

Putin defies Trump with continued Russian oil shipments to India

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Delhi

Vladimir Putin has told the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, that Russia is ready to continue “uninterrupted” shipments of oil to India, signalling a defiant stance to the US as the two leaders met in Delhi and affirmed that their ties were “resilient to external pressure”.

Yesterday’s statement, made after the annual India-Russia summit, appeared to be directed at western countries – particularly the US – that have attempted to put pressure on New Delhi to scale back its ties with Moscow.

In August, the US president, Donald Trump, imposed an additional 25% import tariff on India over its purchase of cheap Russian oil, arguing it was undermining US sanctions and helping Putin to bankroll the invasion of Ukraine.

The punitive tariffs were met with anger in New Delhi and were described by the Indian government as unreasonable and unjustified. India’s relationship with Russia goes back decades and is considered one of the country’s most important defence and geopolitical alliances.

In his statement, Putin made it



clear that Russia did not intend to back down faced with US pressure over its energy cooperation with India. “Russia is a reliable supplier of energy resources and everything necessary for the development of India’s energy sector,” the Russian president said. “We are ready to continue ensuring the uninterrupted supply of fuel for the rapidly growing Indian economy.”

Modi did not mention oil directly in his statement, but said: “Energy security has been a strong and important pillar of the India-Russia partnership.”

In a television interview before his meeting with Modi, Putin had

challenged US interference in India’s purchase of Russian oil and said he intended to raise it with Trump. “If the US has the right to buy our [nuclear] fuel, why shouldn’t India have the same privilege?” he said.

It was Putin’s first visit to India since his invasion of Ukraine and there was a visible attempt to demonstrate that the relationship between the two leaders had not been disturbed.

Modi took the unusual step of greeting Putin directly off the plane and the two embraced each other warmly as old friends before they had a private dinner together on Thursday evening. In his statement,

Modi described India’s partnership with Russia as “a guiding star” and said that “based on mutual respect and deep trust, these relations have always stood the test of time”.

In the joint statement issued after their talks, both leaders emphasised “that in the current complex, tense, and uncertain geopolitical situation, Russian-Indian ties remain resilient to external pressure”.

Before his arrival in Delhi, Putin had vowed to increase cooperation with India and China, in defiance of economic sanctions on Russia from the US and EU.

Yesterday’s bilateral summit resulted in multiple agreements

► Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, and India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, share a car as they leave Palam airbase in Delhi

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between the two countries in defence and economic cooperation. They finalised an economic cooperation programme until 2030, which aims to double trade to \$100bn (£75bn) a year by 2030.

The two leaders also agreed to reshape their defence ties. Russia remains India’s biggest supplier of weapons, though this has diminished in recent years as Delhi has worked to diversify.

Although no direct mention was made of India’s purchase of specific Russian defence systems, or Sukhoi Su-57 fighter aircraft, they agreed to the joint production of advanced defence platforms.