

Russia does not have any tight military relations with Pakistan, says Putin

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Saint Petersburg: Russian President Vladimir Putin today said that Moscow is "respectful toward all Indian interests" and that it will never dilute its "trust-based" ties with New Delhi.

Putin shakes hands with Modi at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum

In an interview to news agency PTI, the head of the world's largest nation also said that India should have no reason to be worried about the military engagement between Russia and Pakistan because the "country doesn't maintain any healthy relations with the Islamic nation".

"We do not have any tight (military) relations with Pakistan. The US, do you have (close relations)? And for sure our relations with Pakistan have no impact on trade between India and Russia," Putin said.

Putin further said that just because Russia has a 'special relationship' with India, it does not mean India should be restricted in having contacts with other 'partnering countries. This is ridiculous'.

Citing the deep defence relations between the two countries, he said, "India is a huge country of more than 1 billion population. Russia is also a huge country. Both Russia and India have a lot of context and mutual interests. We are respectful toward all Indian interests."

"I don't think we should push figures here in our military cooperation because it has an unprecedented level in its volume and quality. (But) there is no other country in the world that we have such deep cooperation in delicate areas such as missiles, and we benefit with cooperation with India. And this results from our trust-based relations with India," he added.

Condemning terrorism in all forms, Putin said that his government stands with India in strongly fighting militancy.

At the same time, Putin sidestepped a question on Kashmir, and said, "It is up to you to assess whether Pakistan is fuelling terrorism in the Indian state."

"No matter where the terror threat comes it is unacceptable and Russia will always support India in its fight against terrorism," he added.

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Earlier in the day, Putin met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a two-day visit to Russia, and held wide-ranging talks on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interests, including ways to boost energy and trade ties.

At the beginning of their restricted meeting, Modi told Putin he was happy to be able to visit his hometown as Prime Minister. This is for the first time Indo-Russia summit in Russia was happening outside Moscow in St Petersburg.

Welcoming Modi, Putin said that "the most important thing is the trust and friendship in our relationship between our countries and our people".

"I am glad to have this opportunity to meet you and discuss the whole spectrum of bilateral relations and international relations," the Russian President told Modi.

Putin also informed that India will formally become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) within a week.

"As far as our international cooperation goes, one thing I would like to point out, in one week, India is becoming full fledged member of the SCO. I would like to remind that process was launched in 2015 in Ufa, Russia. Russia has always supported this and given full assistance to it," Putin said.

The SCO is a political, economic, and military bloc founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Reciprocating the warm welcome, Modi said that he was privileged to have been able to visit Putin's hometown as Prime Minister.

"India, Russia friendship is very old, deep and based on trust. India and Russia have always been together on international issues," he said.

Modi thanked Putin for his active role in getting India SCO membership. "I thank you for all the initiatives taken."

Putin noted that this year Russia and India mark the 70th anniversary since establishing diplomatic relations.

"Normally, in international relations there are ups and downs. But history is witness, there have been no ups and downs in Indo-Russia relations. We have always moved forward," Modi said.

"Not just on bilateral issues, but even on international issues India and Russia have cooperated keeping the objective of Sarvajan Sukhaia, bahujan sukhay (for the welfare, happiness of all)," he added.

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