

**Yoga, skiing and beaches: India invites Russian tourists**  
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**Interview by Mr. Igor Baykov**

*The republic can offer the most diverse vacations for travelers from Russia, India's Ambassador in Moscow said.*

*On August 15, the Republic of India celebrates Independence Day. On this day in 1947, the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, raised the national flag over the Red Fort in Delhi, marking the country's acquisition of sovereignty from the United Kingdom. How does India live today? How and in what areas are relations between our countries developing? What is the republic ready to offer tourists from Russia? Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Russia Vinay Kumar spoke about this and not only in an interview with Russian Federation Today magazine.*

**Question: Mr. Ambassador, in what areas is Russian-Indian cooperation developing today? In what areas is there potential for further expansion of bilateral cooperation?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** The main areas of cooperation between India and Russia are trade, energy, security, cooperation on strategic issues, as well as in the field of culture. Our relations are so developed and multifaceted that all areas are of great importance.

The potential for further expansion of bilateral ties can be seen in the economic cooperation between our countries. Thus, an increase in Indian exports to Russia in areas such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and textiles will help correct the existing trade imbalance. In particular, we are talking about the supply of mangoes, other fruits and vegetables, seafood, and cattle meat to the Russian Federation. We are interested in expanding cooperation with the Russian side to issue all necessary sanitary and phytosanitary certificates for Indian exporters of agricultural products.

Qualified specialists from India, especially in the fields of information technology, healthcare and mechanical engineering, are able to meet the demand for labor in Russia and deepen our cooperation.

Another priority area is the expansion of energy cooperation through increased investment. India is one of the participants in the Sakhalin project, and Indian companies are also investing in the development of deposits in the Tomsk Region. Oil and gas is the main area of energy cooperation between our countries.

Cooperation is underway in the field of nuclear energy. With the participation of Russia, the construction of the third stage of power units at the Kudankulam NPP in southern India is underway. We are interested in establishing cooperation with Russia in the field of joint research and development of low-power reactors. Among the areas of energy cooperation, it is also worth mentioning wind power and hydrogen fuel.

Finally, the potential for cooperation between our countries in the transport and logistics sector looks promising. One of the projects we are already working on is the North-South International Transport Corridor through Iran. India is interested in Russia's plans for the development of the Northern Sea Route. At the end of 2024, the Eastern Sea Corridor, which connects the Russian port of Vladivostok with the Indian Chennai, was officially launched. As Russian-Indian trade continues to increase, new transport corridors will become economically profitable.

In addition, India is interested in expanding air links between our countries and launching new direct flights connecting various Russian and Indian cities. There are no restrictions on this issue at the government level. It's up to the airlines.

**Question: What do you expect from Russian President Vladimir Putin's upcoming visit to India this year?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** Our expectations are simple: to further strengthen bilateral ties. The Indian Prime Minister invited the Russian President to visit the republic to participate in the 23rd annual India-Russia Summit. President Putin accepted the invitation. According to the usual practice, the dates of the visit will be determined through diplomatic channels. When it is determined, we will make an official statement.

In the meantime, we continue to work to expand and strengthen various aspects of our bilateral relations in all areas, including politics, security, defense, trade and economics, science and technology, culture and people-to-people relations.

**Question: One of the key areas of Russian-Indian cooperation is trade and economic ties. In your opinion, what are the future prospects for cooperation between our countries in this area?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India and Russia pay considerable attention to the development of trade and economic ties. In the fiscal year 2024-2025, the volume of bilateral trade amounted to 68.7 billion US dollars.

We strive to maintain the steady growth of trade turnover achieved in recent years. By 2030, the parties aim to reach the target of 100 billion US dollars in bilateral trade.

Nevertheless, there are still some issues that we should work on to further develop our bilateral business ties. The priority is to solve problems related to logistics and transport connectivity between our countries.

In my opinion, the following steps could be taken to strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations. Thus, we are talking about working to achieve a more balanced trade by increasing the supply of goods from India, removing non-tariff trade barriers and liberalizing bilateral trade. It is important to support key factors that facilitate trade, such as logistics and communications, to improve transaction efficiency. We should also ensure that insurance, trade finance, and payment systems support and facilitate trade between our countries.

Other possible measures include optimizing customs procedures using intelligent digital systems, increasing cooperation in energy sectors such as nuclear energy, oil refining and petrochemicals, strengthening cooperation in infrastructure development, transport engineering and other industries. Effective steps may include facilitating the entry of Indian and Russian companies into each other's markets, as well as promoting investments and joint projects in the field of digital economy, science and research, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

At the same time, the development of bilateral ties will be facilitated by strengthening cooperation in such areas as healthcare and medical safety, education, culture, and tourism. It is extremely important to promote our cooperation in the field of human resources, which can bring significant mutual benefits and contribute to the further deepening of bilateral ties, using the human resources of India and the technical experience of Russia.

**Question: The United States is threatening to impose 100% trade tariffs against countries that buy Russian oil. How does India, which imports significant amounts of hydrocarbons from Russia, perceive such statements?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** The priority of the Indian government is to ensure the energy security of the republic and the population of the country. Such an approach is also necessary for the economic growth of the national economy, socio-political stability and well-being of India as a whole. The need for energy resources is determined based on factors such as availability, cost, and transportability. In this regard, India, as a developing country, proceeds from its own interests and chooses those options that best meet national needs.

At the same time, it is important to ensure stability in the global energy market. If a major exporter is excluded from it, this will lead to a destabilization of the situation and the emergence of various problems, such as rising prices for raw materials, high inflation, and so on. International trade and the energy market will also be affected. It is about these challenges that we speak publicly and convey our concerns to all partners.

