

Russian President's Visit to India - Key Takeaways

Mains: *GS II - Bilateral relations*

Why in News?

Recently, During the visit of Russian president Putin to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the India-Russia relationship steady like a pole star (dhruva tara).

What are the main takeaways?

- **Visit amidst global disorder** - It is Putin's first visit since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the India-Pakistan conflict this year, and the downturn in India-U.S. ties.
- **Huge prospects** - There was considerable speculation that the two sides were working on a substantial set of agreements on defence cooperation, procurement and technology transfer deals in aircraft, air defence systems, drones and missiles.
- **No defence announcement** - The meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov before Mr. Putin landed, ended without any announcements.
- **Prominent attention** - The focus was squarely on economic cooperation, and taking forward the roadmap on the "Development of Strategic Areas of India — Russia Economic Cooperation till 2030" that was launched during Mr. Modi's visit to Moscow in 2024.
- **Significant agreement** - They announced a "Labour Mobility Agreement" that will facilitate Indian skilled workers to work in Russia, where manpower shortages for three million jobs are expected by the end of the decade.
- **MoU on Fertilizer sectors** - Russian and Indian fertilizer companies also signed an MoU to build a urea plant in Russia.
- **Maritime and customs** - Apart from this, the two sides signed agreements on maritime cooperation, ports and customs.
- **Trade corridors** - The two sides expected to smooth the path for bilateral trade, particularly via the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and International North South Transport Corridor.
- **Agreement on currencies** - India and Russia agreed to continue working towards enhancing the settlement of bilateral trade in their national currencies.
- **No talks on Oil procurements** - There were no announcements, on oil procurement that made up more than \$60 billion of the \$69 billion trade last year.
- **No space and nuclear agreements** - There were no concrete outcomes on space and nuclear cooperation.

What are the important factors to consider?

- **Significance of Putin's Visit** – President Vladimir Putin's visit to India came at a crucial moment, as the Ukraine war approached its fourth year.
- The visit coincided with intense negotiations in Moscow over a U.S.-led peace proposal.
- **India's Position** – PM Narendra Modi thanked Mr. Putin for consistently keeping India informed about the conflict.
- Modi reiterated that *India is "not neutral" and stands on the side of peace.*
- He expressed hope for a quick end to the war.
- **Russia's Position** – Mr. Putin also expressed hope for peace.
- He indicated openness toward the U.S.-backed peace plan.
- **Impact of Western Sanctions** – Western sanctions on Russia continue to impose significant costs on India.
- Although Mr. Putin assured uninterrupted fuel supplies and India maintains it will decide oil purchases based on *"commercial considerations,"* sanctions by Europe and a U.S. tariff of 25% on Indian goods have weakened India's earlier resolve.
- Russian oil intake by India dropped sharply in 2025, with a 38% year-on-year decline in value (October 2025).
- **Strategic Cooperation Held Back** – Both sides avoided major announcements in defence, space, and nuclear sectors—possibly to avoid triggering a U.S. reconsideration of *CAATSA sanctions.*
- A critical joint article by the U.K., Germany, and France before the visit may have also contributed to India's cautious approach, despite India rejecting such "public advice" as unacceptable.
- **Diplomatic Atmosphere** – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who previously criticised Modi's embrace of Putin, stayed silent this time.
- His silence is likely due to New Delhi's diplomatic outreach and the delicate phase of the ongoing U.S.-led peace negotiations.

What lies ahead?

- For New Delhi, an end to the conflict in Ukraine will ease the tightrope walk it is currently being forced into due to the deep polarisation between Russia and Europe, and as Russia's dependency on China grows.
- Mr. Putin's visit came just a month before likely visits from German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the European Union's top leadership Ursula Von Der Leyen and Antonio Costa for Republic Day.
- The EU-India Summit is being held after a long gap, and the EU-India Free Trade Agreement is expected to be signed.
- In February, New Delhi expects French President Emmanuel Macron and other Western leaders at the Artificial Intelligence Summit, and Canadian PM Mark Carney thereafter.
- Meanwhile, the India-U.S. free trade agreement, that hopes to see a rollback of excessive U.S. tariffs, is also in a decisive phase.
- In that sense, New Delhi hoped the Putin-visit, that was long delayed, would be a "win-win."

- It wanted the visit to be a reaffirmation of its traditional ties with Russia, while ensuring the outcomes did not raise a protest from the West.
- This would allow India to continue to uphold its decades-old policy of “strategic autonomy.”

Reference

[The Hindu| Putin in India](#)

