

**Ambassador of India: There are currently no problems with payments for oil from Russia**

**TASS, 24.08.2025**

**Interview by Mr. Ilia Ermakov**

*In an interview with TASS, Indian Ambassador to Moscow Vinay Kumar speaks about trade between countries in the context of external sanctions and duties, outlined his country's priorities as chair of BRICS in 2026, and gives advice to Russian tourists who want to visit India.*

**Question: On 15 August, India celebrated Independence Day. How would you describe India today in a few words? And how are relations with Russia?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India's transformation since gaining independence from the British colonial rule on August 15, 1947 has been profound. This journey has been marked by substantial progress across various sectors, including economic development, scientific and technological advancements, social indicators, and infrastructure growth. India has seen significant improvements in human development indicators. Today's India is the world's fourth-largest economy. It has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy and is on track to become the world's third-largest economy with a projected GDP of \$7.3 trillion by 2030.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) of today promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological sovereignty. The National highways network has increased to 146,204 km till March 2025. Under PM Gati Shakti there is a renewed focus on infrastructure development. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna has brought financial inclusion to millions. More than 531.4 million beneficiaries have banked under this initiative. India has emerged as the pharmacy of the world. India's growth is no longer just about its future promise; it is now demonstrated by actual results, reliable policies, and a strong underlying economic structure.

India-Russia relations are characterized as a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," a designation that underscores the deep, multifaceted, and enduring nature of our ties. The partnership between India-Russia is a strong multifaceted bilateral relationship, encompassing political, strategic, energy, space, cultural, educational, and humanitarian domains.

There are active contacts between both sides to further strengthen the cooperation. There have been many high level exchanges between our two countries. Last year, Prime Minister Modi visited Russia twice and President Putin will be travelling to India later this year for the 23<sup>rd</sup> India-Russia Annual Bilateral Summit.

**Question: There is only one daily regular flight between Russia and India. Can we expect increasing the number of flights between countries?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** There are no legal restrictions for the airlines to increase their capacities or frequencies or destinations. We hope that there will be better air connectivity between our countries in the near future.

**Question: Which paying facilities and tools do Russian tourists coming to India have nowadays? Can they use Rupay somehow?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** Apart from cash transactions, the Russian tourists can use the banking facilities offered by VTB and Sberbank in India. There are several banks which have branches in India and are currently making transactions easier for a variety of travelers, including students and tourists from Russia.

The Indo-Russian working group on Banking and Finance, comprising representatives from relevant ministries and the central boards of both nations, is actively engaged in discussions concerning technical aspects of messaging systems and payment mechanisms to make financial transactions easier for all categories of travellers.

**Question: Does India consider secondary sanctions which were announced by US as a threat to the trade with Russia? Can such restrictions, taxes etc. lead to decrease of bilateral trade?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India's trade with Russia is a bilateral relationship that the two countries have based on their mutual interests. Our trade is based on market factors and done with the overall objects of ensuring the energy security of 1.4 billion people of India. There are other countries including the US itself and in Europe trading with Russia.

**Question: How will the tariffs imposed by the US on India affect trade with Russia? What will be India's response to these tariffs?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** We think that the US actions are unfair, unjustified and unreasonable. India will, of course, take all actions necessary to protect its national interests.

**Question:** There has been a lot of information and rumours circulating that India may stop buying oil from Russia following the introduction of new customs duties by US President Donald Trump. Could you clarify the situation once again: will India continue to buy Russian oil?

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** First of all, we have clearly stated that our goal is energy security for India's 1.4 billion people, and India's cooperation with Russia, as with a number of other countries, has contributed to stability in the oil market, in the global oil market. Therefore, the US decision is unfair, unreasonable and unjustified. The government will continue to take measures to protect the country's national interests. Trade is conducted on a commercial basis. So, if the basis for import trade operations is legitimate, Indian companies will continue to purchase oil where they are offered the most favourable terms. That is the current situation.

**Question:** There were many reports earlier about some issues with Indian payments for Russian oil in rupees. Did the countries manage to resolve these issues?

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India and Russia have a working system of trade settlement in national currencies. There is no problem now in payment for oil imports.

**Question:** Which areas of export to Russia do you see as the most promising?

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** You know, our trade is growing, and India's export to Russia has also grown. But it is still far below what it can be. So some of the important areas that we think we need to focus on and improve our exports are textiles and fashion products, construction materials, auto and automobile spare parts and components, also electronics and the entire set of electronics and IT related products. Also phones. Many of the top manufacturers are also manufacturing in India. We look forward to increase in those areas also.

