

Modi urges Zelensky to arrange peace talks

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IN KYIV

India's Narendra Modi has urged President Volodymyr Zelensky (*both inset*) to sit down for talks with Russia to end the war in Ukraine and offered to act as a friend to help bring peace as the two leaders met in Kyiv.

The first visit by an Indian prime minister in modern Ukrainian history comes at a volatile juncture in the war launched by Russia in 2022, with Moscow making slow gains in eastern Ukraine as Kyiv presses a cross-border incursion.



The optics closely resembled the Indian leader's visit to Moscow last month where he called for peace and embraced the Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

"The road to resolution can only be found through dialogue and diplomacy. And we should move in that direction without wasting any time," Mr Modi said. He added: "Both sides should sit together to find a way out of this crisis.

"India is ready to play an active role in any efforts towards peace. If I can play any role in this personally, I will do that, I want to assure you as a friend."

It was not immediately clear what

Isis hostages at Russian prison freed, say officials

Hostages held by suspected Islamic State (Isis) militants at a Russian prison have been freed, according to Kremlin authorities and media, with four militants and four captives killed in the incident.

Russia's national guard "neutralised four prisoners who had taken employees of a colony in Surovikino hostage. The hostages have been released", state media agency Tass reported yesterday.

Russia's prison authority announced that four criminals armed with knives took eight prison staff and four inmates hostage. Four of the prison staff were killed.

Two other hostages were taken to hospital in "serious condition", according to local health officials.

Photos published by media outlet Mash, which has close ties to the Russian security establishment, purported to show inmates with knives standing over the body of a prison guard at the IK-19 prison colony in Volgograd, Russia.

In unverified videos posted on Telegram, the alleged attackers declared allegiance to Isis and said they were inspired by the attack on the Crocus concert hall in Moscow in March.

Kieron Monks

Kyiv made of his remarks and whether they were part of a diplomatic push taking place behind closed doors with a presidential election looming in the United States, a close Ukrainian ally.

India, which traditionally has close economic and defence ties with Moscow, has publicly criticised the deaths of innocent people in the war, but also strengthened its economic ties with Russia.

Both leaders described Mr Modi's visit as "historic" in their statements, in which Mr Modi spoke second so Mr Zelensky did not have an opportunity to respond to the call for dialogue.

Mr Zelensky said that "the matter of ending the war and a just peace are the priority for Ukraine". REUTERS