutually beneficial footing. In this context, they expressed their firm view that the G20 should continue to function in a productive manner, focusing on the delivery of concrete outcomes, taking decisions by consensus. They commended the incumbent Indonesian Presidency in its effective steering of this platform and committed themselves to a constructive contribution towards the success of the upcoming G20 Bali Summit on November 15-16, 2022.

The BRICS ministers appreciated the role of India and Brazil as members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 respectively. The presence of four BRICS countries in the UNSC provides an opportunity to further enhance the weight of our dialogue on issue of international peace and security and for continued cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Need for comprehensive UN reform

They recalled the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of the developing countries so that it can adequately respond to global challenges. China and Russia reiterated the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and supported their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.

All the ministers stressed their commitment to the important role of international organizations and to improve their efficacy and working methods, as well as to improving the system of global

TRADE TIES

governance, and agreed to promote a more agile, effective, representative and accountable system that can deliver better in the field, address global challenges and better serve the interests of all member-states.

The ministers called for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its three dimensions - economic, social and environmental - in a balanced and integrated manner by mobilising the means required to implement the 2030 Agenda.

UN Education 2030 Agenda

They welcomed the Transforming Education Summit convened by the UN Secretary-General from September 16-19 2022. They reaffirmed that the BRICS countries are committed to implementing the UN Education 2030 Agenda, promoting education accessibility and equity, accelerating the development of quality education and training, encouraging exchanges among the youths, strengthening the cultivation of knowledge on sustainable development, and providing BRICS contributions for global governance.

The ministers reiterated that the objectives, principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances, must be honoured. They reaffirmed their national and joint efforts to promote implementation of the Paris Agreement and, in that regard, stressed the importance of the fulfilment, delivery and urgency of developed countries' commitments to provide credible, adequate, predictable, timely, new and additional financing and technology transfer to developing countries to combat climate change. They also expressed their concern on attempts to link security with the climate change agenda and recalled that the UNFCCC, including the annual COP sessions, is the appropriate and legitimate international forum to discuss the issue of climate change, considering all its aspects. They welcomed the efforts of and express their full support to the incoming Egyptian Presidency of COP27,

and committed to working towards the success of COP27.

Medical countermeasures

They reiterated that it was imperative to ensure access to safe, quality, effective and affordable medical countermeasures, including vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics and essential medical products to people from all countries especially from developing countries, including the least developed among them as well as ensure the equitable distribution of vaccines and expeditious vaccination, to fill the immunization gap globally. They supported the leading role of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as acknowledged initiatives such as the ACT-Accelerator and its COVAX Facility. They acknowledged the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) Decision on the TRIPS Agreement and the decision to discuss, within six months, its extension to cover the production and supply of covid-19 diagnostics and therapeutics. They stressed the need to continue to strengthen the cooperation on testing methods, therapeutic, research, production and mutual recognition of vaccines on reciprocal basis, the research on their efficacy and safety in light of new variants of COVID-19 virus, address new and emerging issues affecting personnel movements, through and recognition of national document of vaccination against COVID-19 and respective testing, especially for purpose of international travel.

They called on all countries, international agencies and philanthropic organisations to procure vaccines and boosters from manufacturers in emerging markets and developing countries, including BRICS countries, to ensure that the manufacturing capabilities being developed are sustained. In line with the Ministerial Declaration on the WTO Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Preparedness for Future Pandemics, the Ministers also underscored the importance of promoting technology transfer that contributes to building capacity for developing solutions to public health crises beyond COVID-19, including those related to epidemics and tropical diseases. Collaborative models of research and development should be pursued to build stronger and sustainable

partnerships among countries to make the fruits of research and innovation accessible to the wider global population.

Multilateralism

The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism and to the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. They reiterated the strong need to strengthen and reform the multilateral system, including the UN, the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other international organizations. The Ministers further reiterated their commitment to strengthen the multilateral trading system of the WTO, that is consensus and rules based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, free and inclusive with special and differential treatment for developing countries, including LDCs, and noted that protectionism and unilateralism run counter to the rules and the spirit of the WTO.

They urged all States to refrain from promulgating and applying any economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with the rules of the WTO, international law and the UN Charter that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. They also emphasized the priority and urgency of restoring a fully and well-functioning WTO dispute settlement mechanism by 2024, as mandated in the MC12 Outcome document.

The ministers committed to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, stressed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, and supported all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises. They reaffirmed their commitment to collective efforts for peaceful settlement of disputes through political and diplomatic means, and recognised the role of the UNSC as bearing the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. They stressed further the imperative of refraining from any coercive measures not based on international law and the UN Charter.

Concern on conflicts

They also expressed concerns regarding

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the increased and ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world. They reiterated the need for full respect of international humanitarian law and the provision of humanitarian aid in accordance with the basic principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence established in UNGA resolution 46/182. The Ministers recalled their national positions concerning the situation in Ukraine as expressed at the appropriate fora, the UNSC and UNGA.

Terrorism condemned

The ministers expressed strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. They recognized the threat emanating from terrorism, extremism and radicalisation. They committed to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the cross-border movement of terrorists, and terrorism financing networks and safe havens. They reiterated that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group. They reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to contribute further to the global efforts of preventing and countering the threat of terrorism on the basis of respect for international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, and human rights, emphasizing that States have the primary responsibility in combating terrorism with the United Nations continuing to play central and coordinating role in this area.

They also stressed the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach of the whole international community to effectively curb the terrorist activities, which pose a serious threat, including in the present-day pandemic environment. They rejected double standards in countering terrorism and extremism conducive to terrorism. They called for an expeditious finalization and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the UN framework and for launching multilateral negotiations on an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism, at the Conference of Disarmament. They welcomed the outcomes of the Seventh BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group Plenary Meeting and its five Subgroup Meetings.

The BRICS ministers welcomed the first BRICS Anti-Corruption Ministerial Meeting held virtually on July 13, 2022. They encouraged the BRICS Working Group on Anti-Corruption to strengthen cooperation, including experience and information sharing on anti-corruption issues among the BRICS countries on the basis of full consultation and consensus and to explore further areas of cooperation against corruption.

