



INDIA - RUSSIA BILATERAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

YOUTH PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM

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Message from the Chairman

India and Russia share a relationship that has demonstrated remarkable continuity across changing geopolitical circumstances, economic transformations, and international realignments. From political understanding and defence cooperation to energy, space, education, culture, and people-to-people relations, the partnership has developed through decades of institutional engagement and mutual strategic trust. The India-Russia relationship, however, now stands at an important juncture. The changing structure of the international system requires both countries to move beyond traditional areas of cooperation and build a more diversified, contemporary, and future-oriented partnership.

The India–Russia Bilateral Cooperation Framework has been developed with this objective. Prepared through the research and policy work of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, the framework seeks to examine the relationship comprehensively across a broad range of sectors and identify practical opportunities for deeper cooperation. Rather than treating bilateral relations as a collection of individual agreements, this framework approaches them as an interconnected ecosystem in which trade, technology, education, energy, infrastructure, diplomacy, youth engagement, culture, and sustainable development reinforce one another.

The framework is particularly intended to identify areas where political commitments can be translated into measurable outcomes. A strategic partnership acquires lasting value when agreements are accompanied by institutional mechanisms, implementation timelines, investment, technological cooperation, and sustained engagement among relevant stakeholders. The recommendations contained in this publication therefore seek to strengthen not only the breadth of India-Russia cooperation but also its institutional depth.

The changing global environment creates significant opportunities for both countries. India possesses substantial capabilities in digital public infrastructure, information technology, pharmaceuticals, space applications, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, and human capital. Russia brings significant strengths in energy, nuclear technology, aerospace, defence technology, critical minerals, advanced scientific research, Arctic expertise, and large-scale infrastructure. A more deliberate effort to connect these complementary capabilities can create new areas of economic and technological cooperation.

At the same time, the partnership must remain responsive to emerging global challenges. Climate change, supply-chain disruptions, technological competition, food and energy security, cyber threats, public health emergencies, and evolving patterns of international trade require countries to develop resilient and adaptable partnerships. India and Russia can contribute to addressing these challenges by combining their respective scientific capabilities, industrial strengths, institutional experience, and human resources. The framework therefore places particular emphasis on cooperation that can generate long-term resilience and shared capacity.

This framework also emphasizes the importance of expanding the constituency of the bilateral relationship. Governments remain central to India-Russia relations, but universities, businesses, research institutions, young professionals, civil-society organizations, cultural institutions, and technology entrepreneurs can increasingly contribute to its future. Youth engagement is particularly important. The young generation will inherit the institutional relationship built by previous generations and will ultimately determine whether it remains resilient and relevant in a rapidly changing world.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum believes that meaningful international cooperation must be grounded in dialogue, mutual respect, development, and peaceful engagement. Our objective through this framework is therefore not merely to document existing cooperation but to contribute constructively to the conversation on where the relationship can go next. The framework is intended to encourage policymakers and institutions to examine areas where existing cooperation can be strengthened, new partnerships can be developed, and implementation gaps can be addressed through sustained institutional engagement.

The preparation of this framework also reflects the Forum's commitment to encouraging young researchers to participate meaningfully in international policy discussions. By examining bilateral relations through a comprehensive and interdisciplinary lens, young researchers can contribute perspectives that connect traditional diplomacy with contemporary questions of technology, development, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and human security.

The framework also recognizes that the strength of a bilateral relationship is ultimately reflected in its ability to generate tangible benefits for citizens. Greater connectivity, educational opportunities, technological collaboration, employment, healthcare cooperation, cultural exchange, and access to new markets can give the India-Russia partnership a broader social foundation. Expanding these areas of engagement can ensure that bilateral relations are not confined to government institutions but are increasingly experienced by students, professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, workers, and communities across both countries.

I hope this publication will serve as a useful reference for policymakers, diplomats, researchers, students, businesses, and young leaders seeking to understand and strengthen India-Russia relations. Most importantly, I hope it encourages further dialogue and practical cooperation between the peoples of India and Russia. The future of this enduring partnership will ultimately depend on the ability of both countries to combine the trust developed over decades with the ambition, innovation, and institutional creativity required for the decades ahead.

Dheeraj GN
Chairman
Youth Peace and Development Forum

Message from the Vice Chairman

The India-Russia relationship represents one of the most enduring partnerships in India's contemporary foreign policy. Its resilience has been shaped not only by strategic interests but also by decades of institutional familiarity, diplomatic communication, educational exchanges, cultural interaction, and public goodwill. Yet the continued strength of a partnership cannot depend exclusively on its historical foundations. The international environment is changing rapidly, and India and Russia must continuously adapt their relationship to emerging economic realities, technological transformations, and new global challenges.

The India–Russia Bilateral Cooperation Framework is an effort to contribute to this process of adaptation. It seeks to examine the relationship not simply through the traditional categories of diplomacy and strategic cooperation, but through the practical mechanisms that can determine its future effectiveness. The central question is not only what India and Russia have achieved together, but what additional opportunities can be developed through stronger institutions, greater connectivity, improved implementation, and wider participation.

A major priority should be the expansion of economic engagement. Bilateral trade and investment require reliable transportation networks, efficient payment mechanisms, predictable regulatory systems, stronger business-to-business connections, and greater market access. Emerging connectivity initiatives provide an opportunity to integrate Indian and Russian economies more closely, while cooperation in manufacturing, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, critical minerals, energy, and technology can generate new commercial opportunities. The objective should be to create an environment in which businesses from both countries can participate more easily and confidently in bilateral economic activity.

Technology represents another major opportunity. India and Russia possess significant scientific and technological capabilities, although their areas of comparative advantage differ. Greater cooperation in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, space, nuclear technology, advanced engineering, digital systems, and scientific research could produce substantial benefits. Such cooperation should emphasize joint development, research partnerships, skills development, commercialization, and technology transfer rather than limiting engagement to the exchange of expertise.

The framework also gives importance to institutional connectivity. Strong bilateral relationships require regular interaction between governments, legislatures, universities, research institutions, businesses, cultural organizations, and civil society. Working groups and memoranda are valuable, but their effectiveness ultimately depends upon implementation, monitoring, and continuity. Institutional mechanisms should therefore be designed with clear responsibilities, measurable objectives, regular reviews, and mechanisms for addressing delays.

Another important dimension is the role of young people. The future of India-Russia relations will increasingly depend on whether younger generations understand the importance of the partnership and have meaningful opportunities to participate in it. Youth exchanges, academic programmes, entrepreneurship initiatives, leadership fellowships, cultural programmes, and research collaborations can create networks that remain active across political and economic cycles. Young people should not be viewed merely as beneficiaries of bilateral cooperation, but as contributors to its development.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum approaches international cooperation from the perspective of constructive engagement and practical policy research. This framework reflects that approach by identifying areas in which existing commitments can be strengthened and new mechanisms can be developed. It seeks to encourage dialogue that is evidence-based, forward-looking, and attentive to the changing needs of both societies.

The publication also reflects the importance of connecting bilateral cooperation with wider regional and international institutions. India and Russia engage through BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the United Nations, and other multilateral platforms. Their bilateral partnership can provide a foundation for coordinated approaches to development, economic governance, climate resilience, technology, food security, and other international priorities.

The coming years provide an opportunity to broaden the constituency of India-Russia relations. Entrepreneurs can create new commercial partnerships, researchers can establish collaborative laboratories, universities can expand academic mobility, cultural institutions can strengthen public understanding, and young professionals can develop new networks of cooperation. Such engagement can provide the partnership with a wider social and institutional foundation.

This framework should therefore be understood as a contribution to an ongoing process rather than a definitive statement on the future of bilateral relations. Its recommendations are intended to stimulate further research, discussion, and institutional action. The relationship will continue to evolve as new technologies emerge, global economic conditions change, and both countries adjust their national and international priorities. I hope this framework will encourage policymakers, diplomats, scholars, entrepreneurs, students, and civil-society actors to explore new possibilities for India-Russia cooperation. A successful partnership for the future must preserve the trust accumulated over decades while developing the flexibility, innovation, and institutional capacity necessary to address new realities.

Aravind Saj
Vice Chairman
Youth Peace and Development Forum

Message from the In-Charge

The India-Russia relationship presents a distinctive case of long-term strategic continuity combined with considerable scope for future expansion. Its institutional foundations have been strengthened over decades through regular diplomatic consultations, economic engagement, scientific cooperation, educational exchanges, cultural interaction, and strategic partnerships. However, the contemporary international environment requires these established foundations to be complemented by new areas of cooperation capable of addressing technological, economic, environmental, and social transformations.

The preparation of the India-Russia Bilateral Cooperation Framework has been undertaken with the objective of examining this relationship through a comprehensive and structured policy lens. Rather than concentrating on a limited number of traditional sectors, the framework attempts to map the broader architecture of bilateral cooperation and identify areas where existing engagement can be strengthened, institutionalized, or expanded.

The research underlying this framework has been guided by an important principle: effective bilateral cooperation requires both strategic vision and implementation capacity. Political declarations provide direction, but durable outcomes depend upon institutions capable of translating commitments into programmes, investments, exchanges, research partnerships, and measurable results. Accordingly, the framework places considerable emphasis on priority actions, institutional mechanisms, implementation timelines, monitoring systems, and opportunities for sustained engagement.

The framework examines cooperation across a wide range of areas, including diplomacy, trade, investment, agriculture, energy, critical minerals, transport connectivity, science and technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, space, education, healthcare, labour mobility, tourism, culture, youth engagement, women's empowerment, disaster resilience, sustainable development, parliamentary relations, legal cooperation, and multilateral affairs. This broad scope reflects the increasingly interconnected nature of international relations, where developments in one sector can directly influence outcomes in another.

An important finding emerging from this exercise is that India and Russia possess substantial areas of complementarity. India's capabilities in information technology, digital public infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, entrepreneurship, services, manufacturing, and human capital can be connected with Russia's strengths in energy, advanced scientific research, aerospace, nuclear technology, heavy industry, natural resources, engineering, and Arctic expertise. The challenge is to create institutional pathways through which these complementary capabilities can generate practical cooperation.

The framework therefore places particular emphasis on cross-sectoral linkages. Trade cooperation is connected with transportation and payment infrastructure; technological cooperation is connected with cybersecurity and education; energy cooperation is linked with

critical minerals and industrial development; labour mobility requires stronger consular and legal mechanisms; and youth engagement can support entrepreneurship, research, and cultural diplomacy. Viewing these relationships together provides a more comprehensive understanding of the partnership.

The framework also recognizes that bilateral relations operate within a wider multilateral environment. India and Russia participate together in institutions and platforms including BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the United Nations. Bilateral initiatives can therefore strengthen multilateral cooperation, while multilateral platforms can provide additional opportunities for advancing shared development and governance objectives.

Another important objective has been to identify areas where institutional continuity can be improved. Regular working groups, parliamentary exchanges, research networks, business platforms, cultural programmes, youth forums, and implementation reviews can provide mechanisms for maintaining momentum between major diplomatic engagements. Such structures can also create opportunities for specialized institutions and non-governmental stakeholders to contribute to bilateral relations.

The participation of young researchers in this process is particularly significant. International relations are increasingly shaped by technological innovation, economic transformation, climate change, demographic shifts, and new forms of communication. Young researchers bring perspectives that can connect these emerging issues with established diplomatic frameworks. Encouraging their participation can therefore contribute to a more dynamic and forward-looking policy discourse.

This publication should not be regarded as a static document. Bilateral relationships evolve continuously, and recommendations must be reassessed as agreements are implemented, new technologies emerge, economic conditions change, and international circumstances develop. The framework is consequently intended to provide a foundation for continuing research, policy discussion, institutional engagement, and periodic review.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum is grateful to all researchers, contributors, reviewers, and organizational members who participated in the development of this framework. Their collective effort reflects the Forum's commitment to independent research, constructive international engagement, and youth participation in public policy.

Suraj Kumar
In-Charge, International Cooperation Framework
Youth Peace and Development Forum

Executive Summary

The India-Russia Cooperative Framework sets out a structured, long-term architecture for deepening the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation. Built on more than seven decades of diplomatic engagement since the establishment of relations in 1947, the partnership has evolved through the Cold War era of close alignment, the recalibration of the 1990s, and the post-2000 consolidation into a relationship now anchored in defence, energy, trade, and technology. The 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, held in New Delhi on December 4 and 5, 2025, during President Vladimir Putin's state visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reaffirmed this trajectory and provided fresh political direction for the years ahead.

This framework is organized around 31 pillars of cooperation, spanning political, diplomatic, economic, financial, investment, energy, defence and security, maritime, water resources, agricultural, scientific, technological, digital, spatial, environmental, humanitarian, infrastructural, industrial, educational, healthcare, youth, gender, labour, tourism, sporting, cultural, parliamentary, legal, multilateral, sustainable development, and entrepreneurial domains. Each pillar is treated as a discrete but interconnected stream of cooperation, with its own objectives, current status, and forward-looking targets, supported by an implementation framework of institutional mechanisms and a roadmap extending to 2050.

The economic foundation of this partnership has strengthened considerably in the most recent fiscal year. Bilateral trade between India and Russia reached a record 68.69 billion United States dollars in the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year, according to India's Commerce and Industry Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia, who described the relationship as resilient, complementary, and strategic in nature (Gulf Today, 2026).

This trade is heavily weighted toward Russian energy exports, with crude oil, fertilizers, and coal dominating the import basket, while Indian pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and engineering products form the core of exports to Russia (IndexBox, 2026). The two governments have set a formal target of raising bilateral trade to 100 billion dollars and mutual investment to 50 billion dollars by 2030 (CargoNet, 2026).

The trade relationship, however, remains structurally imbalanced. Data from India's Department of Commerce show that in the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year, through November 2025, Indian exports to Russia stood at only 3.00 billion dollars against imports of 40.81 billion dollars, a ratio that underscores the dependence on energy flows rather than diversified commercial exchange (IBEF, 2026).

In June 2025, India became the largest recipient of Russia's seaborne Urals crude, accounting for 80 percent of total shipments, driven largely by purchases from Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy at discounted prices (IBEF, 2026). Russian companies, including Rosneft, have in turn committed more than 25 billion dollars to Indian oil refining and retail

infrastructure, signalling a deepening of energy sector interdependence beyond simple trade flows (Gulf Today, 2026).

Investment ties, while growing, remain modest relative to the scale of both economies. Russian investments in India total approximately 20 billion dollars, concentrated in oil and gas, petrochemicals, banking, railways, and steel, while Indian investments in Russia are estimated near 16 billion dollars, focused on oil and gas and pharmaceuticals (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.). Russia currently occupies the 31st position among sources of foreign direct investment into India, with cumulative FDI of 1.32 billion dollars between April 2000 and September 2025 (IBEF, 2026), a figure that this framework identifies as significantly below the potential of the relationship and a priority area for structural reform.

Defence cooperation remains the most mature and strategically significant pillar of the partnership. Long-standing programs such as the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, the Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft, the T-90 battle tank, and the S-400 air defence system continue to anchor military-technical cooperation, with an evolving emphasis on co-development and co-production rather than direct procurement (Sanskriti IAS, 2025). Joint military exercises, including India's participation in Zapad-2025 and the continuation of the INDRA series, reflect sustained interoperability efforts between the two armed forces.

Beyond the transactional metrics, both countries have converged on a shared reading of the emerging global order. Officials on both sides describe unity on questions of terrorism, climate change, and the desirability of a multipolar international system.

President Putin has publicly characterized India as a reliable partner and has stated that external pressure aimed at reducing India-Russia ties is both ineffective and damaging to global stability, framing India's growth trajectory as a product of its own domestic policy choices (Gulf Industry Online, 2026). This political alignment provides the underlying rationale for the expansive, multi-sectoral framework presented in this document.

This framework proceeds from the premise that the India-Russia relationship, having demonstrated resilience through a period of significant global realignment, is now positioned to move from a primarily energy and defence-driven partnership toward a more diversified architecture encompassing technology, connectivity, human capital, and multilateral coordination.

The chapters that follow lay out, pillar by pillar, the specific mechanisms, targets, and institutional arrangements through which this diversification can be achieved, culminating in a roadmap of short-term priorities through 2031, medium-term priorities through 2041, and long-term strategic goals extending to 2050.

Acknowledgement

The Youth Peace and Development (YPD) Forum expresses its deepest gratitude to all individuals, institutions, and domain experts whose dedication, geopolitical insight, and intellectual contributions made the preparation of The India Russia Bilateral Cooperation Framework possible.

We extend our profound gratitude to the **Government of the Republic of India** and the **Government of the Russian Federation**. The enduring diplomatic, economic, and strategic initiatives undertaken by both governments provided the foundational context and historical bedrock for this comprehensive framework.

The Forum places on record its sincere appreciation to **Dheeraj GN**, Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, for his visionary leadership and initiative in conceptualizing this vital geopolitical project. Heartfelt thanks are also extended to **Aravind Saj**, Vice Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, for his continuous encouragement and strategic guidance throughout the execution of this comprehensive initiative.

The Forum also wishes to express its special thanks to the **Embassy of the Russian Federation in New Delhi** for their continuous efforts in fostering public diplomacy, cultural ties, and educational exchanges. Their work has significantly enriched the bilateral discourse and inspired the younger generation to engage deeply with Indo Russian relations.

