

Vladimir Putin met in Sochi with Prime Minister of the Republic of India Narendra Modi, who had come to Russia on a working visit.

The agenda included issues related to the development of Russian-Indian partnership, as well as pressing international and regional topics.

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President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Mr Prime Minister, friends,

Allow me to welcome you wholeheartedly in Russia.

I would like to start by thanking you for accepting our invitation and coming to this meeting.

There is no need to explain Russian-Indian relations, since we all know that they have deep roots. However, we have been able to create additional momentum recently. Last year, our trade saw a significant increase, adding another 17 percent since the beginning of this year.

Russia and India are proactive in their foreign policy cooperation, including within international organisations such as the UN, BRICS, and now the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. We have established close contacts and collaboration between our defence agencies. All this is indicative of the high level of strategic relations between our countries.

We are delighted to see you, Mr Prime Minister, and consider you personally as a big friend of our country. We are very glad to be able to have this meeting.

Welcome!

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (retranslated): Your Excellency, President Vladimir Putin,

Russia is India's old-time friend. We share long-standing historical ties, and Mr President is my personal friend, and a friend of India.

I am very glad to meet with Mr President in Sochi. I am the first Prime Minister of India to visit this city.

We share long-standing ties; we hold bilateral meetings. I would like to thank President Putin for organising this informal meeting and inviting me. This initiative is yet another step in developing our relations.

Mr Putin, you have been elected President of the Russian Federation for your fourth term. I want to congratulate you on that. My best wishes. We have already discussed it by telephone, but I wanted to congratulate you in person, and we were able to arrange this meeting at very short notice. Let me congratulate you on my own behalf, as well as on behalf of 1.3 billion people of India.

Mr President, you were elected President for the first time back in 2000, and made a major contribution to developing relations with India. In 2000, you made your first visit to India when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was Prime Minister. You said very eloquently back then that India and Russia were ancient civilisations

and vibrant democracies. People remember your words very well and highly appreciate what you said.

Russia and you specifically always played a very important role in my political career. In 2001, when I served as Chief Minister of Gujarat, I made my first visit to Russia with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. And you were the first international leader I met as Chief Minister. Moscow and you yourself marked the beginning of my career.

Over the past 18 years I had a chance to sit down with you and discuss important bilateral matters with a view of further developing our relations.

Eighteen years ago, you and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee planted the seeds of strategic Russian-Indian partnership. We can say proudly now that this partnership, the seeds of which you planted, has grown into a huge tree of privileged strategic partnership. It is a major achievement in itself.

We held annual bilateral summit meetings for the past 18 years. You also used informal meetings to add an innovative element to our ties. This is a very good opportunity to discuss our relations.

For the past four years, you and I stood side by side in the bilateral format and on the international stage. We openly talked about all aspects of our relations and chose the path for our onward movement. I am very glad that it was so.

When you visited India for the first time in 2000, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said that India as a friend of Russia wants Russia to be a strong and confident country holding an important place in a multipolar world. This dream of Mr Vajpayee is leading us towards success, and I am glad that we have been part of this plan.

Mr President, we work together at international organisations, such as the SCO. You played a key role in granting India full membership in the SCO and BRICS, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), as well as in such mechanisms as the North-South International Transport Corridor. We are working together within these organisations and mechanisms.

Being a real friend, you never forget about me. Last year you invited me to the St Petersburg International Economic Forum. It was a great privilege to be invited by you as a guest of honour. I am grateful to you for this. This year's forum will be held in St Petersburg this week. My very best wishes.

Mr President, the world is looking forward to the FIFA World Cup, for which you have prepared so carefully. The world will be looking at Russia. I wish you every success.

I would like to thank you once again for inviting me to this unofficial meeting.

(In Russian.) Spasibo.

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