Misuse of ICTs

The ministers reiterated their commitment to further strengthening the cooperation within the BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group in accordance with the existing international drug control regime.²⁰ The ministers, while emphasising the formidable potential of the ICTs for growth and development, recognised the new possibilities they bring for criminal activities and threats, and expressed concern over the rising level and complexity of criminal misuse of ICTs. They welcomed the ongoing work in the UN Open-Ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Committee of Experts to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of ICTs for criminal purposes and reaffirmed their commitment to cooperating in the implementation of the mandate adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 75/282.

They reiterated the need for all countries to cooperate in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms under the principles of equality and mutual respect. They agreed to continue to treat all human rights including the right to development in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis. They agreed to strengthen cooperation on issues of common interests both within BRICS and in multilateral fora including the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council, taking into account the necessity to promote, protect and fulfil human rights in a non-selective, non-politicised and constructive manner and without double standards.

It was also noted that the initial deliberations on the BRICS expansion process and agreed to continue discussions, as instructed by the XIV BRICS Summit, to clarify the guiding principles, standards,

criteria and procedures for this expansion process through Sherpas' channel on the basis of full consultation and consensus.

The ministers expressed their warm appreciation to China for the success of the 14th BRICS Summit held virtually on June 23, 2022. They welcomed the High-level Dialogue on Global Development held virtually on 24 June 2022 as a testimony to the open and inclusive nature of the BRICS Partnership including BRICS Outreach/BRICS Plus cooperation.

BRICS chairship 2023

The BRICS ministers were briefed on the preparations for South Africa's Chairship of BRICS in 2023. Brazil, Russia, India and China extended their full support to South Africa for its BRICS Chairship in 2023 and the holding of the XV BRICS summit. The Ministers also look forward to the Stand-alone Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations in South Africa in 2023.

Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the BRICS countries on the sidelines of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly

On September 22, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov took part in a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the BRICS countries held on the sidelines of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly. In keeping with the existing procedure, the meeting was organised by South Africa, which is to take over BRICS chairmanship next.

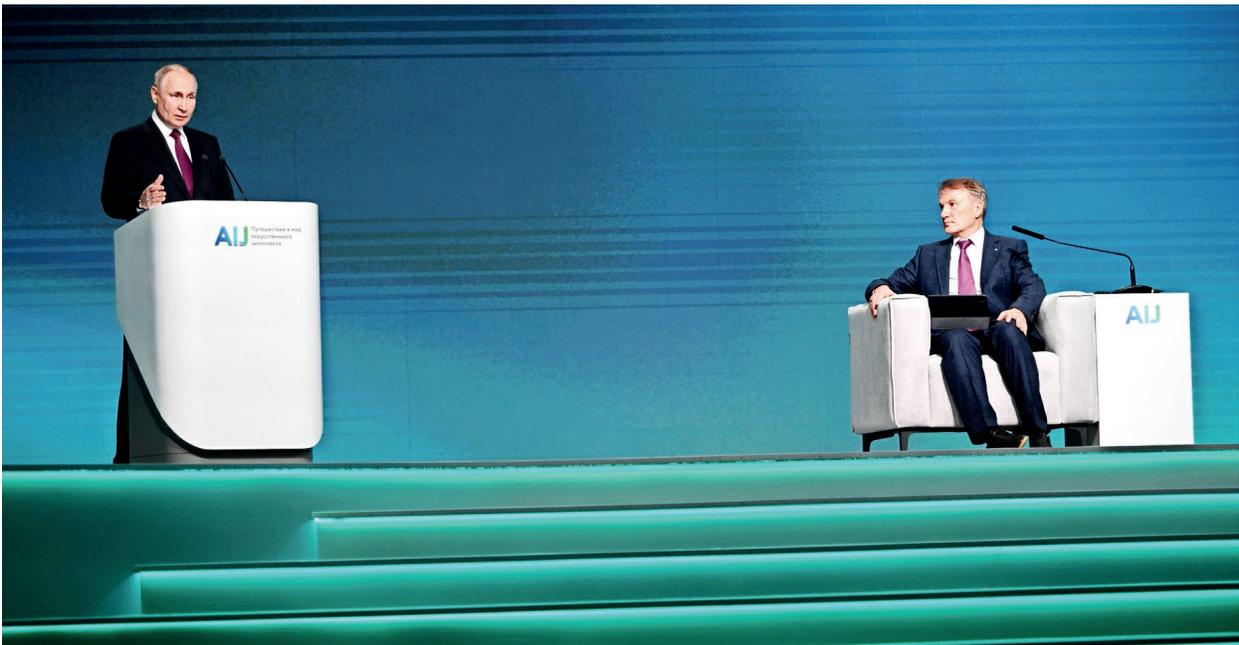


Foreign Ministers held a detailed exchange of views on a wide range of current international issues, including those on the agenda of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly. They called for strengthening the collective principles in international affairs. The participants discussed the prospects for bolstering the strategic partnership within BRICS, specifically its institutional development.

AI TECHNOLOGY

'NEXT GOAL ON THE HORIZON OF THE CURRENT DECADE IS TO ENSURE BROADER INTRODUCTION OF AI'

EXCERPTS FROM THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S REMARKS AT THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE JOURNEY 2022 INTERNATIONAL AI AND MACHINE LEARNING CONFERENCE, HELD UNDER THE MOTO 'AI-ENABLED TECHNOLOGIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH', ON NOVEMBER 24



It is a pleasure to welcome the participants of Artificial Intelligence Journey 2022, a conference annually hosted by Sber - the scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs who are present in this room today, and the rest of the audience of course - hundreds of thousands of people around the world joining us online. As you can see, at certain moments, there are even more interested people abroad than here. But this is no surprise. We are developing technology - we have indeed been making big strides in certain areas, but in others, we still have to catch up - and people involved in this agenda certainly want to keep abreast of developments.