Special appreciation is extended to the **Board of Directors** of the Youth Peace and Development Forum for their strategic guidance, institutional leadership, and continuous support in strengthening the research process. The Forum also acknowledges the dedicated contributions of its **Associate Members**, whose commitment and collaborative efforts have significantly enhanced the quality and coordination of the research undertaken. Appreciation is further extended to the **Internship Programme participants** for their enthusiasm, diligence, and valuable assistance in research, data collection, and documentation. The Forum further extends its appreciation to all well wishers, advisors, and stakeholders who encouraged this initiative. Whether through expert consultations, peer reviews, or moral support, their contributions helped strengthen the relevance and strategic accuracy of this work.

This report is a reflection of a shared commitment to building a stable, multipolar world anchored in mutual trust and cooperation. While the recommendations contained herein aim to explore new and dynamic avenues for India Russia cooperation in the twenty first century, they also serve as a proud testament to the time tested and enduring friendship between the two great nations.

Vision for the Two Nations

The India-Russia relationship stands at an inflection point. For most of its post-independence history, the partnership was defined primarily by defence procurement and diplomatic solidarity, particularly during periods when India faced constrained access to Western military technology and diplomatic support at multilateral forums such as the United Nations Security Council. The central vision is of two civilizational states, each pursuing an independent foreign policy rooted in strategic autonomy, working together as complementary rather than dependent partners across the full span of national development priorities. India's vision, as articulated through its economic growth trajectory and its stated ambition to become a developed nation by 2047, requires reliable access to energy, defence technology, critical minerals, and advanced scientific collaboration. Russia's vision, shaped by its reorientation toward Asia amid changed relations with Europe, requires reliable markets for its energy and industrial exports, access to investment capital, and partners willing to engage in long-term industrial and technological collaboration outside the constraints imposed by Western sanctions regimes.

Three elements define the shared vision. First, energy security for India paired with reliable market access for Russia, recognizing that India's import dependence on Russian crude, currently exceeding 80 percent of Russia's seaborne Urals crude shipments in some months (IBEF, 2026), creates a mutual interest in long-term contractual stability, rupee-rouble settlement mechanisms, and diversification into downstream refining and petrochemical partnerships rather than raw commodity trade alone. Second, technological sovereignty for both nations, achieved through co-development rather than one-directional transfer. The evolution of defence cooperation from procurement of finished platforms toward co-production, as seen in the localization of BrahMos manufacturing and component supply chains, is presented in this framework as the template for extending similar co-development models into civil nuclear energy, space technology, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

Third, a rules-based but multipolar international order, reflecting the convergence both governments have expressed on questions of terrorism, climate change, and resistance to unilateral coercive measures. This vision does not presume identical positions on all international questions. This framework treats such independent positioning as a structural feature of the relationship to be managed through institutional dialogue, not as an obstacle to be resolved through convergence on every issue. The vision extends to 2050 and is organized around a central proposition: that a relationship historically concentrated in two sectors, defence and energy, can be systematically diversified into a thirty-one pillar architecture without diminishing the strength of those founding sectors. This requires sustained political will at the summit level, empowered institutional mechanisms at the ministerial and working group level, and measurable targets against which progress can be assessed at each annual summit. The chapters that follow operationalize this vision pillar by pillar.

Guiding Principles of Bilateral Cooperation

This framework is organized around eight guiding principles that apply across all 31 pillars of cooperation. These principles are intended to function as a common reference point when specific pillars encounter tension, ambiguity, or the need for prioritization.

Strategic Autonomy - Both India and Russia retain full sovereign discretion over their respective foreign, defence, and economic policies. Cooperation under this framework does not constitute alignment against any third country, and both governments reserve the right to pursue parallel relationships with other strategic partners. This principle reflects India's long-standing doctrine of multi-alignment and Russia's own pursuit of diversified partnerships across Asia, and it is treated in this framework as a strength of the relationship rather than a limitation, since it allows cooperation to proceed on its own merits rather than as a function of a broader alliance structure.

Mutual Economic Benefit - Every pillar of cooperation is expected to generate identifiable value for both economies, not simply for one side. Given the current trade imbalance, in which Indian exports to Russia stood at 3.00 billion dollars against imports of 40.81 billion dollars in the period through November 2025 (IBEF, 2026), this principle requires explicit attention to rebalancing mechanisms within the economic, financial, and industrial pillars, including expanded market access for Indian goods and services within the Eurasian Economic Union framework.

Institutional Continuity - Cooperation should be sustained through standing institutional mechanisms, such as the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, rather than depending solely on leader-level summits. The Inter-Governmental Commission functions as the apex government-to-government forum for bilateral economic cooperation and is treated throughout this framework as the primary coordinating body beneath the annual summit (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

Technological Co-Development - Where earlier phases of cooperation, particularly in defence, were characterized by direct procurement of finished Russian systems, this framework prioritizes joint design, joint production, and technology localization within India, consistent with India's Make in India policy and its objective of building domestic manufacturing capacity for export to third countries (Sanskriti IAS, 2025).

Diversification Beyond Energy and Defence - While energy and defence will remain the largest components of the relationship for the foreseeable future, this framework treats the 29 non-defence, non-energy pillars as equally important to the long-term durability of the partnership, on the reasoning that a relationship overly concentrated in two sectors is more exposed to sector-specific shocks, whether from global energy price volatility or from shifts in defence procurement policy.

Currency and Payment Resilience - Given the disruption to conventional dollar-denominated settlement channels affecting Russia, this framework prioritizes the continued development of national currency settlement mechanisms between the rupee and the rouble, building on negotiations already underway between the two finance ministries.

Measurable Targets and Periodic Review - Each pillar includes specific, time-bound targets, consistent with the pattern already established in the trade relationship, where successive summits have set and revised numerical targets, from 20 billion dollars by 2015, to 30 billion dollars by 2025, to the current 100 billion dollar target by 2030 (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.; CargoNet, 2026). This framework formalizes that practice across all 31 pillars through the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework described in the Implementation Framework chapter.

Inclusive and People-Centered Cooperation - Beyond government-to-government and business-to-business engagement, this framework treats youth exchange, tourism, cultural cooperation, and educational mobility as essential to the long-term sustainability of the partnership, on the premise that institutional cooperation is more resilient when reinforced by direct people-to-people ties, including the expanded e-visa and group visa facilities introduced for Russian nationals in 2025.

31 PILLARS OF COOPERATION

1. Political Cooperation

Overview

Political cooperation forms the connective tissue that binds the other 30 pillars of this framework together. Unlike trade or defence cooperation, which can be measured in dollars and units delivered, political cooperation is measured in the frequency, depth, and consistency of high-level contact, and in the degree to which both governments coordinate positions on questions of global governance. The India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership, established in 2010 as an upgrade to the Strategic Partnership signed in 2000, rests on a political relationship that traces its institutional origins to the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, under which the Soviet Union used its United Nations Security Council veto three times in India's favour, most notably during the Bangladesh Liberation War (Vajiram and Ravi, 2026). This history of political trust, built over more than five decades, remains the single most distinctive feature of the relationship when compared with India's other major bilateral partnerships.

Current Status

The year 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the India-Russia Strategic Partnership Declaration, and this milestone was formally observed at the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, held in New Delhi on December 4 and 5, 2025, during President Vladimir Putin's state visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Drishti IAS, 2026). At the summit, the two countries signed 16 agreements spanning defence, healthcare, trade, and culture, and issued a joint statement titled "Russia-India: A Time-Tested Progressive Partnership, Anchored in Trust and Mutual Respect" (President of Russia, 2025; Drishti IAS, 2026). The joint statement recorded that both sides noted with satisfaction the resilience of the partnership and the convergent and complementary approaches of their respective foreign policy priorities, and it committed both governments to continued cooperation in pursuit of stability in a multipolar world and a multipolar Asia (President of Russia, 2025).

Political contact between the two leaderships has been sustained at a high frequency in recent years. Prime Minister Modi and President Putin met during the 22nd Annual Summit in Moscow in July 2024, where they issued a joint statement titled "India-Russia: Enduring and Expanding Partnership" along with a separate statement on strategic economic cooperation through 2030 (Doordarshan News, 2026). During that visit, Prime Minister Modi was awarded Russia's highest state decoration in recognition of his role in strengthening bilateral ties (Doordarshan News, 2026). The two leaders met again on the margins of the BRICS Summit in October 2024 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in September 2025, and they have maintained regular telephone contact, including discussions on counterterrorism cooperation following the Pahalgam terror attack (Doordarshan News, 2026).

This pattern of engagement illustrates a structural feature of India-Russia political cooperation, namely that it is conducted through multiple, overlapping channels rather than through the Annual Summit alone. These channels include bilateral summits, meetings on the margins of multilateral forums such as BRICS, the SCO, and the G20, and a dense network of ministerial and expert-level dialogues. The 2+2 Dialogue, involving the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries, provides a dedicated channel for coordinating security and diplomatic positions, while the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, operating through its IRIGC-TEC and IRIGC-M&MTC divisions, manages the economic and military-technical dimensions of the relationship respectively (Lukmaan IAS, 2026).

Political cooperation at the multilateral level has also intensified. At the December 2025 summit, Russia reaffirmed its backing for India's demand for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and pledged full support for India's chairship of BRICS in 2026 (Drishti IAS, 2026). India, for its part, commended Russia for successfully hosting the SCO Council of Heads of Government Meeting in Moscow on November 17 and 18, 2025 (President of Russia, 2025). Both sides committed to strengthening their BRICS partnership under its three organizing pillars of political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation, reaffirming their commitment to the BRICS principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus (Eurasia Review, 2025).

Strategic Autonomy and Independent Positioning

A defining characteristic of India-Russia political cooperation is that it does not require identical positions on all international questions. Both governments have publicly framed the relationship as an expression of strategic autonomy rather than alignment, with commentary on the December 2025 summit describing it as an assertion of strategic autonomy by two major powers operating within a fragmented global order (Vision IAS, 2025). India has maintained an independent position on the conflict in Ukraine throughout, balancing its historical ties to Russia against its economic and strategic relationships with the United States and the European Union, including in the face of tariff measures imposed on Indian exports connected to continued Indian purchases of Russian crude oil (Vision IAS, 2025). President Putin has publicly stated that external pressure aimed at reducing India-Russia ties is both ineffective and damaging to global stability, and has characterized India's economic growth as the product of domestic policy choices under Prime Minister Modi's leadership (Gulf Industry Online, 2026).

This framework treats such independent positioning not as friction to be eliminated but as a durable structural feature of the relationship, consistent with the guiding principle of strategic autonomy set out earlier in this document. Political cooperation under this framework is therefore designed to function through institutionalized dialogue that can absorb and manage

divergence on specific international questions, rather than through an expectation of uniform alignment.

Priority Actions

Building on this foundation, the following priority actions are proposed for the political cooperation pillar over the period covered by this framework.

First, the Annual Summit mechanism should be preserved as the apex political event of the relationship, with a standing commitment from both governments to hold it without interruption, alternating between New Delhi and Moscow, as has been the established practice since the summit process began. Second, the 2+2 Dialogue between Foreign and Defence Ministers should be expanded in frequency, moving from its current periodic schedule toward a more predictable annual or biannual cadence, to ensure that security and diplomatic coordination keeps pace with the growing complexity of the relationship across its 31 pillars.

Third, diplomatic presence should be expanded in both countries. India is already moving in this direction, with two new consulates planned for Kazan and Yekaterinburg, reflecting an effort to deepen engagement beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg and into Russia's regional centres, including areas relevant to the Russian Far East (Lukmaan IAS, 2026). This framework recommends that Russia consider reciprocal expansion of its consular presence in India beyond its existing missions, particularly in southern and western Indian states where commercial and cultural engagement is growing. Fourth, both governments should continue to use their combined weight within BRICS, the SCO, and the G20 to advocate jointly for reform of global governance institutions, including continued Russian support for India's Security Council candidacy and continued Indian support for Russian participation in forums such as the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, both of which Russia expressed interest in joining at the December 2025 summit (Drishti IAS, 2026). Fifth, the track two dialogue between think tanks, research institutions, and policy communities in both countries, which the December 2025 joint statement specifically noted with appreciation, should be formalized and resourced as a standing input into the official political dialogue, on the reasoning that sustained expert-level engagement improves the quality of ministerial and summit-level decision-making (President of Russia, 2025).

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for political cooperation rests with the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, operating through the Annual Summit process, the 2+2 Dialogue, and regular diplomatic channels.

2. Diplomatic Cooperation

Overview

Where the Political Cooperation pillar addresses leader-level engagement and multilateral coordination, the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar addresses the institutional and consular architecture that sustains the relationship on a day to day basis. This includes the network of embassies and consulates, the officer corps that staffs them, the consular services they provide to citizens, and the specialized dialogue formats that translate political intent into working-level coordination. Diplomatic relations between India and Russia were formally established with the opening of embassies on April 13, 1947, making the relationship one of the longest continuously maintained diplomatic partnerships in India's post-independence history (Wikipedia, 2025a).

Current Diplomatic Architecture

India currently maintains three diplomatic representative offices in Russia: the Embassy in Moscow, the Consulate General in Saint Petersburg, and the Consulate General in Vladivostok (Embassies.net, 2026a). The Embassy of India in Moscow is located at 6-8, Ulitsa Vorontsovo Polye, in a complex that dates to 1821, was remodeled in 1896, and was transferred to the Indian government in 1952 to serve as the official embassy, and it is currently headed by Ambassador Vinay Kumar (Wikipedia, 2025b). In July 2024, Prime Minister Modi announced plans to open two additional Indian consulates, in Kazan and in Yekaterinburg, a decision this framework identifies as a deliberate move to extend India's diplomatic footprint beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg into Russia's regional and Volga-Urals centres (Wikipedia, 2025b).

Russia's diplomatic presence in India is more extensive by count of missions. Russia currently maintains seven diplomatic representative offices in India, located in New Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai (Embassies.net, 2026b). The Russian Embassy in New Delhi is situated at 50-F, Shantipath, Chanakyapuri, and the Consulate General in Chennai, headed by Consul General Valerii Khodzhaev since September 2024, serves the southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, along with the union territory of Puducherry (Wikipedia, 2025c). The post of Russian Ambassador to India has been held by Denis Alipov since January 12, 2022 (Wikipedia, 2025d). Notably, Russia's engagement with India through consular representation predates independence by nearly half a century: Russia opened its first consulate in India in Mumbai in November 1900, having sought a diplomatic presence as early as 1860, a request the then British colonial government resisted (Wikipedia, 2025c).

Specialized Dialogue Formats

Beyond the standing embassy and consulate network, India-Russia diplomatic cooperation operates through several dedicated formats that this framework treats as core institutional

assets. The 2+2 Dialogue brings together the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries in a single format, allowing diplomatic and security considerations to be addressed jointly rather than in separate, uncoordinated channels (Lukmaan IAS, 2026). The India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation operates through two specialized divisions, one covering trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural matters, and the other covering military and military-technical cooperation, providing a standing bureaucratic structure beneath the annual political summits (Lukmaan IAS, 2026).

Track two diplomacy, conducted through exchanges between think tanks, research institutes, and policy communities in both countries, was specifically acknowledged in the joint statement following the December 2025 summit, which noted with appreciation the enhanced exchanges and contacts between experts and institutes of both nations, describing this track as having promoted increased mutual understanding between Russian and Indian strategic and policy making circles over the years (President of Russia, 2025).

Consular Services and Citizen Welfare

A growing share of diplomatic cooperation activity involves direct consular services to citizens rather than government to government engagement. Both embassies provide passport, visa, and welfare services to their respective diaspora and traveller populations. India's diplomatic missions in Russia issue and renew Indian passports, including the standard Type P passport for general travel, the maroon Type D diplomatic passport for officials on diplomatic assignment, and the white Type S official or service passport for government representatives (Embassies.info, 2026). Russian missions in India perform equivalent functions for Russian nationals, including facilitation of visa applications submitted either directly by individuals or through authorized travel agencies (Godigit, 2026).

This framework identifies consular capacity as an area requiring proportional expansion alongside the growth in bilateral trade, tourism, and educational exchange addressed elsewhere in this document. As tourist arrivals, business travel, and educational mobility increase, following the introduction of expanded e-visa and group visa facilities for Russian nationals, consular sections in both countries will require additional staffing and digitization of processing systems to avoid the visa processing delays that have historically constrained people to people exchange.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar. First, the planned Indian consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg should be operationalized on a defined timeline, with clear staffing and budget commitments, given that the announcement was first made in July 2024 and full operationalization should not be allowed to lag significantly behind the political commitment. Their establishment should be

accompanied by adequate consular officers, administrative personnel, digital infrastructure, and emergency-response mechanisms to ensure that the new missions provide substantive services rather than merely symbolic diplomatic presence.

Second, given the asymmetry in mission count, with Russia currently operating seven missions in India against India's three in Russia, this framework recommends that India evaluate the case for at least one additional consulate in a Russian regional centre beyond Kazan and Yekaterinburg, potentially in the Russian Far East, to support the expanding trade and investment relationship with that region referenced in the Political Cooperation pillar. Such expansion should be assessed through a demand-based approach, considering commercial activity, Indian nationals, educational mobility, tourism, and emerging strategic interests. Third, both countries should invest in digitizing and streamlining consular services, including visa processing, to keep pace with rising demand from tourism, business travel, and educational mobility, building on the digitization efforts already underway with the e-visa facility for Russian nationals. Greater interoperability of appointment, documentation, authentication, and emergency-assistance systems could reduce administrative delays and improve citizen experience.