Services is another important part in which we need to do better, including financial and digital services. And, of course, transportation and related infrastructure is yet another area that we need to improve.

**Question: I would like to follow up the question with Indian citizens that are working in Russia. The number of Indians who are working in Russia, as far as I'm concerned, is growing as well. So how do you see, how would you assess the situation with Indian people who are working in Russia nowadays, in which areas they work and which challenges their quantity brings to the embassy?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** Well, with increasing number of people, there are always increasing number of issues and one of the increased workload is for consular services. When people come and leave, they need consular services to extend passport, childbirth, say for example, and loss of passport and those kinds, basically consular services. So that is one part of it. You know, at a broader level, there is manpower requirement in Russia and India has a skilled manpower. So at present, within the Russian regulations, framework of Russian regulations, laws and quotas, the companies are hiring Indians. Most of the people who have come are in construction and textile sector, working in different parts, but there is a growing number of people who are interested in hiring Indians in mechanical sector, electronic workforce in the industries.

**Question: India is BRICS chair in 2026. Could you share which priorities your country has for the coming year in BRICS?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India, as the BRICS chair in 2026, will seek to leverage BRICS as a platform to reform global financial institutions, promote trade and investment, and advocate for the interests of the Global South.

As Prime Minister Modi has stated “Under India’s BRICS presidency, we will work to define BRICS in a new form. BRICS will mean Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability. Just as, during our G-20 chairmanship, we gave priority to the issues of the Global South in the agenda, similarly during our chairmanship of BRICS, we will take this forum forward in the spirit of people-centricity and humanity first”.

Our focus will be the global challenges such as health, technology development, and climate change. During our 2021 BRICS presidency, we had championed

vaccine fairness, digital progress, and environmental sustainability. For India, BRICS is a platform to ensure greater global representation.

**Question: I would like to talk a bit about tourism and culture as well. Firstly, many Russian tourists have many stereotypes about India, what to see there, about some cases that they can face in everyday life there in India. So what advice you as an ambassador could give to Russian citizens who go as tourists to India? What should they know by all means?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India is a big country. There is a large number of places that any tourist would like to visit and should visit. So India is not a one-trip country. You have to make multiple trips and long durations to actually enjoy what the country has to offer, right from the high Himalayas to beautiful beaches, from Ayurvedic massage and Ayurvedic treatment to cultural and historic sites. So I would encourage Russian tourists to visit many times and focus on different parts of the country in one visit, rather than trying to cover many different parts.

So, go to Kerala, go to South India, go to different parts in one trip. Then focus, of course, on what you wear, your clothing, because in the country some parts can be very cold while other parts are very hot. Be mindful of what you eat, always make sure that you eat in proper hotel restaurants and avoid roadside eateries if you are not already accustomed to Indian food, particularly to chilies and spices. Just take normal precautions.

People are very friendly, very hospitable, and the vast majority of tourists feel welcomed by the Indian population and are encouraged by them. So my advice is: plan your trip carefully and focus on particular areas rather than skimming through many areas.

**Question: Which big events devoted to India are planned in Russia in coming months, maybe next year as well?**

**H.E. Vinay Kumar:** India is participating as the Guest of Honour Country at the Moscow International Book Fair (MIBF) which will be held from September 3-7 in VDNKh. The Indian Pavilion at MIBF will offer visitors a comprehensive immersion into Indian culture and literature. It will feature an exhibition of more than 1,800 Indian books translated into Russian, an experience center, a meditation room, and various other attractions designed to acquaint visitors with India's rich literary heritage and vibrant cultural traditions.

I must also mention that the 3rd International Buddhist Forum will be held in Kalmykia from September 25-28. During the forum, there will be exposition of Holy Relics of Lord Buddha and donation of a Buddha Statue by the Government of India. Along with this, National Mission for Manuscripts of India will present an exhibition, "Ink, Palm and Parchment: Manuscript Culture of India". This prestigious event brings together representatives from around the world to discuss the development of Buddhism, its culture, philosophy, and practice. This involvement not only honors India's ancient Buddhist heritage but also strengthens collaborative efforts with other nations to promote peace, harmony, and sustainable development.

In October, the Embassy will be organizing a multi-city Indian Film Festival. The festival is planned in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan, Yakutia and Vladivostok. There will be screenings of Indian films followed by interactive sessions.

The Embassy's JNCC (Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre) will continue to organize regular events of Indian dance, music, drama etc., including with participation of Russian artists. Also, we have classes of Indian music, dance, Hindi language and Yoga in JNCC for which we invite our Russian friends.

\*\*\*