I would like to note that in the opinion of international experts, Russia is one of the world's leaders in digitising

THE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SIMILAR TO SUCCESS IN GOVERNING A REGION, INDUSTRY OR COMPANY, DEPENDS ON THE USE OF THE DATA-BASED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

government services and among the top 10. To my knowledge, 198 countries are rated overall. The three leaders include South Korea, Brazil and Saudi Arabia. They are our good partners; we could say some of them are our closest partners.

Of course, our business tech community is providing an excellent example of self-

organisation. An alliance of companies has been established in artificial intelligence (AI). Ethical principles for the development and introduction of this technology have been drafted at its initiative. Over 120 participants have already joined this Code of Ethics.

Let me emphasise that we have now reached an important and significant milestone on the journey we planned - we have created the foundation necessary for the rapid development of artificial intelligence. Today, Russia has scientific achievements, unique researchers who are creating a new era of breakthrough technologies, and some experience with their practical application.

Our next goal on the horizon of the current decade is to ensure broader introduction

AI TECHNOLOGY

of artificial intelligence. It should penetrate all sectors of the economy, the social services, and the public administration system.

The successful practical introduction of artificial intelligence, just as success in governing a region, industry or company in the modern world, depends on the use of the data-based management system. This, above all, means that the decision-making process is not based on intuition, even though it is important. In this connection, I would like to say that intuition is based on experience and a large amount of data which people accumulate and remember. But even that is not enough in this case. Decisions must be taken not only based on intuition but also on the basis of competently processed structured data about the object of management and their deep analysis.

This is where AI technologies are playing an increasingly more active and important role. I would like to note that transition to this modern model is impossible without resolve, maturity and a number of basic conditions.

We should also invite our colleagues from other countries to these conferences, those who are ready for this. We continue working with many of them; they are from the SCO and BRICS. Those who are not members of these groups but hold the lead in some spheres, as I said at the beginning, will gladly work with us.

I have no doubt that new solutions that will



change the world can only be found through close cooperation and based on trust and high ethical standards. This concerns all technological spheres, but especially AI. There are many examples showing when complicated AI algorithms are developing based on the open code principles, thanks to hard work by thousands of software developers, who set up open libraries of solutions and designs.

We will definitely continue to strengthen AI implementation-related cooperation with our partners who are interested in this cooperation. As I said earlier, we will conduct joint research and education programmes in order to maximise the advanced technology's potential for the benefit of the participating countries with all stakeholders, including BRICS and SCO members. A number of cooperation documents have been signed. We will keep working on this."

"Our advances in the practical implementation of AI technology depend on our joint efforts and businesses'

willingness to scale up and improve their technology positions. On the other hand, these advances also depend on the authorities' push to speed up change and to open doors to advanced technology. Starting next year, we will monitor the results of using AI specifically by the economic sectors and in the social sphere. To this end, I propose creating a special tool - an industry- and region-specific maturity index, or an intelligence maturity index to make it sound more like a catchphrase - since we are talking about the introduction of AI, and use it to evaluate the performance of each constituent entity of the Federation, a ministry or an agency as they work to implement artificial intelligence.

It is imperative to encourage those who are making faster progress, creating the future and bringing it closer to us. In this regard, I propose establishing an annual award for young researchers and engineers for AI research and design breakthroughs. One more annual award should be established for successes in implementing AI and presented to domestic companies, enterprises, regions and cities. The first awards ceremony could be held next year during the Artificial Intelligence Journey 2023 conference."



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BILATERAL TIES

INDO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS: GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

DESPITE EVOLVING DIVERSE GEO-POLITICAL EQUATIONS, INDIA'S FRIENDSHIP WITH RUSSIA HAS BEEN CONSTANT AND DEEPENING WITH TIME

■ **Jadav.Kakoti**@timesgroup.com



India and Russia share deep bilateral ties based on historic legacy and friendship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin over phone and reiterating India's resolve to strengthen bilateral ties with the country despite all odds. The two leaders appreciated the sustained momentum in bilateral relationships. "President Putin expressed appreciation for PM's video-message at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok earlier this month," the MEA said in a statement.

In fact, the bilateral relations with Russia constitute a key pillar of India's foreign policy dynamics. India has always seen Russia as a long-standing and time-tested friend that has played a significant role in its economic development and security.

Since the signing of the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000, bilateral ties have acquired a qualitatively new dimension with enhanced levels of cooperation touching the entire gamut of bilateral relationship including political, security, trade and economy, defence, science and technology and culture. Under the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, several institutionalised dialogue mechanisms have been put in place that operate at the political and official levels and ensure regular interaction and follow up on cooperation activities.

Annual Summit meeting

The Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Russia is the highest institutionalised

dialogue mechanism and this dialogue shapes the contours of bilateral ties between the two nations. In their latest telephonic conversations, Modi and Putin discussed regional and global developments, including the post-pandemic global economic recovery. They noted that both sides shared common positions on many international issues and agreed to further strengthen cooperation at multilateral fora, including at the UN Security Council.

Despite Covid-induced challenges, the pace of relations between India and Russia has not changed. The Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between the two countries has been continuously strengthening. The fight against Covid-19 has also seen excellent cooperation

BILATERAL TIES

between the two countries - whether in vaccine trials and production, in humanitarian assistance, or in the repatriation of each other's citizens. Last year (2021) was a significant year for the bilateral relations in many ways. It marked five decades of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation and two decades of Strategic Partnership.

The two countries are adopting a long-term vision to deepen bilateral relationship in the economic sector. The defence cooperation is being further strengthened through co-development and co-production under the 'Make in India' programme. Indo-Russian cooperation in the military technical cooperation sphere has evolved from a simple buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research and development, joint production, and marketing of advanced defence technologies and systems. The BrahMos missile system is an example of this type of cooperation.

Russia has been a long-standing partner of India in nuclear energy and recognises India as a country with advanced nuclear technology and an impeccable non-proliferation record. The construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) is a good example of ongoing



cooperation in this area.

Security Council cooperation

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 Nikolai Patrushev from the Russian side. They hold regular bilateral consultations besides meeting on the sidelines of various multilateral events. Russia has been a long-standing supporter of India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Russia has expressed its

strong support for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in the 20th Bilateral Summit Joint Statement.