Fourth, the track two dialogue mechanism should be formalized with dedicated funding and a regular meeting calendar, rather than functioning as an ad hoc complement to official diplomacy, so that its findings can be systematically fed into the 2+2 Dialogue and the Intergovernmental Commission. Universities, policy institutions, business associations, youth organizations, and strategic-affairs experts should be incorporated into this mechanism to broaden the knowledge base supporting bilateral policy.

Finally, India and Russia should strengthen institutional coordination between their diplomatic missions, sectoral ministries, chambers of commerce, and subnational authorities. Regular reviews of consular capacity and mission performance should be undertaken, with measurable indicators covering service delivery, response times, citizen assistance, and economic facilitation. This would ensure that diplomatic infrastructure evolves alongside the broader strategic partnership and remains capable of supporting increasingly diversified India-Russia engagement.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, operating through their respective embassies, consulates general, and the 2+2 Dialogue format. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Political Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Multilateral and Regional Cooperation pillar addressed later in this document.

3. Economic and Trade Cooperation

Overview

Economic and Trade Cooperation is the pillar in which the India-Russia relationship has, in the most recent fiscal year, achieved its most visible measurable success, while also revealing the structural imbalance that this framework identifies as the central challenge for the coming decade. Bilateral trade between India and Russia reached a record 68.69 billion United States dollars in the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year, a figure India's Commerce and Industry Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia described as reflecting the resilience, complementarity, and strategic nature of the economic partnership (Gulf Today, 2026). This trade volume represents a substantial increase from the roughly 35 billion dollars recorded just a few years earlier, when trade turnover grew 2.6 times to exceed the 30 billion dollar target that had originally been set for 2025 (Deccan Herald, n.d.).

Composition of Trade

The composition of India-Russia trade remains heavily concentrated in a narrow set of commodities, with energy dominating the import side. Russian exports to India are led by crude oil, fertilizers, and coal, while Indian exports to Russia are led by pharmaceutical and chemical products (IndexBox, 2026). Detailed figures from India's Department of Commerce show that, for the period through November 2025 in fiscal year 2025 to 2026, fertilizer imports from Russia stood at 2.11 billion dollars, animal and vegetable fats and oils at 966.3 million dollars, project goods at 564.53 million dollars, iron and steel at 343.31 million dollars, and pearls and precious and semi-precious stones at 299.32 million dollars, alongside smaller volumes of salt, sulphur, cement-related materials, machinery, paper, and edible vegetables (IBEF, 2026).

The scale of the imbalance this composition produces is significant. In the same period, Indian exports to Russia amounted to only 3.00 billion dollars against imports of 40.81 billion dollars, an imbalance ratio that other analyses have placed at approximately 13 to 1 when measured against the full fiscal year 2024 to 2025 figures of 4.88 billion dollars in exports against 63.84 billion dollars in imports (Vision IAS, 2025; IBEF, 2026). This imbalance is driven substantially by energy flows. In June 2025, India became the largest recipient of Russia's seaborne Urals crude oil, accounting for 80 percent of total shipments, a surge driven primarily by aggressive purchases from Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy at discounted prices (IBEF, 2026).

Institutional Mechanisms

Trade cooperation is coordinated through several standing mechanisms. The India-Russia Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation provides the working-level forum through which both governments address diversification, supply chain resilience, regulatory predictability, and balanced growth (PIB, 2025). Above this sits the India-Russia

Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, which functions as the apex government to government forum for the full range of bilateral economic engagement (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

The most significant recent institutional development is the launch of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union, the five member economic bloc comprising Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. India and the EAEU signed the Terms of Reference to begin these negotiations on August 20, 2025, in Moscow, with the Terms of Reference laying out an 18 month roadmap focused on opening new markets for Indian businesses, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises, farmers, and fishermen (News on Air, 2025a). At the time of signing, trade turnover between India and the EAEU as a bloc had already reached 69 billion dollars in 2024, a 7 percent increase over 2023 (News on Air, 2025b). The first formal round of negotiations was held in New Delhi in late November 2025, addressing customs administration, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical regulations, competition policy, intellectual property protection, and e-commerce, in addition to tariff liberalization (Interfax, 2025).

At the December 2025 summit, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed that the Free Trade Agreement was a central topic of discussion between Prime Minister Modi and President Putin, with both sides agreeing that negotiations should be fast tracked toward early conclusion within stipulated timelines, given the agreement's expected role in addressing the trade deficit (News on Air, 2025c). By May 2026, Russian Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov described the negotiations as complex, noting that India's requests were ambitious given the size and complexity of its economy, and indicated that the two sides were discussing a limited and temporary free trade arrangement covering selected categories of goods as an interim step while full negotiations continued (Business Standard, 2026). By mid-2026, reporting indicated that talks had gained renewed momentum, driven in part by India's search for export diversification following the imposition of tariffs of up to 50 percent on Indian goods entering the United States market, and by India's assumption of the BRICS chairship in 2026, under which deepening trade integration with the EAEU has been identified as a priority (Deliver2, 2026).

Structural Challenges

This framework identifies four structural challenges that must be addressed for the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar to achieve balanced, sustainable growth. First, India's overall Free Trade Agreement utilization rate stands at approximately 25 percent, far below the 70 to 80 percent utilization typically observed in developed economies, indicating that even where preferential trade terms exist, Indian exporters are not fully capturing their benefit (Drishti IAS, 2025). Second, non-tariff barriers, including bureaucratic delays, complex customs procedures, and regulatory inconsistency, continue to constrain the flow of goods in both directions (Drishti IAS, 2025). Third, sanitary and phytosanitary standards imposed by EAEU member states pose a persistent obstacle to Indian agricultural exports, limiting

diversification of the export basket beyond pharmaceuticals and chemicals (Drishti IAS, 2025). Fourth, continued reliance on the United States dollar for a portion of trade settlement introduces currency risk exposure that both governments have identified as a priority to reduce, with Russia and India already conducting the majority of mutual settlements in roubles and rupees, and with the New Development Bank financing infrastructure projects in both countries using yuan and national currencies as part of a broader de-dollarization effort (Deliver2, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions. First, both governments should adhere to the fast track timeline agreed at the December 2025 summit for concluding the India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement, prioritizing the interim limited and temporary trade arrangement discussed by Minister Reshetnikov as a bridging mechanism while full negotiations continue. Second, the Bilateral Investment Treaty discussions, which Foreign Secretary Misri identified as being expedited alongside the trade agreement, should be concluded on a parallel track, since investment flows and trade flows are mutually reinforcing (News on Air, 2025c). Third, both governments should establish a joint task force on non-tariff barrier reduction, with specific attention to harmonizing sanitary and phytosanitary standards to open agricultural export opportunities for India.

Fourth, India should prioritize improving its Free Trade Agreement utilization rate through targeted outreach to exporting micro, small, and medium enterprises, given that the EAEU agreement's Terms of Reference specifically identify this segment as a priority beneficiary (News on Air, 2025a). Fifth, both countries should continue expanding rouble and rupee denominated settlement infrastructure, in coordination with BRICS financial architecture initiatives, to reduce dependence on dollar denominated trade settlement. Sixth, a structured monitoring mechanism should be established to review progress on these commitments at regular intervals, with measurable targets for trade growth, investment facilitation, market access, and payment connectivity. Such institutional monitoring would help identify implementation bottlenecks early and ensure that agreed economic initiatives translate into sustained commercial outcomes for businesses in both countries.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Russia's Ministry of Economic Development, operating through the India-Russia Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation, the Intergovernmental Commission, and the India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement negotiating track. This pillar connects directly to the Financial Cooperation and Investment Cooperation pillars that follow.

4. Investment Cooperation

Overview

Investment Cooperation addresses the long-term capital flows between India and Russia, distinct from the trade flows covered in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar and the payment mechanisms covered in the Financial Cooperation pillar. Investment remains the least developed of the three economic pillars relative to its potential, and this framework identifies the absence of a modern legal protection framework, combined with the geopolitical disruption since 2022, as the primary constraints on its growth.

Current Investment Position

Russian investments in India total approximately 20 billion dollars, concentrated in oil and gas, petrochemicals, banking, railways, and steel, according to figures cited by President Putin in December 2024 (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.). Indian investments in Russia are estimated at approximately 16 billion dollars as of October 2023, focused primarily on oil and gas and pharmaceuticals, having grown from 6.5 billion dollars in 2011 (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.). Despite this growth, Russia occupies only the 31st position among sources of foreign direct investment into India, with cumulative FDI inflows of just 1.32 billion dollars between April 2000 and September 2025, a figure that stands in sharp contrast to the scale of the trade relationship and that this framework treats as clear evidence of untapped investment potential (IBEF, 2026).

The energy sector remains the dominant channel for investment in both directions. Indian public sector companies, including ONGC Videsh and Oil India, have invested in upstream oil and gas projects in the Russian Far East and Siberia since the early 2000s, with these holdings expanding further since 2024 (CallMissed, 2026). On the Russian side, Rosneft has committed more than 25 billion dollars toward Indian oil refining and fuel retail infrastructure, a figure that Commerce and Industry Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia has cited as underscoring the resilience and strategic depth of the economic partnership (IndexBox, 2026).

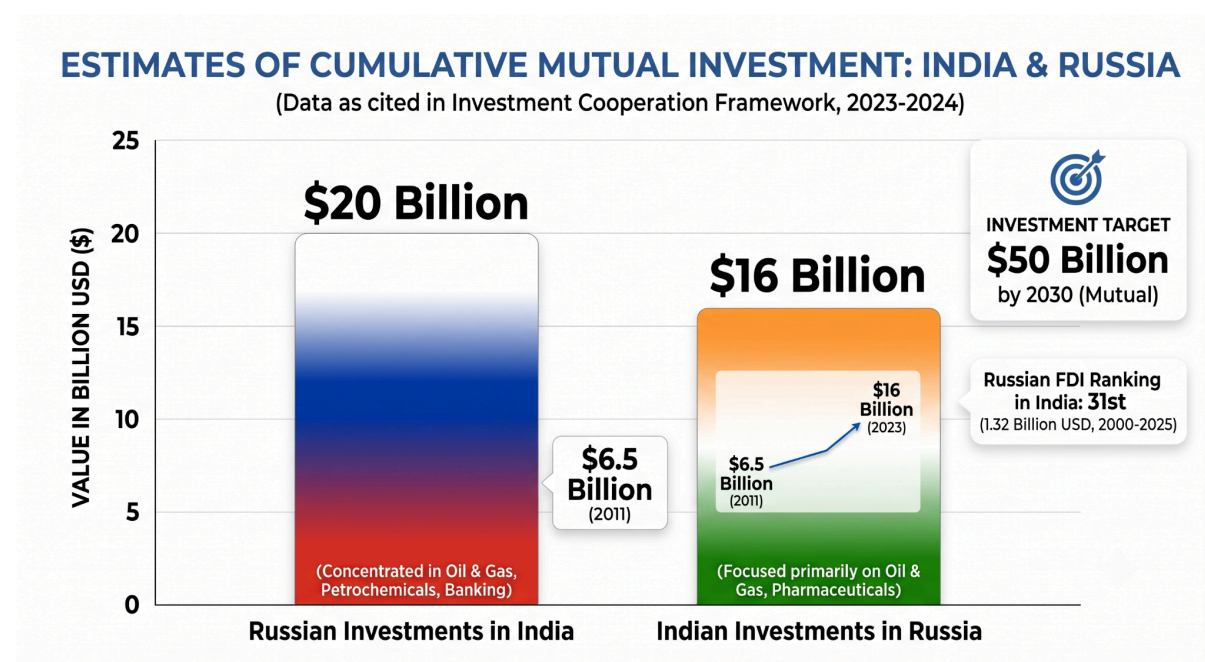
Beyond energy, Russian steelmaker Severstal has moved into Indian steel production, and Russian firms have expressed interest in India's dedicated freight corridor projects and broader steel modernization plans, contributing to an infrastructure and steel investment relationship valued at approximately 3.5 billion dollars (CallMissed, 2026).

The Bilateral Investment Treaty Gap

A central structural weakness in this pillar is the absence of a functioning Bilateral Investment Treaty. India and Russia signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in December 1994, which entered into force in August 1996 and provided for promotion and fair and equitable

treatment of mutual investments, but this treaty has since lapsed in relevance as both countries have revised their model investment treaty frameworks, leaving investors on both sides operating without a modern, mutually agreed legal protection mechanism (Observer Research Foundation, 2026). Officials from both governments resumed talks on a fresh investment treaty, recognizing complementary interests across sectors, with India focused on upstream oil and gas opportunities and Russia interested in downstream activities, and with India also exploring opportunities in Russia's Far East, including the Northern Sea Route, shipbuilding, and energy, while Russia has invited Indian investors into high-tech projects in its Far East region and India has encouraged Russian firms to establish manufacturing facilities in new Indian industrial cities (IndBiz, 2024).

At the 23rd Annual Summit in December 2025, both sides appreciated progress toward the India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement and specifically directed negotiators to intensify efforts toward a mutually beneficial agreement on the promotion and protection of investments, indicating that the treaty gap has been elevated to a leader-level priority rather than left solely to technical negotiators (Doordarshan News, 2026). Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed after the summit that both sides underscored the importance of expediting Bilateral Investment Treaty discussions specifically to help energize investment flows in both directions (News on Air, 2025).



Investment Targets and the Far East Opportunity

Investment targets between India and Russia have followed a similar trajectory to trade targets, with successive revisions upward. In December 2021, the two leaders set a target of achieving 50 billion dollars in bilateral investment by 2025, a target complicated by the changed geopolitical environment following 2022, which introduced sanctions exposure and payment friction that slowed the pace of new investment even as trade volumes grew

(Observer Research Foundation, 2026). The current target, reaffirmed at the December 2025 summit, is 50 billion dollars in mutual investment by 2030, alongside the 100 billion dollar trade target (Gulf Today, 2026).

The Russian Far East and Arctic region has emerged as a specific priority area for Indian investment. The December 2025 joint statement placed particular emphasis on Indian investments in the Russian Far East and Arctic, alongside new connectivity corridors and cooperation in emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and critical minerals (Sanskriti IAS, 2025). Both sides noted continued progress on cooperation along the Northern Sea Route, and Russia acknowledged India's participation in the 6th International Arctic Forum, held in Murmansk in March 2025 (Doordarshan News, 2026). During his December 2025 visit, President Putin invited Prime Minister Modi to visit Russia in 2026 for the 24th Annual Summit, with Far East and Arctic investment cooperation expected to remain a central agenda item (Doordarshan News, 2026).

Investment cooperation is also beginning to extend into advanced manufacturing linked to defence-industrial collaboration. On January 28, 2026, India and Russia entered technical talks on the possibility of joint production of Su-57 fighter jets, a development this framework identifies as carrying potential investment spillovers into advanced manufacturing capacity within India, consistent with the broader shift from procurement toward co-production described in the Political Cooperation pillar (IBEF, 2026).

Institutional Mechanisms

Investment discussions are channeled through the India-Russia Business Forum, which has convened in New Delhi in November 2024 and in Moscow in August 2025, alongside the 25th and 26th sessions of the IRIGC-TEC, both of which produced outcomes welcomed at the December 2025 summit (Doordarshan News, 2026). The Economic Cooperation Programme through 2030, adopted by Prime Minister Modi and President Putin at the December 2025 summit, provides the overarching framework within which investment targets are now tracked alongside trade targets, spanning energy, logistics, fertilizers, healthcare, and connectivity (IBEF, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions. First, negotiators should conclude the Bilateral Investment Treaty on the fast track timeline directed by both leaders at the December 2025 summit, given that the absence of modern legal protection is a primary deterrent to new investment on both sides. Second, both governments should establish a dedicated Far East and Arctic investment facilitation cell, building on the priority status already assigned to this region, to provide Indian investors with streamlined regulatory guidance and risk assessment support.

Third, India should expand incentives for Russian firms establishing manufacturing facilities in Indian industrial cities, building on the pattern already established with Severstal's entry into Indian steel production.

Fourth, both governments should work to close the gap between Russia's 31st ranking among sources of FDI into India and the scale of the broader trade relationship, through targeted investment promotion campaigns aimed at Russian firms in sectors beyond energy, including information technology, renewable energy, and metallurgy.

Fifth, defence-industrial investment cooperation, exemplified by the Su-57 joint production talks, should be extended into a broader co-production investment framework covering civilian advanced manufacturing sectors.



Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Russia's Ministry of Economic Development, operating through the India-Russia Business Forum and the IRIGC-TEC.

This pillar connects directly to the Economic and Trade Cooperation and Financial Cooperation pillars preceding it and to the Energy Cooperation pillar that follows.

