

Putin invites PM Modi to 2019 Russia biz meet

Indo-Russia S-400 deal draws guarded response from US

Iftikhar Gilani
iftikhar.gilani@dnaindia.net

New Delhi: No sooner Russia President Vladimir Putin invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a business forum meeting to Moscow in September 2019 than there were murmurs in the audience at Hyderabad House, Delhi on Friday. The Russian President sent signals that he was sure PM Modi would return to power after the 2019 General elections. Putin also invited PM Modi to visit Russia for the 20th Annual Summit scheduled next year. PM Modi smiled at Putin's invitation and accepted it.

Braving US threats of imposing sanctions, India and Russia on Friday went ahead with the agreement to purchase USD 5 billion S-400 missile defence system. However, they decided to go slow on other major defence deals – a \$2 billion deal for frigates and \$1 pact for choppers. **Turn to P4**



Russian President Vladimir Putin and PM Narendra Modi after the joint statement following their talks at Hyderabad House in Delhi —REUTERS



Today Russia is supporting our Gaganyaan programme to put a human in space. Russia and India agree on multipolarity and multilateralism in the world
—Prime Minister Narendra Modi

8 AREAS OF AGREEMENT

- 1** Protocol for consultations between foreign ministries for 2019-2023
- 2** MoU between NITI Aayog and Russian economic development ministry
- 3** MoU between ISRO and Federal Space Agency of Russia on human spaceflight
- 4** Cooperation agreement between railways of two nations
- 5** Action plan to implement areas of cooperation in nuclear field
- 6** MoU between Russia's transport ministry and Indian Railways in transport Education
- 7** MoU on cooperation in field of micro, small, medium Enterprises
- 8** Cooperation in fertilizers sector between Russian Direct Investment Fund, PJSC PhosAgro and Indian Potash Limited

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PM Modi and Putin signed eight pacts in the fields of space, nuclear energy, railways. Even though Putin's visit was classified as "state visit", there was no ceremonial reception or other splendid displays. Sources from the government said that both the sides wanted to keep the visit low profile. Putin had a three-hour meeting with PM Modi at his residence on Thursday evening.

Both the countries went ahead to purchase five S-400 missile defence systems. Shortly after the deal, the US gave a guarded response. While not specifying whether it would give India a presidential waiver, the US embassy here said its intent to slap sanctions against Russia was not aimed at impos-



PM Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin after attending the India-Russia Business Summit in New Delhi on Friday —REUTERS

ing damage to the military capabilities of its "allies or partners", but only to inflict costs on Russia for its "malign behaviour".

Sources, who were part of negotiations, said Russia assured India that it would increase oil production to stabi-

lise global oil prices. The Russian side evinced its interest to sell civilian aircraft in India. Putin repeatedly said that their aircraft industry with latest models and material was competitive with Boeing and Airbus. He (Putin) also sought more avenues in partnering in the Railway sector and to supply river crafts to materialise India's dream of reviving water transport.

In response, Modi sought greater access to India's IT and pharmaceutical industry to set shops in Russia to take bilateral trade to 25 billion dollars by 2025. Currently, it is a meagre 10 billion dollars. The two leaders agreed to start Ganga-Volga dialogue aimed to involve people of different walks and build a public opinion around the relations.

PM Modi said the next goal in the space partnership was to send an Indian astronaut in Gaganyaan. He said India and Russia were unanimous in strengthening multi-polarity and multilateralism in this rapidly changing world. "Both our countries have common interests in cooperating on terrorism, developments in Afghanistan and Indo-pacific, climate change, regional organisations like SCO, BRICS and multilateral organisations like the G20 and ASEAN. We have agreed to continue our beneficial cooperation and coordination in international institutions," he said.

Russia is offering visa on arrival for Indian businessmen who want to visit the Far East.

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