Trade and economic cooperation

The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) is co-chaired by EAM and the Russian Deputy PM Yuri Borisov.

Intensifying the trade and economic relations has been identified as a priority area by both the leaders, and a lot of efforts are being made in this regard.

Defence cooperation

India has 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.

Space cooperation

India-Russia cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of outer space dates to about four decades. Pursuant to the MoU between ISRO and Federal Space Agency of Russia 'ROSCOSMOS' on Joint Activities in the field of Human Spaceflight Programme (HSP), under the contract regarding support in "crew selection and space flight training", four astronauts were identified with Russian support for their training at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center. They have successfully completed their training and have returned to India, citing a unique show of victory.



EDUCATION

RUSSIA: A HUB FOR HIGHER ASPIRATIONS

WHEN IT COMES TO LUCRATIVE DESTINATIONS FOR HIGHER STUDIES, RUSSIA CONTINUES TO BE A POPULAR CHOICE AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS. HERE'S WHY THE COUNTRY IS THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER STUDY DESTINATION

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PHOTOS: RUSSIA EMBASSY

Anation that is pulsating and progressing, Russia offers limitless opportunities. Today, the nation has successfully positioned itself as an international business hub.

Russia ranks among the leading countries regarding ease of doing business and has always been at the forefront to expand and diversify trade and investment relationships. With talent, technology, and transparency, the country is rapidly transforming its capabilities, offering globally competitive opportunities for collaboration.

FUTURE WISE

Not just a robust economic hub, Russia boasts of one of the most reputable education systems in the world. Be it a bachelor's, specialist, or master's degree, a doctorate, professional training, or career

advancement - the progressive nation is a bustling avenue of academics owing to the presence of premier institutes.

Each year thousands of foreign students arrive in Russia to pursue higher studies. Popular areas of training are medicine, engineering specialities, and IT, and among other disciplines, economics, finance, and natural sciences are of priority.

Russia is a recognised leader in the training of mathematicians, physicists, chemists, engineers, programmers, and doctors, as well as representatives of creative professions. Classical education is considered to be one of the strongest in the world here. Every year, Russian universities occupy leading positions in world rankings. Apart from this, the nation is a cherished destination for several researchers and scholars across the world.

Russian cities are a great place to study, work and live - offering a highly attractive combination of world-class university education and a great lifestyle. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, and Yekaterinburg are now garnering the attention of international students more than before.

OPPORTUNITIES GALORE

This year's QS World University Rankings include almost 1,500 institutions from around the world. Out of which, 10 Russian universities have been featured in the top 400 universities.

With more than 3,000 higher-education institutions and 4,000 courses to choose from, Russia offers a diverse choice of subjects for international students. Today, it is easier than ever for international applicants to receive higher education at a

EDUCATION

Russian university. Also, every year scholarships are allocated, and new forms of funding evolve, including international grants and new scholarships.

Medicine is one of the most popular fields of education among international students in Russia. Every year, thousands of students from all over the world, including Asia, CIS countries, Africa, and the Middle East, study clinical medicine in Russia. There are about 70 universities in Russia that train doctors, both specialised medical educational organisations, and special medical faculties in universities with a wide range of educational profiles. They train specialists in modern medicine - from general practice to radiology. Holders of Russian diplomas are successfully employed all over the world.

At present, of 3.16 lakh foreign students in Russia, 22,000 are Indian students and most of them are studying medicine. Expecting a huge demand from Indian students in the coming season, the Russian medical universities are planning to increase their intake of Indian students by 50 per cent from 5,000 last year to 7,500 in 2022-23.

A CHERISHED DESTINATION

Apart from its commitment to top-quality education, Russia is popular among international students because of the support that its universities continue to provide

its students during and post their education phase. The country is extremely active and provides a welcoming and safe environment for all students at all times. Representatives of Russian universities say the situation inside Russia is peaceful despite the current political situation and Covid-19.

Russian cities are a great place to study, work and live - offering a highly attractive combination of world-class university education and a great lifestyle. Diverse, dramatic, and unparalleled cultural legacy - Russia is a visual feast. It is a warehouse of art, history, and architecture with world-class museums and galleries. The past is preserved in magnificent palaces and churches and the landscapes are serene. With festivals, exhibitions, sports competitions, film premieres, theatrical performances, and more - the country is full of life which is what attracts students here.

A HUB FOR IT EDUCATION

With the world witnessing rapid technological advancements, careers in the field of IT are becoming more popular. As a result, several leading Russian universities specialise in training graduates who go on to acquire coveted jobs as developers, web designers, cryptographers, testers, and information security engineers. As universities here also offer internships in recognised international organisations, there is no dearth of employment oppor-

tunities for trainees once they complete their internships thereby making it a great destination to pursue one's studies.

GREAT FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

Russia possesses many prominent medical universities that are recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Medical Council of India (MCI). There are about 70 universities in the country that train doctors in various areas of modern medicine, whether it's general practice or radiology.

The focus on practical experience through internships and residencies encourages a greater number of foreign medical students to apply to Russian colleges. As a result, over 50,000 students from across the globe study clinical medicine in Russia every year.

With every passing year, Russian education is setting new standards in delivering quality learning to students across the world, thus making it a worthy place for foreign students seeking the best education. Russia's diverse population and culture helps to ensure that foreign students feel welcome and at ease while studying here. These play a vital role in helping foreign students find a reliable support system which can be advantageous in their educational journey, while making them feel at home in an otherwise alien land.