5. Financial Cooperation

Overview

Financial Cooperation addresses the payment, settlement, and banking infrastructure that underpins the trade relationship described in the preceding pillar. This pillar has become one of the most actively negotiated areas of the India-Russia partnership since 2022, as Western sanctions on Russian financial institutions forced both countries to build alternative payment channels outside the conventional dollar-based system. The central challenge this framework identifies is that trade volume has grown far faster than the settlement infrastructure needed to support it, creating what one December 2025 industry study described as a settlement wall standing between India and its full trade potential with Russia (South Asian Herald, 2025).

Current Status of Payment Infrastructure

Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, the Reserve Bank of India permitted export and import operations to be conducted in Indian rupees, establishing the foundation for the rupee-rouble settlement mechanism now used across the bulk of bilateral trade (Observer Research Foundation, 2026). By early 2026, industry reporting indicated that approximately 90 percent of India-Russia trade was being settled in national currencies rather than the United States dollar, a substantial shift from the earlier dollar-intermediated system in which banks were required to conduct two nearly simultaneous conversions, first rupee to dollar and then dollar to rouble, to arrive at an effective exchange rate (Sadbhaav Spices, 2026; Business Standard, 2025).

This shift has been supported by a series of regulatory measures from the Reserve Bank of India. A circular issued in August 2025 allows Indian category-1 banks to open special rupee vostro accounts for their foreign correspondent banks without requiring prior Reserve Bank of India approval, streamlining a process that had previously been a significant bottleneck (Observer Research Foundation, 2026). In a further sign of deepening institutional integration, the Russian Central Bank is set to open a branch in Mumbai in 2026, a move both governments have described as reflecting the substantial increase in transaction volume within the rupee-rouble settlement mechanism (Observer Research Foundation, 2026).

Both countries continue to work on improving the interoperability of their payment systems, including mutual acceptance of bank cards and integration of financial messaging systems, although Russian officials have acknowledged that these efforts are only gradually developing and that Indian banks remain somewhat overcautious in working with Russian counterparts, given lingering concern about secondary sanctions exposure (Observer Research Foundation, 2026).

The question of financial messaging infrastructure has been a recurring point of negotiation. Russia has proposed that India adopt its System for Transfer of Financial Messages, known as

SPFS, as an alternative to SWIFT for rupee-rouble trade settlement. The Reserve Bank of India reviewed this proposal following discussions between Prime Minister Modi and President Putin and concluded that adoption was technically doable, although a final decision on implementation remained pending as of the most recent reporting (Ensure IAS, 2025). This followed an earlier agreement, signed in April 2023 between the two governments, under which India agreed in principle to adopt the SPFS system for banking payments to Russia, although implementation of that earlier commitment stalled amid concern among Indian banks about exposure to Western sanctions and amid a growing imbalance in bilateral trade that left Russian entities holding large, difficult-to-repatriate rupee surpluses (The Wire, 2023).

The Rupee Surplus Problem

A defining structural issue in India-Russia financial cooperation is the accumulation of rupees by Russian entities as a direct consequence of the trade imbalance addressed in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar. Because Indian imports from Russia, driven overwhelmingly by crude oil, vastly exceed Indian exports to Russia, Russian companies accumulate rupee holdings that are difficult to convert into other usable currency or to repatriate, since Russia has historically been reluctant to hold large rupee reserves, in a pattern similar to the earlier experience of the Iranian central bank under sanctions (The Wire, 2023).

Proposed solutions have included allowing Russian entities to invest surplus rupees in Indian government securities, corporate bonds, equities, or infrastructure projects, or to use accumulated rupees to fund imports from India for onward export to third countries (Sadbhaav Spices, 2026). Russia has in the past also expressed a preference for settlement in yuan or dirhams rather than accumulating rupees, an option India has been reluctant to pursue given the implications of routing bilateral trade through a third country's currency (The Wire, 2023).

The scale of the missed opportunity created by this settlement bottleneck was quantified in a study released by the Global Trade Research Initiative on December 5, 2025, during the Annual Summit. The study estimated that Indian merchandise exports to Russia could rise seven-fold to 35 billion dollars by 2030 if India were to tap into product segments where Russia is a major buyer and India is a globally competitive supplier, but concluded that this growth is not achievable without a modern, predictable rupee-rouble settlement system, warning that without such a system Russia may remain India's largest oil supplier without ever becoming a serious export market for Indian goods (South Asian Herald, 2025).

The same study found that Russia imported 13 billion dollars of food products in 2024, while India's combined exports of fruits, oils, meat, and dairy to Russia failed to cross 250 million dollars, illustrating the scale of underperformance attributable in part to settlement friction rather than lack of underlying demand (South Asian Herald, 2025).

Institutional Engagement

Financial cooperation is coordinated in part through the India-Russia Joint Business Council for banking and finance, which brings together central bank officials and commercial bankers from both countries. In a meeting held in Moscow, Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor T. Rabi Sankar and senior officials from public sector banks explored the establishment of a dynamic rupee-rouble exchange rate mechanism intended to eliminate the need for dollar-intermediated conversion, alongside efforts to establish a payment confirmation mechanism between banks in both countries (Business Standard, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Financial Cooperation pillar. First, both central banks should finalize and implement a direct rupee-rouble exchange rate mechanism that does not require dollar intermediation, building on the exploratory discussions already held by the India-Russia Joint Business Council for banking and finance.

Second, a decision on financial messaging system integration, whether through adoption of SPFS, development of a bespoke bilateral messaging arrangement, or another alternative, should be finalized rather than left in the pending status it has occupied since at least 2023, given the operational uncertainty this creates for banks on both sides.

Third, both governments should expand the range of permitted uses for Russian-held rupee surpluses, including investment in Indian government securities and capital markets, to reduce the disincentive for Russian entities to expand rupee-denominated trade.

Fourth, the Reserve Bank of India should continue to clarify and simplify special rupee Vostro account procedures for category-1 banks, building on the August 2025 circular, to address the overcaution Russian officials have identified among Indian banks.

Fifth, both governments should explore trilateral settlement arrangements with partners such as the United Arab Emirates, which serves as a major trade partner for both India and Russia, as a supplementary channel for cases where direct bilateral settlement remains constrained.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Reserve Bank of India, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, and the India-Russia Joint Business Council for banking and finance, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance of India and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation. This pillar is closely linked to the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Investment Cooperation pillar that follows.

6. Energy Cooperation

Overview

Energy Cooperation is the largest single component of the India-Russia relationship by trade value and remains the most mature axis of economic engagement. It spans crude oil and petroleum products, civil nuclear energy, natural gas, coal, and emerging cooperation in hydrocarbon exploration technology, and it interacts directly with the Economic and Trade Cooperation, Financial Cooperation, and Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillars.

Hydrocarbons

India imports over 85 percent of its crude oil demand, and Russia has become its single largest supplier since India surpassed China as the largest buyer of Russian oil in July 2024 (Drishti IAS, 2026). In June 2025, India accounted for 80 percent of Russia's total seaborne Urals crude shipments, driven by purchases from Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy at discounted prices (IBEF, 2026). This dependence has not been without complication. Reporting from June 2026 noted that the United States had become India's largest LPG supplier following Gulf supply disruptions in May 2026, even as Russian crude imports rose 24 percent month on month, while India simultaneously increased purchases from Venezuela and Oman to diversify its supply routes, and analysts flagged that a potential end to the United States sanctions waiver on Russian oil could raise India's crude import costs and add further complexity to its energy planning (Indian Defence News, 2026).

At the December 2025 summit, both governments reviewed ongoing and potential collaboration across oil and oil products, oil refining and petrochemical technologies, oilfield services and upstream technologies, liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas infrastructure, and underground coal gasification technology, and agreed to address concerns faced by energy investors and to work toward timely resolution of issues affecting energy investment projects (Doordarshan News, 2025a).

Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, President Putin projected that bilateral trade, then running at approximately 58 to 60 billion dollars, could reach 100 billion dollars, driven substantially by continued cooperation in hydrocarbons, nuclear energy, and investment, and stated that new platforms for hydrocarbon cooperation would continue to emerge (Doordarshan News, 2026a).

Civil Nuclear Energy

Civil nuclear energy is the flagship of India-Russia energy cooperation and, in the words of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, positions Russia as India's foremost partner in this domain, with the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project cited as a stellar example of the relationship (BusinessToday, 2026). The Kudankulam plant, India's largest nuclear power

generation complex, located in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district, was initiated under an intergovernmental agreement signed in 1988 and is built and operated jointly by India's Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and Russia's Atomstroyexport, a subsidiary of Rosatom (Vision IAS, 2026). The plant consists of six units of 1,000 megawatts electric each. Units 1 and 2 are operational, having connected to the national grid in 2013 and 2016 respectively, while Units 3 and 4 are in advanced construction and Units 5 and 6 are under construction, with the project moving closer to its full 6,000 megawatt electric capacity as of mid-2026 (Vision IAS, 2026).

At the December 2025 summit, both leaders reaffirmed adherence to timelines for equipment and fuel supplies at Kudankulam and confirmed their intention to broaden nuclear cooperation to include the fuel cycle, life cycle support for the operating plant, and non-power applications, while agreeing to elaborate a new agenda for peaceful uses of atomic energy and related high technologies (World Nuclear News, 2025).

The two sides also agreed to accelerate technical and commercial discussions on Russian-designed VVER reactors, alongside joint research, localization, and manufacturing of nuclear equipment and fuel assemblies (BusinessToday, 2026).

A second nuclear power plant site in India remains under discussion, with the Indian side committed to finalizing formal allotment in accordance with earlier agreements, potentially including a coastal Andhra Pradesh location that has been discussed in past summit cycles (Doordarshan News, 2025a; Deccan Herald, n.d.). Jaishankar has linked this cooperation to India's broader ambition of increasing nuclear energy generation capacity to 100 gigawatts by 2047, describing Russia as a trusted and reliable partner for that goal (BusinessToday, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments finalize the formal allotment of the second nuclear power plant site without further delay, that they establish a dedicated energy investment dispute resolution mechanism to address the investor concerns acknowledged at the December 2025 summit, that India continue diversifying crude oil sourcing to manage exposure to potential changes in the United States sanctions waiver, and that both sides expedite cooperation on liquefied natural gas and underground coal gasification technology as a means of diversifying the energy relationship beyond crude oil.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Department of Atomic Energy, and Russia's Ministry of Energy and Rosatom, operating through the IIRGC-TEC and dedicated nuclear cooperation working groups.

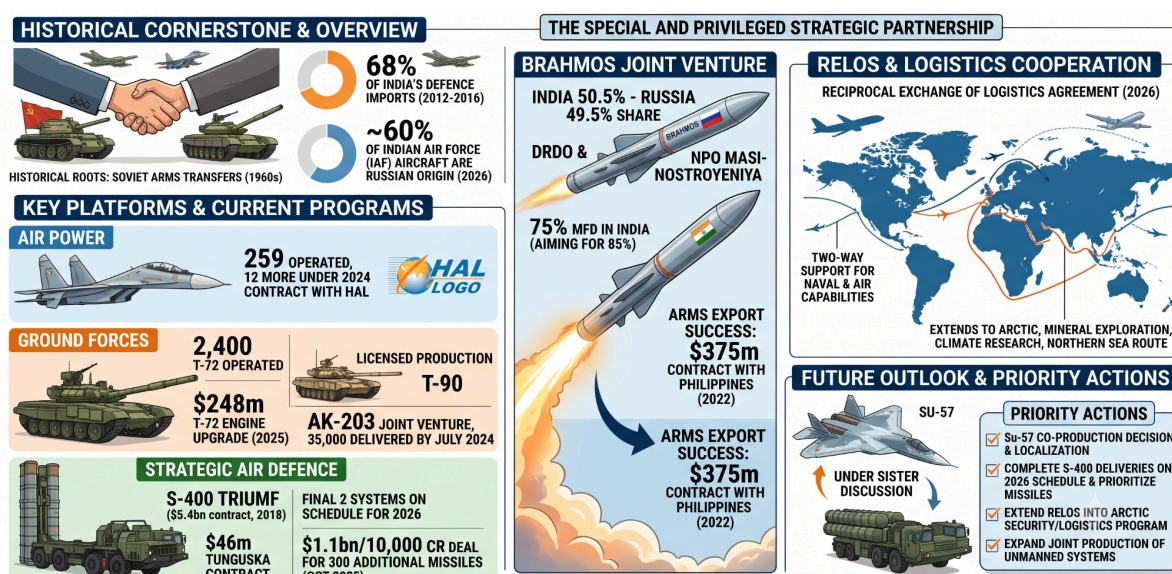
7. Defence and Security Cooperation

Overview

Defence and Security Cooperation is the most historically established pillar of the India-Russia relationship, tracing its roots to Soviet arms transfers beginning in the 1960s, and it remains the cornerstone of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. Between 2012 and 2016, Russia accounted for 68 percent of India's defence imports, and nearly 60 percent of Indian Air Force aircraft remain of Russian origin today (Eurasian Times, 2026; Airpower Asia, 2026). Cooperation is governed by a Long-Term Military-Technical Cooperation Pact, extended until 2031 (SpecialEurasia, 2025).

Current Platforms and Programs

India's defence relationship with Russia spans multiple major platforms. India operates 259 Russian-designed Su-30 MKI fighters, with a 2024 contract awarding Hindustan Aeronautics Limited production of twelve more (War on the Rocks, 2025). India's tank fleet includes 2,400 Russian-made T-72 tanks, supported by a 248 million dollar 2025 contract for new 1,000 horsepower engines, alongside the T-90 tank produced under license in India (War on the Rocks, 2025; Sanskriti IAS, 2025). The Russian AK-203 assault rifle is produced in India through a joint venture that had delivered 35,000 rifles to the Indian Army by July 2024 (War on the Rocks, 2025). India is receiving and deploying S-400 long-range air defence systems under a 5.4 billion dollar contract signed in 2018, with the final two of five systems, delayed by Russia's war in Ukraine, brought back on schedule for delivery in 2026, and India has expressed interest in an additional batch (Moscow Times, 2026). In October 2025, India initiated a 10,000 crore rupee, approximately 1.1 billion dollar, deal to acquire 300 additional missiles to replenish its S-400 systems (Eurasian Times, 2026). The S-400 and Su-30 MKI-BrahMos combination reportedly performed well during Operation Sindoor (The Secretariat, 2026; Airpower Asia, 2026).



BrahMos remains the flagship joint venture of the relationship, a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya, in which India holds a 50.5 percent stake, with 75 percent of the missile currently manufactured in India and plans to raise this to 85 percent (Eurasian Times, 2026). BrahMos has become one of India's few significant arms export successes, including a 375 million dollar contract with the Philippines signed in 2022 with first deliveries in 2024 (War on the Rocks, 2025).

Negotiations are underway on further-reaching programs, including potential joint production of the Su-57 fifth generation fighter jet, with technical talks initiated on January 28, 2026, and Russia reportedly offering unrestricted technology transfer and localization of production as part of the discussions (IBEF, 2026; ORF, 2025). Russia has also offered its S-500 air defence system for joint production, and analysts have raised the possibility of cooperation on the R-37M air-to-air missile and joint development of loitering munitions given shared requirements for large-scale drone production (Airpower Asia, 2026).

RELOS and Logistics Cooperation

A significant recent development is the India-Russia Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement, known as RELOS, operationalized in 2026, which establishes a two-way logistics support arrangement expected to bolster naval and air capabilities on both sides (The Secretariat, 2026). Analysts note that although not explicit in the text of the agreement, RELOS is expected to support cooperation in mineral exploration, climate research, and development of the Northern Sea Route, extending its relevance into the Arctic and connecting this pillar directly to the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar that follows (Eurasia Review, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments conclude the pending decision on Su-57 co-production with a clear localization roadmap, that the delayed S-400 deliveries be completed on the 2026 schedule with the additional missile batch prioritized, that RELOS implementation be extended into a defined joint Arctic security and logistics program, and that both sides expand joint production of unmanned systems given shared operational requirements.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Defence and Russia's Ministry of Defence, operating through the 2+2 Dialogue and the IRIGC-M&MTC division of the Intergovernmental Commission.

8. Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation

Overview

Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation addresses the sea-based connectivity infrastructure linking India and Russia, a domain that has moved from concept to active implementation since 2024. Three corridors anchor this pillar: the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor, the International North-South Transport Corridor, and the Northern Sea Route through the Russian Arctic.

The Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor

First proposed in 2019, the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor received renewed momentum at the December 2025 summit. The corridor connects Chennai on India's east coast with Vladivostok in Russia's Far East, passing through the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, and the Malacca Strait (Drishti IAS, 2025b). It reduces the shipping distance from 8,675 nautical miles via the traditional St. Petersburg to Mumbai route through Europe to 5,600 nautical miles, cutting transit time from over 40 days to just 24 days, a change of particular significance given that India imports over 85 percent of its crude oil demand and has become the largest buyer of Russian oil (Drishti IAS, 2025b). The corridor is used primarily for crude oil, coking coal, fertilizers, and metals.