**Question: How is the interparliamentary cooperation between our countries progressing?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** The Inter-Parliamentary Commission, co-chaired by the Chairmen of the People's Chamber (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) and the State Duma, plays a key role in promoting parliamentary cooperation. Five meetings of this structure have already been held.

India and Russia have a rich experience of fruitful exchanges at the legislative level. In February, Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin paid an official visit to the republic. In addition to the bilateral meetings, the Russian parliamentary delegation took part in the work of the plenary sessions of the Council of States and the People's Chamber of the Parliament of India. In October 2023, Speaker of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko, at the head of a

delegation from the Russian Federal Assembly, visited New Delhi to participate in the G20 parliamentary Forum, which was then chaired by India.

After the terrorist attack in the vicinity of the city of Pahalgam in the north of the republic and the subsequent Indian military operation Sindoor, an inter-party delegation of the Indian Parliament visited Russia in May. During the trip, the lawmakers informed their Russian colleagues about India's united determination and its principle of zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

At the end of June, Shashi Tharoor, head of the Indian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, held consultations with Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, and Konstantin Kosachev, Vice Speaker of the Federation Council, during his trip to Moscow. And last July, Speaker of the People's Chamber of the Indian Parliament Om Birla led the Indian delegation to the X BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg.

We are currently awaiting a visit to India by First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Vladimir Yakushev, who heads the Federation Council's cooperation group with the Council of States of the Indian Parliament.

**Question: What do you see as the advantages of BRICS as a multilateral platform of the Global South? In your opinion, what are the prospects for the development of this interaction platform?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** Currently, the world is undergoing significant economic, political and cultural restructuring to the extent that it is already possible to talk about a real multipolarity. It is clear that BRICS has the potential to make a positive contribution to ensuring global stability, while contributing to the formation of a multipolar world. The organization's role in actively promoting global governance reforms is also noteworthy.

India has already hosted the Voice of the Global South summits three times between January 2023 and August 2024. We make constant efforts to promote the views of these countries on the world stage. These summits are a practical demonstration of the ancient Indian philosophy of "One land, one family, one future."

BRICS should give priority attention to the hopes, aspirations and expectations of the States of the Global South. Since 2024, this international forum has included individual African countries. And since this year, several States of the Global South have joined its work as partner countries.

In addition, the BRICS can play a key role in stimulating economic growth in the Global South, including through their efforts to simplify agricultural trade procedures, create sustainable supply chains, e-commerce, and establish special economic zones.

In 2026, India will chair the BRICS. Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated in this regard: "Under the Indian presidency, we will work to give BRICS a new shape.

BRICS will mean strengthening resilience and innovation for cooperation and sustainable development. Just as during our G20 presidency we prioritized issues of the Global South on the agenda, so during our BRICS presidency we will promote this forum in a spirit of humanitarianism and humanitarianism."

**Question: How is the dialogue on the creation of a free trade area between India and the Eurasian Economic Union going? Is New Delhi planning to conclude a corresponding agreement?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** We are considering the prospect of concluding a free trade agreement with the EAEU. This is in line with India's goals of strengthening economic cooperation and diversifying trade relations. Eurasia is an extremely important region for New Delhi. We look forward to further advancing the negotiations in a way that promotes mutual economic benefits and strengthens ties between our regions.

**Question: What holiday destinations does India offer tourists from Russia today?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** The Republic is actively working to attract more travelers from Russia through various initiatives. We are witnessing an increase in tourist exchanges between the two countries. Indian regional and national organizations regularly participate in specialized tourism exhibitions. We actively demonstrate the diversity of Indian culture and "unity in diversity."

India is interested in Russian tourists. Tourism is one of the important areas of the national economy, which creates jobs and contributes to the development of infrastructure. It is also very important that people share their experiences and learn about each other's culture.

India's rich landscape offers wonderful tourist destinations for every taste. There are lush green forests, beautiful islands, a hot desert, breathtaking mountains and downhill skiing, ecotourism, wildlife, diverse cultural sites and much more.

In addition, in July, in cooperation with the Moscow government, we organized the Bharat Utsav Festival of Indian Culture and traditions for the first time on Manezhnaya Square in the center of the Russian capital. The attention to the event was overwhelming - the festival, which lasted nine days, was attended by about 850 thousand people. We believe that such initiatives will contribute to the further development of tourism.

**Question: What advice would you give to travelers from Russia? What would you recommend them to visit?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** In my opinion, India is a country where everything is available. It is very similar to this world: everything at once and infinitely! My advice is simple: visit India and appreciate its beauty in its entirety. Everyone is free to choose for themselves what they like. But India has everything to offer: from beaches to snow in the mountains, from diverse cuisine to modern fashion,

from yoga and Ayurveda to affordable healthcare, from high technology to spirituality.

**Question: Given the growing tourist flow, when can India start accepting cards from the Russian payment system Mir?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** We have a working group on banking and finance, which includes representatives of the relevant departments of the two countries. Technical aspects of the messaging system as well as the payment mechanism are currently being discussed.

Meanwhile, banks with branches in India are making transactions easier for various categories of travelers, including students and tourists.

**Question: You have been working in Russia for just over a year. What are your impressions of your stay in the Russian capital?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** Relations between our countries are deep and comprehensive. It is a great honor for me to work as an ambassador to Russia. Given the intense work schedule, the Russian capital does not let me get bored.

Moscow is a very dynamic city that has a lot to offer both to its guests and residents. I especially like cultural events in the Russian capital. I also like to visit parks.

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