TOURISM

SEVEN REASONS FOR INDIAN BUSINESS TOURISTS TO MAKE MOSCOW A TRAVEL DESTINATION

ACCORDING TO THE INDIAN MINISTRY OF TOURISM, BUSINESS TRIPS ARE THE SECOND MOST COMMON PURPOSE OF TRAVEL TO MOSCOW (13%), WITH RECREATION BEING IN THE FIRST PLACE (61%). THE MOSCOW CITY TOURISM COMMITTEE FINDINGS IN 2021 SAID BUSINESS TOURISM TO MOSCOW ACCOUNTED FOR ABOUT 19.0% OF THE TOTAL TOURIST FLOW, OR 3.2 MILLION TRIPS



In September 2022, Moscow took part in the Outbound Travel Mart exhibition in Mumbai. Following the event results, the Russian capital was top-ranked as the best innovation for the Indian tourist market. This was one of the most remarkable achievements: early in the year it was declared the best city for its 'Life Quality' and 'Infrastructure development level' by the United Nations Organisation (the UN).

The concept of the 'MICE-tourism' (MICE - meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) has two key directions: the first one is business trips organisation, and the second is the congress and exhibition management.

Prime business destination

For Indian businessmen, Moscow is one of the key destinations of MICE tourism. For example, according to the Ministry of Tourism of India, business trips are the

MOSCOW IS THE LARGEST TRANSPORT HUB IN RUSSIA. FROM HERE, YOU CAN GET TO THE NEAREST SUBURBS OF THE CAPITAL AND VISIT THE ABBEYS AND FORTRESSES OF SERGIEV POSAD, AS WELL AS KOLOMNA AND ZVENIGOROD

second most common purpose of travel to Moscow (13%), recreation is in the first place (61%). According to Moscow City Tourism Committee, in 2021, business tourism to Moscow accounted for about 19.0% of the total tourist flow, or 3.2 million trips. So, what is the secret behind business tourists getting attracted to Moscow?

Here are the reasons...

Simplified visa entry and no bureaucratic

formalities. For tourists from India, the visa policy has been simplified and the consular fee has been reduced. The validity period of a tourist visa is 30 days, and the period of its issue can take up to 12 days for a single entry and up to 17 days for a double entry.

In the near future, it is planned to introduce a visa-free entry for foreign tourists groups. In addition, an electronic visa (simplified online application procedure) will be available for 52 countries, including India. Also, there are no quarantine and COVID-19 restrictions for those arriving in Moscow.

National identity

Moscow meets all the latest trends. In Moscow, you can get acquainted with the national identity from very different angles. For example, by visiting the inner chambers of the Moscow Kremlin and ultramodern buildings, such as, the

TOURISM

Moscow City skyscrapers which are among the tallest in Europe.

Good infrastructure

The capital has a convenient and diverse infrastructure for holding forums, exhibitions, congresses. Upon your arrival to the city, you can colate a tourist's programme from different fields and activities drawing your own picturesque trip. These could be luxury hotels located in the historical center of the city.

Entertainment quotient

Moscow offers its guests an extensive entertainment programme and a lot of various interactive and team-building activities. For example, Russian cuisine culinary master classes, painting nesting dolls, retro cars driving tours and many other entertainments. If it is a winter trip, tourists will surely enjoy master classes on ice-made statues or ice skating. The capital has over 400 museums and exhibition halls, 250 theatres and concert halls, a large number of festival programmes.

Gourmet world

In recent years, Moscow has become almost a paradise for gourmets. It will satisfy anyone's taste. There are more than 15 thousand restaurants in Moscow (69 restaurants marked in a Michelin guide) with all kinds of cuisine existing,



including Indian - there are more than 20 Indian cuisine restaurants, the most popular ones being Darbar, Moscow - Delhi, Dhaba, Thali etc.

High on security

Unlike many other large cities in the world, Moscow has a high security level. Here, you can safely walk in the evening or late at night with no fear of any kind. There is a special tourist police in the capital available round the clock; these policemen speak several foreign languages and are always ready to help tourists.

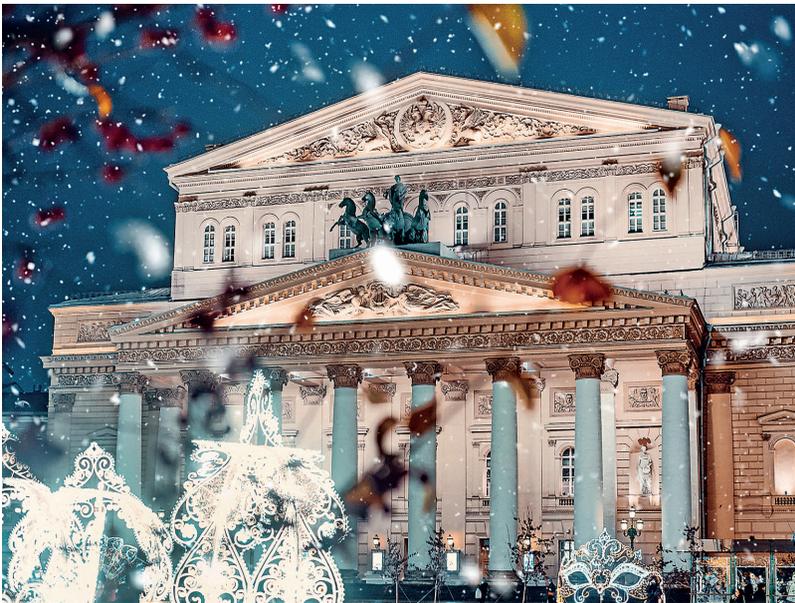
Transport hub

Last but not the least, Moscow is the largest transport hub in Russia. From Moscow, you can get to the nearest suburbs of the capital and visit the majestic abbeys and fortresses of Sergiev Posad, as well as Kolomna and Zvenigorod, which are imbued with the spirit of the late Russian Middle Ages. The capital is a place to start a trip to any city in Russia. Most often, when coming to the capital, Indian MICE tourists also like to visit St. Petersburg.

The journey takes only four hours on a comfortable high-speed train, and less than one hour by plane. A quick trip and you are there - in the 'northern' or 'cultural' capital of Russia, the city of 'white nights', drawbridges, luxurious palaces of Russian emperors and majestic cathedrals.

Return tourism

According to statistics, 40% of Indian tourists return to the Russian capital after a business trip to Moscow for the second time to spend holidays here with family or friends. And according to the results of a survey conducted by Moscow City Tourism Committee in 2021, 71% of Indian tourists highly appreciated their trip and were ready to recommend visiting Moscow to their friends and relatives, while 48% of the surveyed tourists visited Moscow twice last year.