INSTC and the Northern Sea Route

The International North-South Transport Corridor, a roughly 7,200 kilometre multimodal route combining ship, rail, and road links connecting India to Russia via Iran, has also seen concrete progress. In November 2025, the first full eastern-arm cargo movement reached Central Asia via this corridor, with a cargo train completing a 900 kilometre journey to the Aprin dry port in Tehran in 12 days, crossing Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (Doordarshan News, 2025b). At the December 2025 summit, Prime Minister Modi and President Putin directed their teams to make the INSTC, the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor, and the Northern Sea Route stable and efficient, agreeing to deepen cooperation on expanding logistics links, improving connectivity, and enhancing infrastructure capacity across all three corridors (Doordarshan News, 2025b). Both sides also stressed the importance of regular bilateral consultations on Arctic issues and noted progress on the Northern Sea Route, with Russia appreciating India's participation in the 6th International Arctic Forum held in Murmansk in March 2025 (Doordarshan News, 2025c).

As part of Putin's December 2025 visit, India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Russia's Ministry of Transport signed a memorandum of understanding on training specialists for ships operating in polar waters, a measure directly supporting India's capacity to participate in Northern Sea Route shipping (Business Standard, 2025). Russia has further proposed a Rosatom-led Northern Sea Route cooperation framework with India, with Putin

describing accelerated cooperation across the roughly 3,500-mile Northern Sea Route, the 4,500-mile INSTC, and the 6,450-mile Eastern Maritime Corridor under the new bilateral agreements reached in December 2025 (RT, 2025). A broader Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor concept, an expanded Russian connectivity initiative that would absorb the Northern Sea Route as a key section, has also been identified as a source of new business opportunities for both countries, though it remains at an earlier stage of development than the three named corridors (MP-IDSA, 2026).

Strategic Significance

This framework identifies maritime connectivity as serving both economic and strategic functions. Analysts have described the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor as a potential cornerstone of regional integration across Eurasia, and as an expression of India's strategic autonomy, since it offers an alternative to routes dominated by other powers' infrastructure initiatives, including China's Polar Silk Road expansion into Russian Arctic shipping and energy infrastructure (Diplomatist, 2026; Eurasia Review, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends completion of port and rail infrastructure upgrades at Chennai and Vladivostok to handle projected cargo volume growth, expansion of the polar seafarer training program into a standing joint maritime academy arrangement, a joint feasibility study on India's role in Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor development, and integration of RELOS logistics support with Eastern Maritime Corridor and Northern Sea Route shipping operations. Both governments should also establish a dedicated India-Russia maritime coordination mechanism to monitor infrastructure development, shipping connectivity, cargo movement, and operational bottlenecks across these corridors. Particular attention should be given to improving multimodal connectivity between ports, railways, and inland logistics networks, thereby reducing transit times and transportation costs. India and Russia should promote greater participation by private logistics operators, shipping companies, port authorities, and infrastructure investors to ensure commercially sustainable corridor development. Joint research on Arctic navigation, polar logistics, maritime safety, climate resilience, and emerging shipping technologies should further strengthen long-term cooperation and support the development of reliable, secure, and diversified Eurasian maritime connectivity.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Russia's Ministry of Transport, in coordination with Rosatom for Arctic and Northern Sea Route matters.

9. Water Resources Cooperation

Overview

Water Resources Cooperation is, by comparison with the pillars preceding it, the least developed area of the India-Russia relationship, and this framework treats it candidly as a nascent rather than a mature pillar. Unlike India's water diplomacy with neighbouring countries, which is shaped by shared transboundary rivers and long-standing treaty frameworks such as the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 with Pakistan and hydrological data-sharing arrangements with China, India and Russia do not share a common river basin, and there is accordingly no equivalent bilateral water-sharing treaty architecture between them (Vajiram and Ravi, 2026a, 2026b). This framework's inclusion of Water Resources Cooperation as a standalone pillar reflects a forward-looking judgment that scientific, technological, and Arctic-linked water management cooperation represents an underdeveloped opportunity rather than a documentation of existing extensive bilateral activity.

Current Basis for Cooperation

The most direct link between the two countries in this domain runs through the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, signed between India and Russia, which explicitly identifies water, alongside climate and natural resources, as one of its designated thematic areas for joint research, alongside a separate theme dedicated to polar research (Department of Science and Technology, n.d.). This linkage connects Water Resources Cooperation directly to the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar that follows and to the Arctic-focused elements of the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar addressed earlier, particularly the memorandum of understanding on training specialists for polar water operations signed during the December 2025 summit (Business Standard, 2025).

India's broader water diplomacy experience, including its India-EU Water Partnership, established in 2016 and now in its third phase, focused on river basin management, climate resilience, and urban flooding in the Tapi and Ramganga river basins, offers a template that this framework recommends India consider extending to Russia, given the compatibility of institutional approach even in the absence of a shared river system (Deccan Herald, n.d.). Russia possesses substantial expertise in cold-region hydrology, permafrost hydrology, and large-river basin management relevant to Siberia's major rivers, expertise that could usefully inform Indian institutions working on glacial-fed Himalayan river systems, particularly in the context of climate change impacts on glacial melt.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions to build this pillar from its current limited base. First, both governments should establish a dedicated India-Russia Water

Partnership, modelled on the existing India-EU Water Partnership, under the umbrella of the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, with an initial focus on hydrological monitoring technology and flood forecasting systems. Second, Indian institutions engaged in Himalayan glacial and river basin research, including agencies responsible for the National Hydrology Project, should be connected with Russian scientific institutions specializing in cold-region and permafrost hydrology, given the relevance of Russian Arctic and Siberian expertise to Indian high-altitude water management challenges.

Third, cooperation on Arctic hydrology and permafrost research should be formally integrated into the polar research theme of the Science, Technology and Innovation Roadmap, building on the momentum already created by the polar seafarer training memorandum of understanding. Fourth, both countries should explore joint capacity building in water treatment and desalination technology, an area of potential commercial as well as scientific cooperation, as bilateral investment in industrial and municipal infrastructure expands under the pillars addressed earlier in this framework.

Fifth, India and Russia should establish a joint water-data exchange mechanism to facilitate the systematic sharing of hydrological, meteorological, cryospheric, and river-basin data relevant to research and disaster preparedness. Such a mechanism could support real-time or near-real-time information exchange during floods, glacial lake outburst events, droughts, and other water-related emergencies, while maintaining appropriate national data-security protocols. Sixth, the two countries should develop joint research programmes on climate change and its implications for water availability, particularly focusing on Himalayan glaciers, snowmelt patterns, groundwater recharge, changing precipitation regimes, and the stability of Arctic and Siberian permafrost systems.

Seventh, cooperation should extend to water-efficient agriculture and irrigation technologies, including precision irrigation, remote sensing, wastewater reuse, and digital water-management systems. Joint pilot projects could be undertaken in water-stressed regions of India while drawing upon Russian expertise in managing water resources across geographically challenging environments. Eighth, Indian and Russian universities, research institutes, technology companies, and public agencies should be encouraged to establish joint laboratories and researcher-exchange programmes dedicated to hydrology, water engineering, cryosphere science, and aquatic ecosystem management.

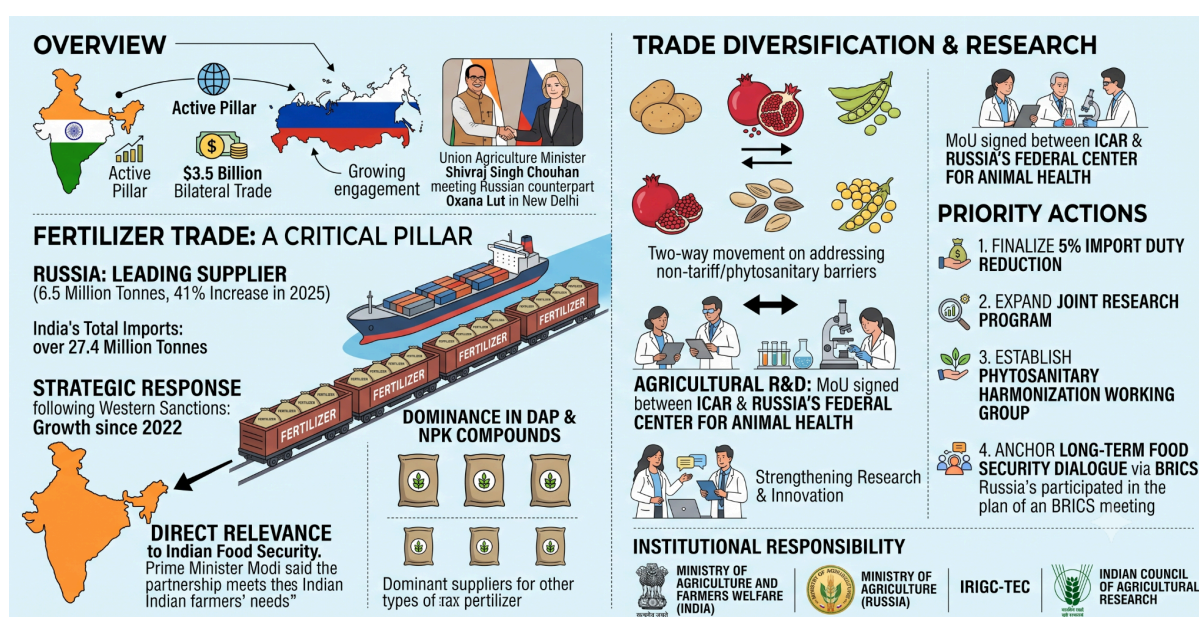
Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for developing this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Jal Shakti and Department of Science and Technology, working with Russia's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and relevant Russian Academy of Sciences institutes, under the umbrella of the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation.

10. Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation

Overview

Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation has emerged as an active and growing pillar of the relationship, anchored by Russia's role as India's leading fertilizer supplier and by expanding two-way engagement on agricultural trade, research, and food processing. Bilateral agricultural trade currently stands at approximately 3.5 billion dollars, a figure Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan highlighted during a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Oxana Lut, held in New Delhi around the December 2025 summit, while emphasizing the need for more balanced trade in this pillar (News on Air, 2025a).



Fertilizer Trade

Fertilizer supply is the single largest component of agricultural cooperation and a matter of direct relevance to Indian food security, given that India imports approximately one-third of its total fertilizer consumption of roughly 60 million tonnes annually, spanning urea, diammonium phosphate, NPK compounds, and potash (Whalesbook, 2025). India increased imports of Russian fertilizer by 41 percent to 6.5 million tonnes in 2025, as India's total fertilizer imports jumped 45 percent to over 27.4 million tonnes, with Russia emerging as the largest single supplier, ahead of China, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Oman (Interfax, 2026).

Russia's dominance is particularly pronounced in diammonium phosphate and NPK compound fertilizers, supplying 18 lakh tonnes of diammonium phosphate and 18.27 lakh tonnes of NPK in the 2024 to 2025 period, making Russia India's single most diversified fertilizer supplier across product categories, even as Oman remains dominant in urea and Saudi Arabia and Morocco dominate potash supply (FertiliserIndia, 2025).

This growth reflects a deliberate strategic response following the introduction of Western sanctions on Russia. According to the President of the Russian Fertilizers Producers Association, Andrey Guryev, Russian fertilizer exports to India nearly tripled in 2022 to 4.3 million tonnes, driven largely by increased phosphate-based fertilizer deliveries, and rose a further 50 percent in 2023, with Russia accounting for approximately 25 percent of all fertilizers imported by India by that point (Malay Mail, 2024). Prime Minister Modi has directly credited this cooperation with resolving fertilizer supply difficulties for Indian farmers, telling President Putin that the two countries' friendship met all of Indian farmers' fertilizer needs (World Grain, 2024).

Uralchem Group, one of Russia's major fertilizer producers with cumulative production capacity of approximately 25 million tonnes, has identified India as a strategic market and signalled continued commitment to expanding supply, with Russia potentially able to supply up to 25 percent of India's fertilizer imports in a given year (Whalesbook, 2025).

Remaining barriers include a 5 percent Indian import duty on mineral fertilizers, which Russian industry representatives have identified as a cost burden on Indian farmers that removal would directly address, and broader trade barriers that Russian producers have said constrain their capacity to expand supply further despite strong underlying demand (Malay Mail, 2024).

Agricultural Trade Diversification and Research

Beyond fertilizers, both governments have moved to address non-tariff barriers affecting Indian agricultural exports to Russia. In a meeting held ahead of the December 2025 summit, Union Agriculture Minister Chouhan raised concerns with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev over phytosanitary and non-tariff barriers imposed on Indian agricultural exports, and sought greater cooperation in agricultural research and development between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Russian agricultural research institutions (Business Standard, 2026). Between April and July 2025 alone, India imported 90,000 tonnes of yellow peas from Russia, representing 11 percent of India's total peas imports from all sources during that period, illustrating the diversification of agricultural trade beyond fertilizers into food grains and pulses (Business Standard, 2026).

At the December 2025 meeting between Chouhan and Lut, both sides agreed to boost bilateral agricultural trade and explore new opportunities in food grain and horticulture exports, and Chouhan specifically thanked his Russian counterpart for resolving long-pending issues related to the export of Indian potatoes, pomegranates, and seeds to the Russian market (News on Air, 2025a).

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Russia's Federal Center for Animal Health to strengthen cooperation in agricultural research, innovation, and capacity building, and Chouhan invited Russia to

participate in the BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting to be hosted by India, reflecting India's assumption of the BRICS chairship in 2026 (News on Air, 2025a). This built on an earlier meeting in September 2025, when Prime Minister Modi met Deputy Prime Minister Patrushev at World Food India 2025 to discuss strengthening cooperation in agriculture, fertilizers, and food processing (News on Air, 2025b).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments finalize removal or reduction of India's 5 percent import duty on mineral fertilizers as part of the broader EAEU Free Trade Agreement negotiations described in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar, that the memorandum of understanding between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Russia's Federal Center for Animal Health be expanded into a broader joint agricultural research program covering crop science and food processing technology, that both sides establish a standing phytosanitary harmonization working group to resolve barriers affecting Indian horticultural exports, and that Russia's participation in the BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting hosted by India be used to anchor a longer-term bilateral food security dialogue addressing supply resilience for both countries.

In addition, India and Russia should establish a dedicated agricultural trade facilitation mechanism to identify and address logistical, regulatory, certification, and payment-related constraints affecting bilateral agricultural commerce. Particular attention should be given to expanding trade in pulses, cereals, oilseeds, fertilizers, animal products, processed foods, and horticultural commodities. Both governments should encourage joint ventures in agricultural processing, cold-chain infrastructure, storage, packaging, and logistics, thereby reducing post-harvest losses and increasing value addition. Cooperation should also include the exchange of agricultural data, climate-resilient farming practices, precision agriculture technologies, and innovations in sustainable fertilizer use. Indian agricultural universities and research institutions should be linked with relevant Russian counterparts through researcher exchanges, joint laboratories, and collaborative field trials. Finally, the proposed food security dialogue should develop early-warning mechanisms for disruptions in fertilizer, grain, and other essential agricultural commodity supplies, strengthening the resilience of both countries against climate shocks, geopolitical disruptions, and fluctuations in international commodity markets.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Russia's Ministry of Agriculture, operating through the IRIGC-TEC and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's institutional partnerships with Russian counterparts.

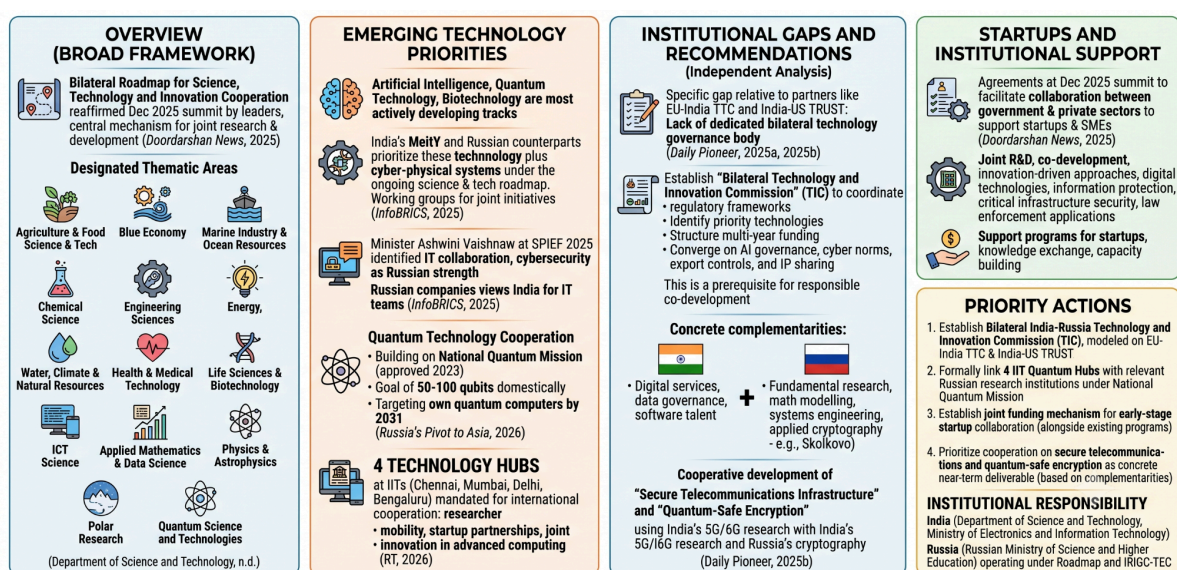
11. Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation

Overview

Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation is governed by the bilateral Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, which both leaders reaffirmed at the December 2025 summit as a central mechanism for joint research and development (Doordarshan News, 2025). The roadmap identifies a wide set of designated thematic areas, including agriculture and food science and technology, blue economy, marine industry, and ocean resources, chemical science, engineering sciences, energy, water, climate, and natural resources, health and medical technology, life sciences and biotechnology, information and communications technology, applied mathematics and data science, materials science, physics and astrophysics, polar research, and quantum science and technologies (Department of Science and Technology, n.d.).

