

## Modi and Putin Reaffirm Strategic Partnership Amid U.S. Tariff Row



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin have held a "very good and detailed conversation" over the phone, reaffirming their commitment to deepen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

The call comes amid rising trade tensions with the United States, following President Donald Trump's imposition of a 50% tariff on Indian exports. Modi's outreach to Putin underscores India's policy of strategic autonomy and its long-standing defense and energy ties with Moscow, which have become a point of contention with Washington. The two leaders also discussed the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, with Modi reiterating India's consistent position on a peaceful resolution.

According to a post by Prime Minister Modi on the social media platform X, he and Putin reviewed the progress in their bilateral agenda and discussed the latest developments regarding Ukraine. The conversation follows a recent meeting between Russia's President and India's National Security Advisor (NSA), Ajit Doval, in Moscow. This series of high-level engagements signals a coordinated effort to strengthen ties and navigate the complex geopolitical landscape. Russia has expressed solidarity with India regarding the U.S. pressure, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stating that "sovereign countries have the right to choose their own trading partners."

The U.S. tariffs were a direct response to India's continued purchase of discounted Russian oil, a move that Trump has criticized as "fueling the war machine." This has put India in a difficult position, balancing its need for affordable energy with its desire to maintain a strong relationship with the U.S. The phone call with Putin, however, suggests that India is not bowing to the pressure and remains committed to its partnership with Russia. The two leaders also discussed plans for Putin's upcoming visit to India later this year for the annual bilateral summit, which is expected to further solidify their alliance.

The conversation between Modi and Putin highlights the multifaceted nature of India's foreign policy. While India is an active member of the Quad and has been strengthening ties with Western nations, its relationship with Russia remains a cornerstone of its strategic interests. This dual approach allows India to pursue its national interests on its own terms, even when faced with pressure from a major power like the U.S.