CULTURE

RUSSIAN FILM FESTIVAL: FAMILIARISING INDIAN AUDIENCE WITH MODERN RUSSIAN CINEMA

RUSSIAN AND INDIAN FILM DIRECTORS EXPRESS DESIRE TO BEGIN JOINT PRODUCTIONS; B SUBHASH EAGER TO REMAKE DISCO DANCER WITH RUSSIAN ACTORS AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC



On November 17-20, Mumbai hosted the Russian Film Festival where Indian audiences were shown the following popular films: Klim Shipenko's *Son of a Rich* and Alexander Fomin's *A Young Man* (comedies), Alexander Domogarov Jr's *A Dog named Palma* (a family adventure), Valery Todorovsky's *The Bolshoi* (a ballet drama), and *Fixies vs Crabots* (a full-length animated movie). The Russian Film Festival in India was organised by ROSKINO and supported by the Russian Ministry of Culture.

The festival was honoured by stars of the Indian film industry, such as directors Babbar Subhash (*Disco Dancer*, *Dance, Dance*) and Saumitra Singh; the actor Vikas Srivastava, as well as producers and critics; Expansion CEO, Rittesh Kumar, and Mrs India World 2022, Sargam Kaushal, were also in attendance, as were various members of the art and show business world.

Son of a Rich, a comedy about the taming

THE MAIN GOAL OF THE RFF IS TO FAMILIARISE THE FOREIGN AUDIENCE WITH VARIETY OF MODERN RUSSIAN CONTENT FROM ART FILMS OF DIFFERENT GENRES AND SERIES TO ANIMATION AND DOCUMENTARIES

of an egoistic golden boy, and *The Bolshoi*, a drama about a young girl's journey to become a ballet dancer at the Bolshoi Theater, received the largest number of viewers. Director Klim Shipenko (*Son of a Rich*) said: "I believe Indian audiences are drawn to the 'rags-to-riches' idea, and vice versa, since their caste system makes such trajectories impossible. Our film depicts an uncanny sort of social mobility: one day Gregor is a spoiled golden boy, the next day he is a poor peasant. The very possibility of such a transformation is at odds with the

very essence of caste, which is unusual and therefore, appealing to Indian viewers. And not just them! More than seven countries have bought the rights for a remake of *Son of a Rich*, including China, Mexico, India, Spain, France, South Korea, etc. Overall, I believe showing contemporary Russian films in different countries is important." During the Russian Film Festival in Mumbai, Indian filmmakers expressed their interest in expanding their collaboration with Russia. Thus, Babbar Subhash noted that he would like to shoot another installment of *Disco Dancer* featuring Russian actors.

"Everything must be in the modern style. The first film was made 40 years ago. However, the new film should retain the dancing fever and musical ambience of the original. We'll have to update the music, of course, since musical styles have changed a bit since the first film. We'll have to introduce rap, for instance. We want to give our viewers a taste of something new," said

CULTURE

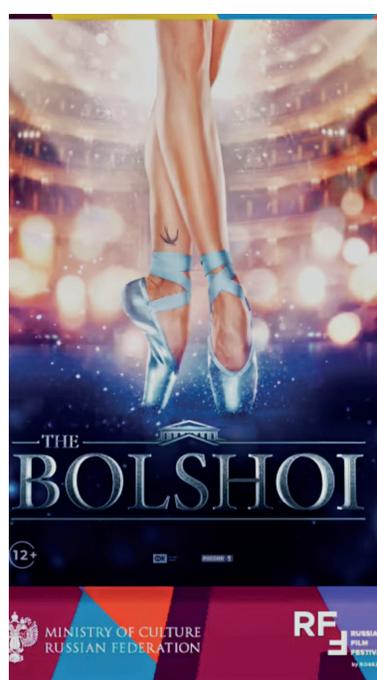
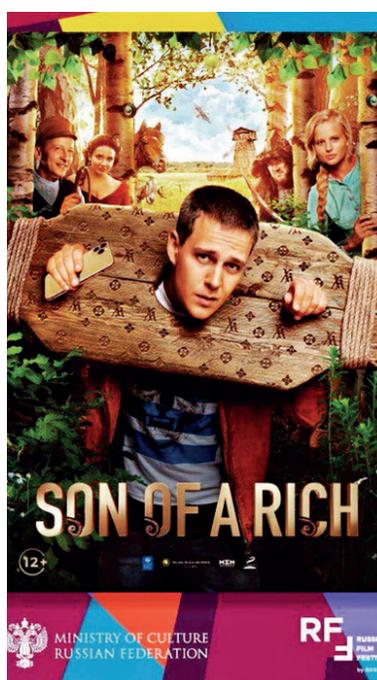


Babbar Subhash. Responding to the question about Russian directors' interest in joint productions, Klim Shipenko said: "I've never been involved in multinational projects before, but I'd like to undertake one in the epic action genre with our Russian actors Alexander Petrov and Milos Bikovic alongside Indian movie stars."

Russian content has huge potential in the Indian market. In support of this idea,

Expansion CEO Rittesh Kumar said: "The films from Russia I saw are modern and often differ, in a good way, from traditional Western films, in that they offer a unique perspective. I believe Russian films ought to be made more widely available in India." From India, the Russian Film Festival went straight to Dubai (UAE), where Russian films were screened on November 25-27. Russian Film Festival (RFF) represents a few days of screening Russian films

abroad held by ROSKINO with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation since 2020. The main goal of the RFF is to familiarise the foreign audience with the variety of modern Russian content from art films of different genres and series to animation and documentaries. In 2020-2022, the festival was held in 28 countries, gathering almost 6.5 million viewers. The RFF format includes both online and offline events.