Emerging Technology Priorities

Within this broad framework, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and biotechnology have emerged as the most actively developing tracks. India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and its Russian counterparts have prioritized biotechnology, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and cyber-physical systems under the ongoing science and technology roadmap, with working groups tasked with implementing joint initiatives in these areas (InfoBRICS, 2025). At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in 2025, India's Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, identified multiple areas of collaboration in information technology, with cybersecurity highlighted as a particular Russian strength, and noted that Russian companies increasingly view India as a base for establishing information technology teams (InfoBRICS, 2025).



Quantum technology cooperation has advanced through direct proposals from the Indian side. India has proposed quantum computing collaboration with Russia, building on the National Quantum Mission, which the Indian federal government approved in 2023 under the leadership of the Department of Atomic Energy, and which aims to build quantum computers with between 50 and 100 qubits domestically, with India targeting development of its own quantum computers by 2031 (Russia's Pivot to Asia, 2026). India has established four technology hubs, at the Indian Institutes of Technology in Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru, explicitly mandated to pursue international cooperation, including researcher mobility, startup partnerships, and joint innovation efforts in advanced computing (RT, 2026).

Institutional Gaps and Recommendations from Independent Analysis

Independent policy analysis published around the December 2025 summit identified a specific institutional gap in the India-Russia technology relationship relative to India's other major technology partnerships. Unlike the EU-India Trade and Technology Council, which operates joint working groups on semiconductors, high-performance computing, trustworthy artificial intelligence, and digital governance, and the India-United States TRUST Initiative, which has produced joint quantum network testbed work and cooperation on advanced materials, India and Russia currently lack a comparable dedicated bilateral technology governance body (Daily Pioneer, 2025a, 2025b).

The same analysis recommended establishment of a bilateral Technology and Innovation Commission to coordinate regulatory frameworks, identify priority technologies, and structure multi-year funding, arguing that such an architecture would allow both countries to converge on artificial intelligence governance, cyber norms, export controls, and intellectual property sharing frameworks, framing this as a prerequisite for responsible co-development in critical technologies (Daily Pioneer, 2025a). The analysis further identified concrete complementarities that a broader technology partnership could exploit, noting that India's strengths in digital services, data governance, and software talent align with Russia's strengths in fundamental research, mathematical modelling, systems engineering, and applied cryptography, including research conducted at institutions such as Skolkovo, and suggested that cooperative development of secure telecommunications infrastructure and quantum-safe encryption could build on India's indigenous fifth and sixth generation telecommunications research alongside Russia's applied cryptography ecosystem (Daily Pioneer, 2025b).

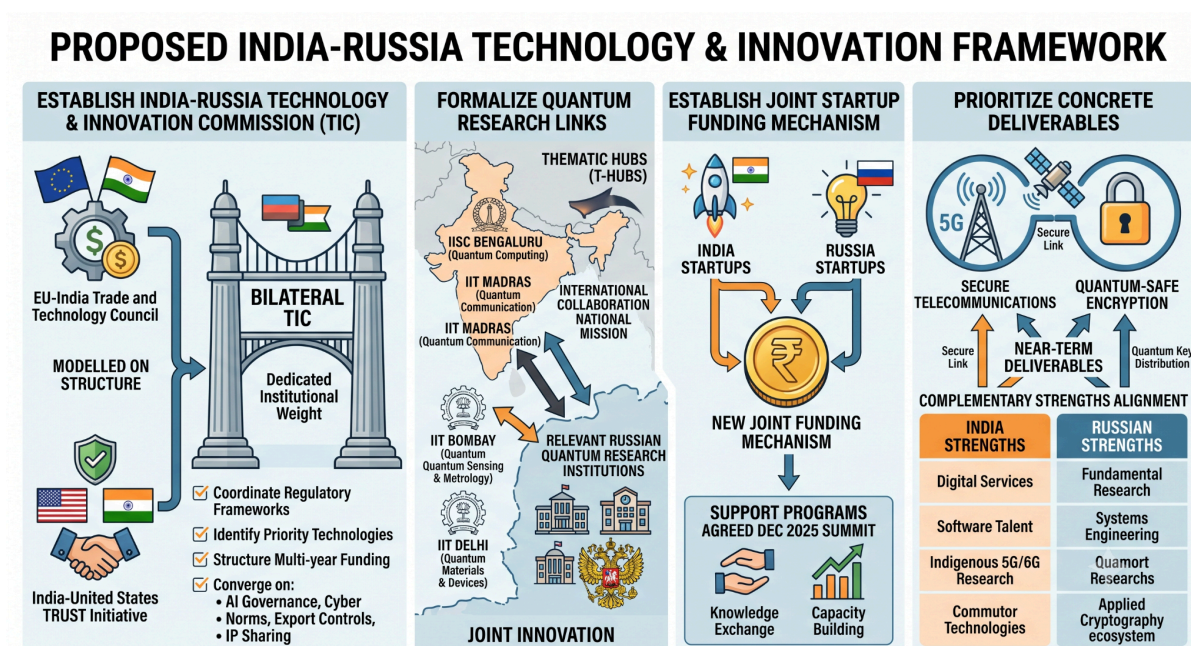
Startups and Institutional Support

At the December 2025 summit, both leaders agreed to facilitate collaboration between government and private sectors to support startups and small and medium enterprises from both countries, encompassing joint research and development, co-development of technologies, and innovation-driven approaches to shared societal challenges (Doordarshan News, 2025). Both sides confirmed interest in expanding cooperation in digital technologies, including information protection, critical infrastructure security, and law enforcement

applications, and agreed to implement support programs for startups to enable knowledge exchange, capacity building, and greater engagement between innovators and entrepreneurs in both countries (Doordarshan News, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends establishment of a bilateral India-Russia Technology and Innovation Commission, modelled on the structure of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council and the India-United States TRUST Initiative, to provide dedicated institutional weight to this pillar. It further recommends that the four Indian Institute of Technology quantum hubs be formally linked with relevant Russian quantum research institutions under the National Quantum Mission's international collaboration mandate, that a joint funding mechanism for early-stage startup collaboration be established alongside the support programs already agreed at the December 2025 summit, and that cooperation on secure telecommunications and quantum-safe encryption be prioritized as a concrete near-term deliverable given the direct complementarity between Indian and Russian technical strengths identified by independent analysts.



Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, together with the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education, operating under the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation and the IRIGC-TEC.

12. Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation

Overview

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation is distinguished in this framework from the broader Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar by its focus specifically on frontier computing capacity, large-scale artificial intelligence model development, and the infrastructure that underpins them. Independent analysis published in November 2025 offers a candid assessment of the current scale of this cooperation, noting that no verifiable joint programme currently exists to pool resources, share datasets, or co-train artificial intelligence models at scale between India and Russia (DebugLies, 2025). This framework treats that assessment as the honest starting point for a pillar with substantial aspirational potential but a thin current base of joint activity.

Current Capacity and Constraints

India's IndiaAI Mission, approved in March 2024, has initiated procurement of between 10,000 and 18,000 graphics processing units by 2026, with a longer-term ambition to reach more than 100,000 units through public-private partnerships, but current operational capacity for frontier model training remains below 3,000 high-end accelerator cards across government facilities, including the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing's PARAM Siddhi and AIRAWAT systems, and private entities such as Reliance Jio and Yotta (DebugLies, 2025). No domestically trained Indian language model exceeds 70 billion parameters in public benchmarks as of the most recent reporting, and India's indigenous semiconductor fabrication capacity, currently under construction, targets a 28 nanometre process node only by 2027 to 2028 at the earliest (DebugLies, 2025). The same analysis notes that the combined compute and capital resources of India and Russia together remain more than an order of magnitude below China alone and two orders of magnitude below the United States, underscoring the scale of the gap this pillar would need to close (DebugLies, 2025).

Areas of Active Engagement

Despite these constraints, concrete points of engagement exist. Discussions at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in 2025 highlighted the potential to combine Russia's expertise in hardware-level cybersecurity and mathematical foundations with India's scalable software engineering and implementation capabilities (InfoBRICS, 2025). Under the inter-ministerial roadmap referenced in the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar, working groups are implementing joint initiatives spanning biotechnology, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and oceanography (InfoBRICS, 2025). Joint research and development centres are reported to be operating in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, alongside educational exchange programmes between Russia's Sirius education centre and India's Atal Innovation Mission, along with early-stage artificial intelligence pilot projects (Sberbank, 2026). Industry analysis from Sberbank's India branch estimates that, according to expert projections, expanded cooperation in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence could

generate up to 200 billion dollars in additional annual revenue for both countries by 2030, driven by Russia's interest in scaling exports of digital solutions to help address the broader bilateral trade imbalance, and India's interest in strengthening national cyber defence and accelerating its domestic artificial intelligence market (Sberbank, 2026).

Both countries have also expressed convergent interest in reducing dependence on Western-dominated technology ecosystems, a posture both have characterized as pursuing digital sovereignty (InfoBRICS, 2025). Within the BRICS framework, discussions have explored interoperability between Russia's MIR payment card system and India's Unified Payments Interface and RuPay systems, though no bilateral mechanism had been operationalized as of November 2025 (DebugLies, 2025).

Strategic Context

This framework notes that India's broader digital sovereignty posture, shaped in part by incidents such as the 2025 disruption to Nayara Energy's corporate email, collaboration tools, and cloud data access following Microsoft's enforcement of sanctions linked to the company's Russian ownership, has intensified Indian policy interest in reducing dependence on a small number of foreign technology providers and building sovereign cloud, computing, and artificial intelligence infrastructure (KPIAS Academy, 2026). This dynamic creates a structural rationale for deeper India-Russia cooperation in this domain, since both countries share an interest in technological alternatives that are not subject to unilateral foreign sanctions enforcement, even as India continues to balance this consideration against its substantial and separate technology relationships with the United States and other Western partners.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia establish a joint compute-sharing and research collaboration framework specifically targeting foundational artificial intelligence model development, building on the existing Uttar Pradesh research centres and Sirius-Atal Innovation Mission exchange. It further recommends that both countries formalize the payment system interoperability discussions between MIR and UPI or RuPay that have so far remained informal, that a dedicated joint venture be explored to combine Russian hardware-level cybersecurity expertise with Indian software implementation scale, consistent with the synergy identified at the 2025 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, and that both governments set explicit, time-bound targets for this pillar given the current gap between rhetorical commitment and measurable joint output identified by independent analysts.

Beyond these immediate measures, both governments should establish an India-Russia Digital and Emerging Technology Council to provide institutional oversight for cooperation in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, quantum technologies, semiconductors, cloud computing, robotics, and digital public infrastructure. The council should include

representatives from relevant ministries, research institutions, universities, technology companies, and innovation agencies, allowing policy priorities to be connected directly with commercial and research implementation. A joint fund for high-impact technology research could also be established to finance collaborative projects, doctoral research, technology demonstrators, and early-stage innovation with clearly defined deliverables.

Artificial intelligence cooperation should place particular emphasis on multilingual and domain-specific foundation models, including models capable of processing Indian and Russian languages and supporting applications in education, healthcare, agriculture, public administration, scientific research, and translation. Joint research should also address AI safety, model evaluation, data governance, intellectual property protection, and responsible deployment. Both countries should develop secure mechanisms for sharing non-sensitive datasets and research resources while maintaining appropriate national data-protection requirements.

In the cybersecurity domain, India and Russia should create structured mechanisms for exchanging expertise on critical infrastructure protection, hardware security, secure communications, cyber threat intelligence, and resilience of financial and government digital systems. Joint cybersecurity exercises could be conducted periodically to test institutional preparedness and develop common protocols for responding to major cyber incidents. Cooperation should also encourage domestic manufacturing and technology transfer rather than creating excessive dependence on imported technological components.

Digital payments represent another practical area where cooperation can produce measurable outcomes. The two countries should conduct technical feasibility studies for greater interoperability between UPI, RuPay, and Russia's MIR system, beginning with controlled pilot arrangements for tourists, students, businesses, and selected financial institutions. Finally, both governments should adopt an annual implementation scorecard covering the number of joint research projects, researchers exchanged, patents or technological outputs generated, pilot projects launched, computing capacity made available, cybersecurity exercises conducted, and progress toward payment-system interoperability. This measurable approach would transform broad political commitments into an accountable technology partnership and provide a basis for reviewing priorities at each annual bilateral summit.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Department of Science and Technology, together with Russia's Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, operating through the inter-ministerial roadmap referenced in the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar.

13. Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation

Overview

Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation addresses the protection of critical information infrastructure, data governance frameworks, and joint response to cyber threats, an area both governments have identified as a priority sector alongside pharmaceuticals and energy in recent trade mission assessments conducted in October 2025 (InfoBRICS, 2025). Cybersecurity cooperation builds on historical agreements between the two countries, with renewed emphasis on practical exchanges following the sanctions environment that has developed since 2022 (InfoBRICS, 2025).

Current State of Cooperation

Russia has positioned itself as offering proven cybersecurity solutions to the Indian market, including data loss prevention systems, anti-fraud technology, and critical information infrastructure protection tools, citing a threefold increase in cyberattack incidents in 2025 according to figures from Sberbank as evidence of rising demand for such solutions in both countries (Sberbank, 2026). This positioning reflects a broader convergence in policy language, with both India and Russia framing their digital security efforts around the concept of digital sovereignty, defined as a country's ability to independently control its data storage and processing, its computational infrastructure including cloud, artificial intelligence, and high-performance computing systems, and its technological autonomy in hardware, software, and critical technology domains (KPIAS Academy, 2026).

India's own domestic legal and institutional framework for digital and cyber security has developed substantially in this period, including the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre, the IndiaAI Mission's associated AI Safety Institute, and the Reserve Bank of India's FREE-AI framework for financial sector artificial intelligence governance (Depenning, 2026). While these frameworks are primarily domestic in orientation, this framework identifies them as the domestic foundation against which bilateral cybersecurity cooperation with Russia must be calibrated, since any joint infrastructure or data-sharing arrangement would need to operate within India's data sovereignty requirements under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act.

At a multilateral level, India's engagement with Russia on information security questions has historical roots in frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's 2006 Declaration on International Information Security, which emphasized a territorial conception of sovereignty over information and communications technology and called for international collaboration on the basis of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). This multilateral track, distinct from bilateral cybersecurity cooperation, provides an additional venue through which India and Russia coordinate positions on international information security governance, connecting this pillar to the Multilateral and Regional Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework. Greater

coordination could also strengthen their respective positions in United Nations discussions on responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, capacity building, cybercrime, and the application of international law to information and communications technologies. Regular consultations within relevant multilateral forums would therefore help align bilateral initiatives with wider international governance objectives.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia establish a dedicated bilateral cybersecurity working group, distinct from the broader digital cooperation track, focused specifically on critical infrastructure protection technology transfer and joint incident response protocols. It further recommends that any data-sharing or cloud infrastructure cooperation between the two countries be structured explicitly to comply with India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, that both governments explore joint development of sovereign cybersecurity solutions for critical infrastructure sectors including energy, banking, and telecommunications, given the direct relevance of the Financial Cooperation and Energy Cooperation pillars addressed earlier, and that India evaluate Russian data loss prevention and critical infrastructure protection technologies through a formal pilot programme rather than informal exchange alone.

In addition, the two countries should establish a bilateral cyber skills and capacity-building programme involving universities, cybersecurity institutes, government agencies, and private-sector specialists. Regular training programmes, tabletop exercises, cyber ranges, and joint simulations should be organized to strengthen preparedness against ransomware, supply-chain attacks, attacks on industrial control systems, financial cybercrime, and other emerging threats. Cooperation should also cover artificial intelligence-enabled cybersecurity, including the use of machine learning for anomaly detection and automated threat analysis. Finally, India and Russia should introduce an annual cybersecurity implementation review containing measurable indicators such as joint exercises conducted, personnel trained, pilot technologies evaluated, incident-response protocols developed, research projects completed, and critical infrastructure sectors covered. This monitoring mechanism would ensure that cybersecurity cooperation produces tangible institutional and technological outcomes rather than remaining confined to diplomatic declarations.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre, and Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, together with relevant Russian federal cybersecurity authorities, operating under the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation.

14. Space Cooperation

Overview

Space Cooperation is among the longest-standing pillars of the India-Russia relationship, dating to 1975, when the Soviet Union helped launch India's first satellite, Aryabhata, and continuing through Soviet support for the first Indian citizen to reach orbit (IndBiz, n.d.). This historical foundation has translated into sustained modern cooperation between the Indian Space Research Organisation, known as ISRO, and Russia's state space corporation, Roscosmos, spanning human spaceflight, satellite navigation, and, most recently, plans for interoperability between India's future space station and Russia's post-International Space Station orbital platform.

