

## BRICS SUMMIT SIDELINES

# Erdogan, Modi spoke about bilateral trade

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**NEW DELHI:** India's global economic clout manifested itself at the Brics summit in South Africa last week when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan focused almost exclusively on bilateral economic relations in a hour-long meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 27, according to people familiar with the happenings at the meeting.

The Turkish president's focus during the meeting was in stark contrast to his comments during his previous visit to India in May 2017 when he spoke on Kashmir and on India's NSG membership.

The bilateral meeting, sought by Erdogan, was held over din-



■ **Recep Tayyip Erdogan**

ner before Modi departed for India.

According to three South Block officials who spoke on condition of anonymity, the meeting with Erdogan was "fruitful" and the Turkish President didn't raise any of the contentious issues.

Last year, President Erdogan ruffled diplomatic feathers even

before he started his trip to India by advocating multilateral dialogue to settle the so called Kashmir question and recommending that Pakistan should also be given entry into the NSG club at the same time as India.

This time, however, President Erdogan refrained from any political discussion and instead was in favour of Turkish companies investing in India.

According to officials, he was all for increasing bilateral trade and avoided speaking about the politics of South Asia.

According to the South Block officials, the current state of US-Russia relations and its fallout on India was the focus of the discussion between Prime Minister Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin during the sum-

mit.

The bilateral meeting in South Africa lasted one hour forty minutes, the three officials said, and Prime Minister Modi reassured Russia that India didn't want to leave its old partner out in the cold.

The officials added that the two leaders share a special relationship and said that they spoke till 4 in the morning last June, in a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the International Economic Forum meeting in St Petersburg.

The officials said that Prime Minister Modi also met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and that the leaders veered from the written text of the discussion to discuss areas of bilateral cooperation over any confrontation or difference.