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

RUSSIAN CULTURE FESTIVAL IN INDIA: A SHOW OF CULTURAL BONDS

THE FESTIVAL, WHICH TOURED NEW DELHI, KOLKATA AND MUMBAI, WAS THE CULMINATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF RUSSIA-INDIA DIPLOMATIC TIES AND EXHIBITED SOME OF THE FAMOUS DANCE AND MUSIC ENSEMBLES FROM RUSSIA



The Russian Culture Festival in India commenced on November 21, 2022, in New Delhi. The festival rolled over New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai till November 29, 2022.

"Tonight, we resume the wonderful tradition of reciprocal cultural festivals of Russia and India and India and Russia. This year, we have brought to India three very prominent, famous dance and song groups and this particular year's festival has become a very colourful culmination of the 75th anniversary of Russia-India diplomatic relations. It would be a very vivid illustration of the rich and diverse cultural bonds between our nations, the historic friendship, mutual interest and understanding and trust," said the Russian Ambassador at the opening ceremony of the festival.

Unfortunately, the cultural exchange between the two nations was affected due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Manifestation of diplomatic ties

"After years of living during the pandemic, we have resumed this wonderful tradition which has always been very popular in both our friendly countries. Over a week's time, our Indian friends enjoyed a number of brilliant performances spread across the metropolitan cities of New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, as a tribute to one of the most ancient civilisations on Earth. The festival was the most colourful manifestation of the

75th anniversary of Russia and India diplomatic relationships which we celebrated this year. There is a popular saying in India, 'Dosti se zyada kuch bhi nahi hota' (there is nothing more important than friendship) - a very precise characteristic of the trusted and friendly character of Russia and India's strategic partnership. This mission of the festival is to increase our humanitarian ties through cultural events," he added.

During the inauguration, the Russian envoy also hoped that the Indian public was impressed by the flavour and culture of Russia. "After Delhi, the festival moved to Kolkata and then to Mumbai and was back to Delhi on November 29th. I am absolutely sure that the Indian public remained impressed and enjoyed the performance, flavour, and culture of Russia in days to come," he added.

The Festival in India began with the

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

performance of the Ensemble Lezginka which demonstrated the unique folk art of Russia.

Dance ensemble Lezginka

The State Academic Honoured Dance Ensemble of Dagestan 'Lezginka' was founded on September 6, 1958. The ensemble has toured 75 countries around the world and has been the winner of 52 world-renowned folklore dancing competitions. In 2014, 'Lezginka' was invited to present special concerts for the guests of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games. In August 2012, 'Lezginka' presented a programme dedicated to the North Caucasian region of Russia to the guests and participants of the XXX Olympic Summer Games in London. The ensemble staged over 100 dances of the people of Dagestan, the Caucasus region and Russia.

Classical & contemporary music

The Festival also included concerts by 'TEREM Quartet' - a musical group from St. Petersburg, performing in the style of a classic crossover on the Russian folk instruments. The group has released 17 albums in Russia and abroad. The ensemble's repertoire includes more than 500 compositions of classical and contem-

porary music. The team gave more than 2,500 concerts and performed in more than 60 countries.

'TEREM Quartet' has repeatedly represented St. Petersburg at many international events, so it is often called the 'symbol' of the city.



'FESTIVAL HELPS INDIANS TO BE FAMILIAR WITH PERFORMANCES BY RUSSIAN CULTURAL TEAMS'

■ Olga Lyubimova | Minister of Culture

Dear friends!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all at the Festival of Russian Culture that covers three cities - New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai - making our Indian friends familiar with the traditional and modern performance by the world-famous teams 'Lezginka' from the North Caucasus Republic of Dagestan, 'TEREM Quartet' from St. Petersburg and the Cossack troupe 'Krinitza' from the Kuban province of South Russia, representing traditions of different parts of Russia. Without exaggeration, this Festival



is a beautiful culmination of the 75th anniversary of the Russian-Indian diplomatic relations, which we celebrate this year, marking unparalleled achievements in the whole gamut of areas for the benefit, well-being and sustainable development of our nations.

I wish you all high spirits, inspiration and new achievements!

Cossack songs & dances

And of course, there is no Russian Culture Festival without the Cossack songs and dances, presented by 'Krinitza'. The history of this ensemble began in 1994. The head of the ensemble is Vladimir Kapaev, the honoured Art Worker of Russia and the Republic of Adygea.

They have held concerts in all corners of Kuban and other regions of Russia, performed at prestigious concert venues in Moscow, such as Tchaikovsky concert hall, Concert hall 'Russia', the Kremlin Palace, and also took part in the festival-marathon 'Songs of Russia' held under the leadership of the People's Artist of Russia Nadezhda Babkina. They also gave concerts in France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Turkey and Lebanon. The ensemble takes an active part in the theatrical activity of the Krasnodar Musical Theatre.

The Festival was brought by the federal state budgetary institution of culture ROSCONCERT, with the support of the Russian Ministry of Culture and the India Council for Cultural Relations under the Ministry of External Affairs of India. The shows depicted exemplary cultural exchange between India and Russia, and a peek into how the two countries have shared great socio-cultural ties over the years of relationship.

TRENDING

RUSSIAN NESTING DOLLS: THE CULTURAL CONNECT

A CLASSIC COLLECTIBLE, THE RUSSIAN NESTING DOLLS SERVE AS AN AMBASSADOR TO THE WORLD, SPREADING RUSSIAN HERITAGE TO EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. THEY ARE GARNERING MORE AND MORE ATTENTION IN THE WORLD MARKET LIKE NEVER BEFORE

■ Artha.Neog@timesgroup.com

A nation that is pulsating and progressing, Russia offers limitless opportunities. Today, the nation has successfully positioned itself as an international business hub.

When one thinks of Russia, images of St. Petersburg, warm and furry Ushanka hats, and large expanses of isolated tundra cascade into the mind. However, another prominent symbol of the country is the Russian nesting dolls. They are hollowed wooden dolls made from linden trees and carved into shapes of a limbless person and typically painted with vivid colours. The painting technique used for these traditional dolls is called Khokhloma, a famous style of Russian wood painting. A Russian nesting doll can be opened to reveal another hollow figure inside. The subsequent doll can also be opened to reveal another and so on, growing smaller each time.