Human Spaceflight Cooperation

Cooperation on India's Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme has been substantial. Following a memorandum of understanding signed between ISRO and Roscosmos on joint activities for the human spaceflight programme at the 19th Bilateral Summit in 2018, Glavkosmos, a Roscosmos subsidiary, has provided consulting support to select Indian astronaut candidates, including medical examinations and space flight training, and has supplied systems and equipment for the Gaganyaan crewed spacecraft, including individual astronaut equipment such as spacesuits, seats, and couch liners produced by Russia's Zvezda enterprise (Glavkosmos, n.d.; IndBiz, n.d.). Four Indian Air Force pilots shortlisted for Gaganyaan completed training at Russia's Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, having begun training in February 2020 under an agreement signed between ISRO's Human Space Flight Centre and Glavkosmos in June 2019 (Deccan Herald, n.d.a).

Post-ISS Orbital Cooperation

The most significant recent development in this pillar is an agreement, finalized during President Putin's December 2025 visit to New Delhi, to align the orbital planning of India's future Bharatiya Antariksh Station, the crown jewel of the Gaganyaan programme's longer-term ambitions, with Russia's Russian Orbital Station, the platform Roscosmos is developing to succeed the International Space Station (Indian Defence News, 2026a). Under this arrangement, India's Bharatiya Antariksh Station now targets launch of its core module by 2028, accelerated from an earlier plan for incremental assembly following Gaganyaan's crewed debut, expected in 2026 (Indian Defence News, 2026a). ISRO's Small Satellite Launch Vehicle and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III are planned to loft pressurized modules, solar arrays, and life support systems for the station, with the Russian Orbital Station providing interim crew training and emergency docking capability during the transition period (Indian Defence News, 2026a). Reports indicate that India's Bharatiya Antariksh Station has been designed with a 51.5 degree orbital inclination, closely matching the Russian Orbital Station's 51.6 degree inclination, a alignment Roscosmos chief Dmitry Bakanov described as mutually beneficial engineering that would reduce the need for costly

orbital plane-change manoeuvres and enable smoother interoperability between Soyuz and future Indian crew vehicles (Indian Defence Research Wing, 2025).

Satellite Navigation and Other Cooperation

Beyond human spaceflight, Russia has established a ground base station in India to receive communications signals from its GLONASS satellite navigation system under a bilateral agreement, complementing India's own NavIC regional navigation satellite system (IndBiz, n.d.). ISRO achieved in-orbit docking of its SpaDeX satellites in January 2025, making India the fourth country to achieve this milestone after Russia, the United States, and China, a capability considered essential for India's future space station construction and lunar ambitions (Kantanka TV, 2025).

Roscosmos participated in the BRICS Space Agencies Meeting held in Bangalore, with the Russian delegation, led by veteran cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev, holding bilateral talks with ISRO leadership covering satellite launches, joint research in space science, and potential expansion of cooperation into advanced propulsion technologies (Indian Defence News, 2026b).

Independent analysis has also identified Russia's development of a nuclear-powered deep space mobility platform, known as Zeus, as a potential new area for India-Russia collaboration in advanced propulsion, given India's historical reliance on Russian know-how and technology transfer to build its domestic space industry (Takshashila Institution, n.d.).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments finalize a detailed technical roadmap for Bharatiya Antariksh Station and Russian Orbital Station interoperability ahead of the targeted 2028 core module launch, that Gaganyaan-related training and equipment supply contracts with Glavkosmos be extended into a standing long-term human spaceflight cooperation agreement rather than being renewed on a mission-by-mission basis, that India and Russia explore joint feasibility studies on nuclear propulsion technology building on the Zeus programme, and that satellite navigation cooperation between GLONASS and NavIC be expanded to include joint receiver chipset development for civilian and commercial applications.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with the Indian Space Research Organisation and Roscosmos, operating through direct institutional agreements and reporting into the broader Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation framework and the IRIGC-TEC.

15. Environmental and Climate Cooperation

Overview

Environmental and Climate Cooperation between India and Russia is concentrated substantially in the polar and Arctic domain, reflecting India's growing strategic interest in a region undergoing rapid environmental transformation and Russia's position as the dominant Arctic power. This framework distinguishes this pillar from the Arctic-linked connectivity work addressed in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar by focusing here specifically on scientific research, environmental monitoring, and climate impact assessment rather than shipping infrastructure.

Polar and Arctic Scientific Cooperation

India, though a non-littoral Arctic state, has pursued Arctic engagement since conducting its first Arctic scientific expedition in 2007, and it formalized this commitment through its official Arctic policy, unveiled on March 17, 2022, which sets out six thematic priorities: science and research, climate and environmental protection, economic and human development, transportation and connectivity, governance and international cooperation, and national capacity building (ISAS, 2022). Over 25 Indian institutions currently pursue Arctic research, and India holds membership in bodies including the International Arctic Science Committee and the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (ISAS, 2022).

Bilateral scientific cooperation between India and Russia in the polar domain has a specific legal basis. An updated memorandum between the two countries' polar research institutions, signed in 2024, creates what Russian officials describe as a strong legal foundation for joint expeditions and research, with Russian counterparts noting keen Indian interest in working at Russian Arctic research stations, particularly on ice condition monitoring and climate change studies (Russia's Pivot to Asia, 2026). This cooperation extends to logistics support in harsh polar conditions, a consideration of direct practical relevance given the scale of Indian oil and gas shipments from Russia's Yamal Peninsula to India's southern coast (Russia's Pivot to Asia, 2026). Russia's shipping company FESCO has also provided logistics support to India's Antarctic polar research base, extending bilateral polar cooperation beyond the Arctic to the Antarctic (Russia's Pivot to Asia, 2026).

At the multilateral level, India and Russia participated together in the seventh meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Polar and Ocean Science and Technology, held in May 2025, which addressed development of capabilities to monitor oceanic and polar regions, with particular focus on meteorology and climate forecasting (IMPRI, 2025). Despite this activity, independent analysis published in November 2025 noted that no significant headway had yet been made toward establishing a dedicated bilateral Arctic security dialogue or a specific bilateral Arctic policy framework between the two countries, distinguishing scientific cooperation, which is relatively advanced, from strategic or security-focused Arctic coordination, which remains underdeveloped (IMPRI, 2025).

Strategic and Economic Dimensions of Climate Engagement

Arctic warming carries direct consequences for India beyond scientific interest, including effects on water security linked to changes in atmospheric and oceanic circulation patterns that influence monsoon timing (CleanArctic, 2025). India's Arctic engagement is also shaped by the prospect of a changing agricultural frontier, with independent research noting that climate change may expand agricultural viability northward into Arctic latitudes over the coming decades, a development identified as a long-term area of potential India-Russia cooperation on food security given India's own agricultural pressures from population growth, urbanization, and shifting rainfall patterns (DOAJ, 2022). Analysts have also cautioned that as India expands its Arctic footprint, it must balance its strategic autonomy with the concerns of democratic Arctic and Nordic partners, who continue to view India as a more reliable actor than China but watch its Russia ties closely in assessing its long-term posture within Arctic governance (CleanArctic, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia formalize a joint Arctic and Antarctic scientific research programme building on the 2024 memorandum, with specific funding commitments and multi-year expedition planning, and that this cooperation be explicitly linked to India's six-point national Arctic policy rather than pursued as an ad hoc scientific exchange.

It further recommends that both countries commission a joint assessment of Arctic climate change impacts on Indian monsoon patterns and water security, that cooperation on polar logistics be formally integrated with the commercial oil and gas shipping relationship from the Yamal Peninsula, and that India and Russia explore the long-term agricultural implications of Arctic warming as a joint research theme connecting this pillar to the Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation pillar addressed earlier. The programme should also establish joint data-sharing protocols, researcher-exchange mechanisms, and dedicated funding for polar climate modelling, glaciology, oceanography, and ecosystem research. Regular scientific assessments could support evidence-based policymaking while strengthening India's long-term scientific presence and Russia's role as a strategic partner in polar research.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Earth Sciences and National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, together with Russia's Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, operating under the bilateral polar research memorandum and the BRICS Working Group on Polar and Ocean Science and Technology.

16. Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation

Overview

Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation is governed by a standing bilateral institutional mechanism, the Russian-Indian Commission for Emergency Situations, which provides a dedicated forum distinct from the broader Intergovernmental Commission for coordinating joint disaster response capacity.

Current Institutional Framework

India and Russia signed a working plan on the effectiveness of cooperation in disaster management covering the 2025 to 2026 period, under which both countries committed to continued cooperation and experience-sharing in disaster management, with particular emphasis on deepening cooperation between educational and research organizations in both countries (Universal Institutions, 2025). The plan specifically covers space-based observation for disaster monitoring, group management during emergency response, and specialist training, with the meeting establishing this agenda held following the Second Meeting of the Russian-Indian Commission for Emergency Situations in Moscow (Universal Institutions, 2025). Recommendations arising from this process include expanded cooperation in training fire and rescue specialists, alongside continued leveraging of space monitoring technologies for risk assessment and disaster preparedness (Universal Institutions, 2025). As part of this cooperation, India reaffirmed its engagement with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, alongside Prime Minister Modi's ten-point agenda for disaster management (Universal Institutions, 2025).

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

India's global leadership role in disaster resilience, exercised through the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, provides a distinct multilateral channel relevant to this pillar. Launched by India at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in 2019 and headquartered in New Delhi with the status of an international organization, the Coalition's stated mission is to drive 10 trillion dollars of new and existing infrastructure investment toward resilience against natural hazards and climate change by 2050 (FortuneIAS Circle, 2026). At the December 2025 summit, Russia welcomed India's invitation to join the Coalition, alongside India's parallel welcome of Russian interest in the International Solar Alliance, indicating a concrete near-term pathway for Russia's formal participation in India-led disaster resilience infrastructure initiatives (Drishti IAS, 2026). The Coalition's most recent International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, held in Nice, France, in June 2025, focused on resilience for coastal regions and small island developing states, and its Global Infrastructure Resilience report for 2025 found that economic losses from service disruptions following disasters are, on average, 7.4 times higher than direct infrastructure damage, underscoring the economic case for the kind of resilience-focused infrastructure planning the Coalition promotes (CDRI, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that Russia's accession to the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, welcomed in principle at the December 2025 summit, be formalized with a specific implementation timeline, and that Russia's Arctic and cold-region disaster response expertise, particularly in relation to permafrost-related infrastructure risks, be integrated into the Coalition's broader technical knowledge base. This cooperation should focus on translating Russia's experience in extreme-weather environments into practical applications for India's mountain, coastal, flood-prone, and climate-vulnerable regions.

It further recommends that the 2025 to 2026 disaster management working plan be renewed and expanded for the following biennium with specific, measurable joint training targets. These should include annual simulation exercises, emergency-response training, search-and-rescue capacity building, emergency logistics, and the exchange of best practices in disaster preparedness and recovery. Indian and Russian disaster management institutions should also establish institutional links between their operational teams to facilitate regular knowledge exchange and professional training.

Space-based disaster observation cooperation should be formally linked to the Space Cooperation pillar addressed earlier in this framework. Joint development and utilization of satellite-based systems for flood forecasting, cyclone monitoring, wildfire detection, landslide assessment, drought monitoring, and post-disaster damage assessment could significantly strengthen early-warning and emergency-response capabilities. Data-sharing arrangements should include clear protocols for timely access during major disasters while respecting national security and data-governance requirements.

A joint humanitarian response protocol should also be developed to enable rapid mutual assistance in the event of major natural disasters affecting either country. The protocol should identify designated national contact points, procedures for requesting and approving assistance, mechanisms for deploying specialized personnel and equipment, and arrangements for humanitarian logistics and medical support. It should be periodically tested through joint exercises.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's National Disaster Management Authority and Ministry of Home Affairs, together with Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations, operating through the Russian-Indian Commission for Emergency Situations and, where applicable, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

17. Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation

Overview

Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation in this framework focuses on physical transport infrastructure, industrial construction capacity, and aviation manufacturing cooperation, complementing the maritime corridor infrastructure, namely the International North-South Transport Corridor, the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor, and the Northern Sea Route, addressed in greater detail in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework.

Aviation Manufacturing Cooperation

A significant emerging strand of infrastructure cooperation involves civil aviation manufacturing. India is exploring the purchase of up to 200 Russian regional aircraft, with plans for local production of the SJ-100 and Il-114-300 models, and Russia's United Aircraft Corporation has signed an initial agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to establish Indian assembly lines capable of producing 20 to 40 aircraft annually (Indian Defence News, 2026). This framework identifies this initiative as a significant departure from the historical concentration of India-Russia manufacturing cooperation in the defence sector, extending co-production principles into civil aviation for the first time at meaningful scale.

Shipbuilding and the Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor

Russia's connectivity ambitions extend beyond the three corridors addressed in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar. In March 2025, President Putin unveiled the Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor, a comprehensive plan to connect key Russian ports from St. Petersburg through Murmansk to Vladivostok, linking them to Russia's inland cities via land, rail, sea, and inland waterway systems, with the domestic objective of enhancing Russian port cargo-handling capacity through digital logistics infrastructure and the international objective of connecting global industrial, agricultural, and energy centres with Asian consumer markets via shorter, safer, and more cost-effective routes (MP-IDSA, 2026). Russia's growing demand for new ship construction and ship repair capacity under this initiative presents what regional analysts have identified as a high-value business opportunity for Indian shipbuilding and ship repair companies, an opportunity this framework recommends India's shipbuilding sector actively pursue as the Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor moves from announcement toward implementation (MP-IDSA, 2026).

Domestic Infrastructure Context Relevant to Bilateral Connectivity

India's own domestic infrastructure expansion provides relevant capacity for deepening connectivity cooperation with Russia. India's Dedicated Freight Corridor network, spanning the Eastern and Western corridors between Ludhiana and Dankuni and between Mumbai's Jawaharlal Nehru Port and Dadri, had reached 96.4 percent completion, or approximately

2,741 of a planned 2,843 kilometres, by October 2025, with a further Dankuni-Surat corridor announced in the 2026-27 union budget (Indian Infrastructure, 2026; News on Air, 2026). This freight infrastructure directly supports the inland leg of trade moving through Indian ports toward the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor and other Russia-linked shipping routes, connecting domestic Indian logistics investment to the bilateral connectivity agenda addressed in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar. India's civil aviation sector has also expanded rapidly, with the number of operational airports rising from 74 in 2014 to 164 in 2025, creating additional capacity relevant to the growing India-Russia aviation manufacturing partnership described above (Indian Infrastructure, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and United Aircraft Corporation agreement on SJ-100 and Il-114-300 assembly be converted from an initial agreement into a binding production contract with a defined localization schedule, that Indian shipbuilding and ship repair firms be connected with Russian Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor project planners through a dedicated industry engagement platform, and that logistics planning for the Dedicated Freight Corridor network explicitly account for projected growth in India-Russia trade volumes moving through the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor and INSTC.

It further recommends a feasibility study on rail technology cooperation between Indian Railways and Russian Railways, given Russia's extensive experience operating rail infrastructure across extreme climate conditions relevant to India's own diverse geography.

The study should examine opportunities for technology transfer, rolling-stock modernization, signaling systems, railway electrification, predictive maintenance, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Both governments should also establish an annual transport infrastructure review mechanism to coordinate project timelines, financing requirements, regulatory approvals, and private-sector participation. Greater integration between ports, railways, industrial clusters, and inland logistics networks should remain a central objective, helping reduce transit costs, improve supply-chain reliability, and strengthen the commercial viability of emerging India-Russia connectivity corridors.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Railways, and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, together with Russia's Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Industry and Trade, and United Aircraft Corporation, operating through the IRIGC-TEC and dedicated sectoral working groups.

18. Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation

Overview

Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation is coordinated through the India-Russia Working Group on Modernisation and Industrial Cooperation, operating under the framework of the Intergovernmental Commission, and this pillar has expanded significantly in scope over the past year, moving well beyond the historically dominant energy and steel sectors into critical minerals, rare earth processing, and special economic zone-based manufacturing.

Steel, Metallurgy, and Critical Minerals

Steel and metallurgical cooperation has taken on new urgency as India pursues an ambitious expansion of domestic steel capacity, having produced over 150 million tonnes of crude steel in the first eleven months of 2025, ranking second globally behind China, with the National Steel Policy targeting 300 million tonnes of installed capacity by 2030 and 500 million tonnes by 2047 (Hindustan Herald, 2026). This expansion faces a structural constraint in coking coal supply, since India's domestic coal is largely high in ash and sulphur content and requires extensive processing to be usable for steelmaking, making metallurgical coal imports, of which Russia is a significant supplier, central to achieving India's steel targets (Hindustan Herald, 2026). Russia's depth in direct reduced iron and electric arc furnace steelmaking technology, both of which produce substantially lower carbon emissions than the conventional blast furnace basic oxygen furnace route that currently underpins 60 to 65 percent of India's planned new steelmaking capacity, has been identified as a potential technology transfer opportunity that could help Indian producers build compliance with the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism directly into new capacity rather than retrofitting it later (Hindustan Herald, 2026).