Shortly after the first set of dolls gained popularity in 1900, Russian nesting dolls began to be manufactured in many parts of Russia. Soon enough, these dolls not only became popular nationwide, but also exported worldwide. The very first Russian nesting doll featured a peasant family. The outermost doll was the mother with each doll inside of her representing her daughters and sons. With time, the physical features of these dolls changed little by little. Today, they are of all sorts - from movie stars to animals and cartoons. Much of the artistry is in the painting of each doll, which can be very elaborate.

Ambassador to the world

The Russian nesting dolls, which are better known as Matryoshka nesting dolls in their country of origin, serve as an ambassador to the world, spreading the nation's heritage to every corner of the globe. But regardless of the name, they all refer to the same classic decorative wooden dolls. Russian nesting dolls are a special piece of history, binding together the Old Russian



Empire with the Soviet Union and the modern nation. These quintessential dolls symbolise fertility. They are associated with family and fertility and traditionally depict a mother carrying her children within her, representing fertility. Russian nesting dolls are also used to represent concepts and relationships between broader and narrower phenomena.

Inspired by Asian cultures, Matryoshka dolls became a fundamental souvenir in 1890s across Russia. Most Russian families had one or two stacking dolls at home.



However, after the Soviet Union fell, western tourists began visiting St. Petersburg, Moscow, and the Golden Ring cities. These metropolitan centres hosted booming souvenir markets, trading mostly Matryoshka dolls near cathedrals, museums, and major tourist attractions. As these tourism markets in Russia boomed, the Russian nesting doll trade evolved.

Classic collectibles

Today, Matryoshka dolls can be valued from USD 10 to USD 5,000 or more, depending on their age, painting, and provenance. They are classic collectibles and have always garnered attention in the auction market. Also, the production of Matryoshka dolls has experienced a huge upsurge with the greater availability of Russian products to a worldwide audience. There is cut-throat competition among manufacturers. Only 15 to 20 artists produce top-quality Matryoshka dolls. Each set is a unique masterpiece that may be priced at around USD 2,000. So, from museums to art galleries, Russian dolls have been a mainstay and they not only evoke the heritage of Russian culture but also showcase the rich artistic legacy of the diverse nation.



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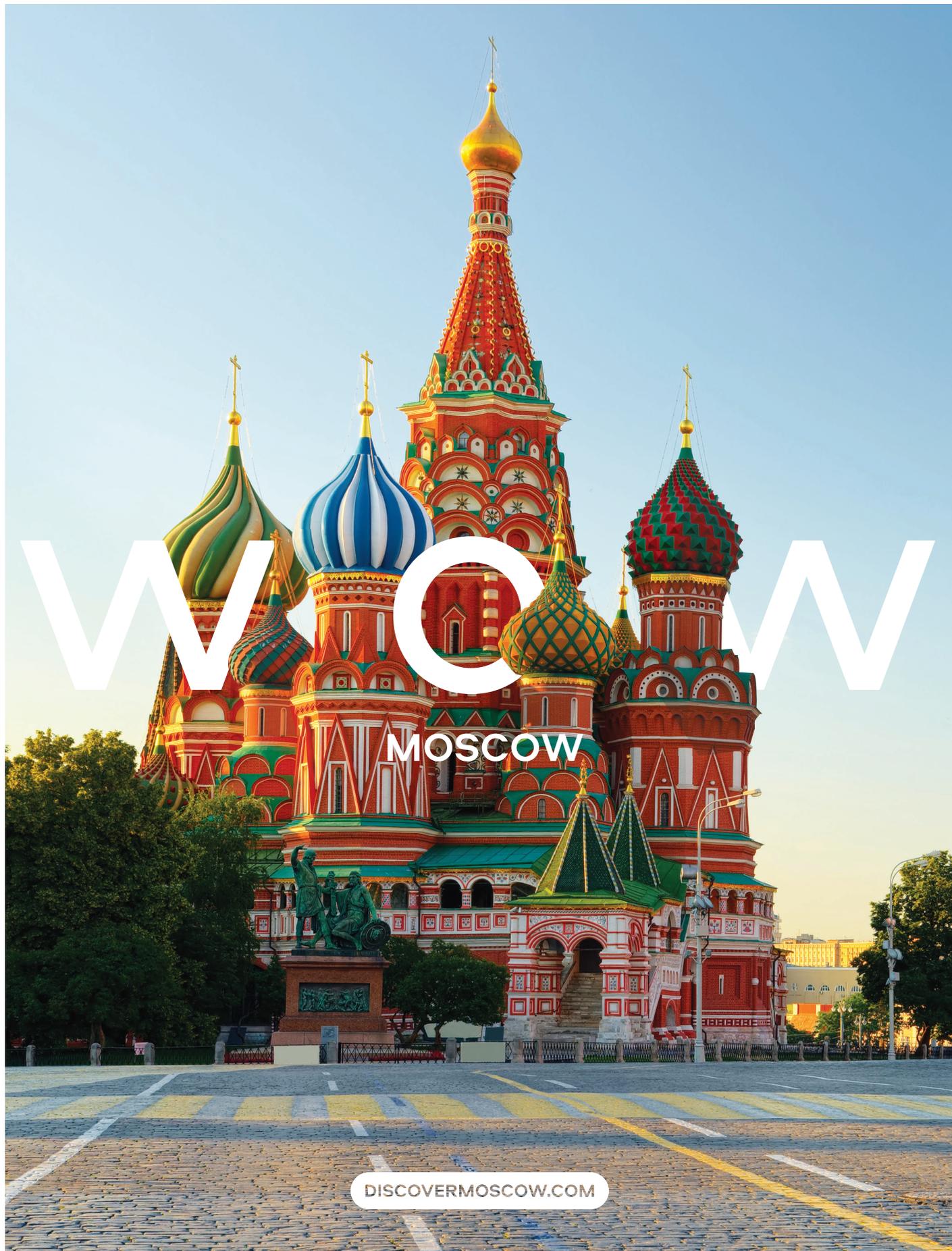
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