Critical minerals and rare earth processing have emerged as a major new frontier of industrial cooperation. India and Russia are moving toward a broader strategic partnership covering the full mineral value chain, including exploration, extraction, refining, and advanced materials processing, driven by India's efforts to secure supplies of lithium, rare earth elements, and permanent magnet materials essential for electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, electronics, and defence technologies (Domain-b, 2026). India possesses rare earth-bearing mineral reserves, including monazite deposits, but continues to rely heavily on imports for advanced processing and high-performance permanent magnet manufacturing, creating a specific opening for Russian expertise in rare earth metallurgy (Domain-b, 2026). This cooperation has already produced a concrete institutional link: a memorandum of understanding between India's TEXMiN Foundation, operating under the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines) Dhanbad and the Department of Science and Technology, and Russia's GIREDMET, a research arm of Rosatom, aimed at fusing GIREDMET's established rare earth metallurgy expertise with TEXMiN's translational research capacity to advance Indian rare earth technologies to higher technology readiness levels (Whalesbook, 2026).

At the 11th Session of the India-Russia Working Group on Modernisation and Industrial Cooperation, held in New Delhi, both sides welcomed enhanced engagement in aluminium, fertilizers, and railway transport, alongside capacity building and technology transfer in mining sector equipment, exploration, and industrial and domestic waste management, and explored further opportunities in rare earth and critical minerals extraction, underground coal gasification, and modern industrial infrastructure development (News on Air, 2025). India's Commerce and Industry Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia identified critical minerals and mineral processing, mining and metallurgy, and transportation and railways as particularly promising sectors for expanded interaction (TASS, 2026).

Special Economic Zones and Localized Manufacturing

Russia has actively courted Indian manufacturers to localize production within its domestic special economic zones, expanding the network and enhancing incentives through 2026, offering foreign investors, once registered as a Russian legal entity, full access to domestic support mechanisms including tax concessions, subsidies, and special economic regime preferences equivalent to those available to Russian firms (Sberbank, 2026). India's pharmaceutical sector has been an early mover in this space: PSK Pharma operates a manufacturing complex within the Dubna special economic zone producing medicines for asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and autoimmune disorders, with the company reporting annual revenues exceeding 150 million dollars, and its leadership accompanied President Putin's business delegation on his December 2025 state visit to India, describing the relationship as a strategic health alliance with relevance beyond the two countries to the broader Global South (SuraDailyNews, 2026).

Priority Actions

It recommends that the TEXMiN-GIREDMET rare earth metallurgy partnership be scaled from a research-level memorandum into a funded joint venture with defined production milestones, that India establish a coordinated investment promotion effort to help Indian manufacturers, particularly in pharmaceuticals and light engineering, access Russian special economic zone incentives, and that underground coal gasification technology cooperation be prioritized as a joint deliverable given its relevance to both energy security and industrial decarbonization objectives.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Ministry of Steel, together with Russia's Ministry of Industry and Trade, operating through the India-Russia Working Group on Modernisation and Industrial Cooperation.

19. Academic and Educational Cooperation

Overview

Academic and Educational Cooperation is one of the most people-facing pillars of the India-Russia relationship, encompassing government scholarship programmes, direct institution-to-institution partnerships, and a growing base of Indian students pursuing higher education, particularly medical education, in Russia.

Government Scholarship Programmes

The Government of the Russian Federation has announced 300 scholarships for Indian students seeking admission to Russian universities for the 2026 to 2027 academic year, covering tuition fees across most Russian universities, with the notable exceptions of Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and spanning disciplines including medicine, pharmacy, engineering, architecture, agriculture, management, economics, humanities and social sciences, mathematics, space, aviation, sports, and the arts (Careers360, 2026a). The scholarship programme covers universities across Russia, from Moscow and St. Petersburg to regional centres including Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, and Vladivostok, and applicants may select up to six universities in order of preference through a two-stage selection process, with the first stage concluding on January 15 each year (Ministry of Education, 2026).

On the Indian side, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations offers reciprocal scholarship programmes to international students, including Russian applicants, through mechanisms such as the Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarship Scheme, covering arts, science, commerce, and humanities across more than 130 empanelled Indian universities, the Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Cultural Exchange Scholarship Scheme operating under bilateral cultural agreements, and the AYUSH Scholarship Scheme promoting India's traditional medicine systems, run jointly with the Ministry of AYUSH (Embassy of India, Moscow, 2026). These programmes are fully funded, covering tuition, living stipends, accommodation, and in some cases international airfare, and are administered through the ICCR's online Admissions to Alumni portal.

Institutional Partnerships

Direct institution-to-institution partnerships have expanded notably. The Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur signed a memorandum of understanding with Empress Catherine II Saint Petersburg Mining University, establishing a strategic academic partnership focused on student and scholar exchange, faculty exchange for joint scientific research, and development of joint academic programmes, spanning mining engineering, petroleum engineering, rubber technology, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, geology, geophysics, and artificial intelligence applications in energy and earth sciences (Careers360, 2026b). This partnership was explicitly framed by both institutions' leadership as building upon the

long-standing India-Russia partnership in science and technology, and as addressing evolving energy needs spanning conventional coal and petroleum resources through energy transition critical minerals (Careers360, 2026b). Russian institutions have also actively promoted academic mobility to India and other partner countries, with events such as anniversary celebrations at Russia's LETI institute used as opportunities to discuss expanding joint programmes and increasing international student numbers under Russia's Open Doors scholarship project (Open Doors, n.d.).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the annual 300-scholarship allocation from Russia to Indian students be reviewed for potential expansion given sustained Indian demand, particularly in medical education, and that India establish a matching reciprocal scholarship allocation specifically earmarked for Russian students, distinct from ICCR's general international scholarship pool. Such reciprocity would provide a more balanced framework for educational mobility and strengthen people-to-people linkages between the two countries.

It further recommends that the IIT Kharagpur-Saint Petersburg Mining University model be replicated across additional Indian Institutes of Technology and Russian technical universities, with priority given to disciplines identified as strategic under this framework's other pillars, including critical minerals, nuclear energy, quantum technology, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and energy systems. Joint research centres and dual-degree programmes should be encouraged in these fields, supported by competitive bilateral research grants.

Both governments should also establish joint doctoral fellowships, faculty-exchange programmes, summer schools, and short-term technical training opportunities to deepen institutional cooperation. A joint credential recognition framework should be developed to streamline mutual recognition of degrees and professional qualifications, with clear procedures for accreditation, equivalence, and professional licensing. Finally, an annual India-Russia Higher Education Dialogue should monitor scholarship utilization, academic exchanges, joint research outputs, and institutional partnerships, ensuring that educational cooperation produces measurable long-term benefits for both countries.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Education and Indian Council for Cultural Relations, together with Russia's Ministry of Science and Higher Education, operating through direct scholarship administration and institution-to-institution memoranda of understanding.

20. Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation

Overview

Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation between India and Russia gained substantial momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic and has since evolved into a broader strategic health partnership encompassing pharmaceutical manufacturing, vaccine development, and medical research collaboration.

Legacy of Vaccine Cooperation

The COVID-19 pandemic produced the most visible instance of India-Russia healthcare cooperation to date, centred on the Sputnik V vaccine developed by Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute and backed by the Russian Direct Investment Fund. India became a major global production hub for Sputnik V, with the Russian Direct Investment Fund establishing manufacturing partnerships with multiple leading Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Gland Pharma, Hetero Biopharma, Panacea Biotech, Stelis Biopharma, and Virchow Biotech, together targeting production capacity of more than 850 million doses annually, sufficient to vaccinate more than 425 million people globally (Sputnik V, n.d.). India's drug regulator subsequently authorized Sputnik Light, a single-dose variant proposed as a universal booster shown to induce a stronger immune response than repeat dosing with the same vaccine, including against the Omicron variant (Pharmaceutical Technology, 2022). This experience established India as a central node in Russia's global vaccine distribution strategy, alongside production partnerships in Brazil, China, South Korea, and other countries (Sputnik V, n.d.).

Post-Pandemic Strategic Health Partnership

Building on this foundation, the two countries have moved to formalize broader healthcare cooperation beyond crisis-driven vaccine manufacturing. In December 2025, the health ministries of Russia and India signed a strategic cooperation agreement that includes the creation of dedicated working groups on pharmaceuticals (GxP News, 2026). This reflects a shift in the pharmaceutical relationship from India's traditional role as a low-cost generic drug supplier toward more sophisticated cooperation, including exploration of localizing innovative, non-generic drug production in Russia, a change industry analysis has linked to India's position as the source of roughly 60 percent of all vaccines distributed worldwide and its extensive experience as a contract manufacturer for major Western pharmaceutical firms (GxP News, 2026).

Anticipated areas of expanded cooperation following the December 2025 summit include collaborative vaccine development for emerging infectious diseases and seasonal illnesses, building directly on the Sputnik V experience, as well as deeper cooperation in medical research, health education, telemedicine, and training of medical professionals (TheHealthSite, 2025). Analysts have suggested that Indian pharmaceutical companies could

gain easier access to the Russian market for generic drugs, cancer therapies, and life-saving medications, while Russia could support India with raw materials and high-technology chemical substances used in drug manufacturing, potentially leading to expanded joint ventures between pharmaceutical companies in both countries (TheHealthSite, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the pharmaceutical working groups established under the December 2025 health ministry agreement be given specific, time-bound deliverables covering joint drug development, raw material supply chains, and regulatory harmonization. It further recommends that the two countries establish a standing joint vaccine research and development platform, building directly on Sputnik V manufacturing infrastructure already established in India, to enable rapid joint response to future pandemic threats, and that telemedicine cooperation be piloted as a mechanism for extending specialist Russian and Indian medical expertise to underserved populations in both countries.

In addition, India and Russia should establish a bilateral health technology and pharmaceutical innovation fund to support collaborative research, clinical development, biotechnology, diagnostics, and medical-device manufacturing. The fund should prioritize projects with clear pathways from laboratory research to commercial production, particularly in vaccines, biosimilars, oncology medicines, antimicrobial resistance, cardiovascular treatment, and infectious-disease diagnostics. Greater cooperation in pharmaceutical manufacturing should also focus on strengthening supply-chain resilience for active pharmaceutical ingredients, critical intermediates, vaccines, and essential medicines. Joint mapping of vulnerabilities in pharmaceutical supply chains could help both countries identify alternative suppliers, strategic reserves, and opportunities for domestic production. Finally, India and Russia should establish a joint pandemic preparedness mechanism capable of coordinating surveillance, laboratory cooperation, vaccine and therapeutic research, manufacturing capacity, and emergency medical supply chains. Annual simulation exercises and periodic assessments should test institutional readiness and identify gaps before a health emergency occurs. A measurable implementation framework, including targets for joint research projects, clinical collaborations, technology transfers, manufacturing capacity, regulatory cooperation, and telemedicine coverage, would ensure that health cooperation develops into a durable strategic partnership rather than remaining dependent on individual agreements or crisis-driven initiatives.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Russia's Ministry of Health, operating through the newly established pharmaceutical working groups and the broader IRIGC-TEC framework.

21. Youth Cooperation

Overview

Youth Cooperation between India and Russia is anchored in a growing set of dedicated forums and institutional mechanisms, formalized in recent years through direct government-to-government agreements and increasingly channeled through the BRICS youth track given India's assumption of the BRICS chairship in 2026.

Bilateral Youth Forums

The most direct bilateral mechanism is the Russian-Indian Youth Forum, launched with its first edition held June 17 and 18, 2025, at the Russian House in New Delhi, organized jointly by the Embassy of the Russian Federation in India and Russian cultural and youth agencies, and dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Rossotrudnichestvo, coinciding with Russia Day and Youth Day (IYES Foundation, 2025). The forum addressed cooperation between Russia and India in bilateral and multilateral formats including BRICS, the SCO, and the United Nations, alongside youth-specific themes of education, career building, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, skills development, international project implementation, and environmental issues (IYES Foundation, 2025). The second edition, the II Russian-Indian Youth Forum, commenced on June 16, 2026, at the Russian House in New Delhi, bringing together more than 250 young leaders, researchers, entrepreneurs, students, professionals, and social changemakers from both countries for expert discussions, networking sessions, cultural exchanges, team-building activities, and field visits, with the forum expected to conclude with a joint declaration promoting stronger youth collaboration (India Today NE, 2026).

This bilateral youth architecture has deeper institutional roots dating to a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in youth policy signed between Russia's Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, known as Rosmolodezh, and India's Ministry of Youth and Sports, under which earlier iterations of joint youth forums brought Indian delegations of political, social, cultural, scientific, and business representatives to Russia, with Russian officials explicitly describing the youth track as playing a crucial role within the broader strategic and highly privileged bilateral partnership (Study in Russia Portal, n.d.).

Individual Youth Engagement and BRICS Integration

Individual instances of youth diplomatic engagement have also emerged. In February 2026, Gujarat-based youth leader Madhish Parikh met directly with President Putin in Moscow during the "We Are Together" international volunteer forum, proposing the establishment of a Russian Culture Centre in Gujarat and signing an agreement with Russia's International Association of Volunteers, DOBRO, to expand leadership pathways for young people from BRICS countries through the BRICS Youth Alliance (The Wire, 2026; Tribune India, 2026). This engagement fed into the broader Global BRICS Youth Dialogue, a youth-led platform explicitly framed around celebrating 25 years of the India-Russia strategic partnership ahead

of India's hosting of the BRICS Summit in 2026, empowering young leaders aged 18 to 35 to develop skills in diplomacy, leadership, and international affairs (BRICS International Forum, 2025). These initiatives demonstrate the potential for youth diplomacy to complement formal intergovernmental engagement by creating direct networks among emerging leaders. Institutionalizing such platforms could provide continuity between BRICS summits, encourage cross-border youth-led projects, and strengthen people-to-people connections across India, Russia, and other BRICS member states.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the Russian-Indian Youth Forum be formalized as an annual, institutionally funded event with a standing secretariat, rather than being organized on an ad hoc basis by embassy cultural sections. It further recommends that the youth entrepreneurship and skills development themes identified at the 2025 forum be connected concretely to the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework, that India leverage its 2026 BRICS chairship to institutionalize a permanent BRICS youth track building on the Global BRICS Youth Dialogue initiative, and that a dedicated Indian-Russian youth exchange scholarship stream be created, distinct from the general academic scholarships addressed in the Academic and Educational Cooperation pillar, focused specifically on leadership and civic engagement training.

Both governments should establish an annual youth leadership fellowship allowing selected participants to undertake short-term placements in universities, public institutions, research organizations, businesses, and civil-society organizations in the partner country. A joint digital platform could support year-round networking, collaborative projects, policy competitions, and knowledge exchange among alumni. Special attention should be given to participation from smaller cities, rural areas, and underrepresented communities to ensure that youth cooperation extends beyond established metropolitan institutions. Finally, an annual implementation report should measure participation, exchange opportunities, joint projects, entrepreneurial ventures, and policy initiatives emerging from these programmes, ensuring that youth diplomacy becomes a sustained component of the India-Russia relationship.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Russia's Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, operating through the bilateral youth policy memorandum of understanding and the Russian-Indian Youth Forum.

22. Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation

Overview

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation between India and Russia is conducted predominantly through the multilateral BRICS Women Track rather than through a dedicated bilateral mechanism, and this framework treats India's 2026 BRICS chairship as the central vehicle through which bilateral India-Russia cooperation on this pillar can be advanced and institutionalized.

The BRICS Women Track Under India's Chairship

India hosted the BRICS Women Working Group Meeting in Kochi, Kerala, on July 6 and 7, 2026, as part of its BRICS chairship, under the chairship theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," bringing together senior officials from BRICS member countries, now including Russia among eleven members, to deliberate on four priority areas: women's participation in governance and leadership, digital and financial inclusion, women's entrepreneurship and skill development, and the role of women in climate action, food security, and nutrition (DD India, 2026). This working group meeting laid the foundation for the BRICS Women Ministerial Meeting, held July 8 and 9, 2026, in Kochi, which concluded with the adoption of the first-ever Joint Statement under the BRICS Women Track, reflecting the collective commitment of member countries to promote women-led development across sectors (Tripura Star News, 2026). Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annpurna Devi inaugurated the ministerial meeting, emphasizing that women's leadership is essential for building stronger economies and resilient societies, and called for deeper cooperation among BRICS nations under the chairship theme (Devdiscourse, 2026a).

India used the occasion to propose two concrete new initiatives to strengthen long-term collaboration within the BRICS Women Track. The first, the BRICS Digital Repository of Best Practices, will create a shared platform for documenting and exchanging successful policies, programmes, and innovations supporting women's empowerment across member nations. The second, the BRICS Women Digital Capacity Building Guidelines, is intended to expand institutional partnerships, promote digital learning, and strengthen capacity-building efforts to help member countries replicate successful programmes (Devdiscourse, 2026b). Ministry of Women and Child Development Secretary Anil Malik described the adoption of the Joint Statement as demonstrating the shared determination of BRICS nations to work together in addressing common challenges while expanding opportunities for women through coordinated action (Devdiscourse, 2026b).

Institutional and Civil Society Engagement

Beyond government-level engagement, the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry Women's Empowerment Vertical has served as a civil society channel for gender equality cooperation across BRICS members including Russia and India, having published thematic

analysis on gender equality initiatives across the grouping (InfoBRICS, n.d.). Academic engagement has also grown, with conferences specifically examining themes such as women's empowerment through BRICS, intersectionality challenges facing women across BRICS member states, and the role of technology in empowering women across the grouping (The Indian Awaaz, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia use the momentum of the 2026 BRICS Women Track Joint Statement to establish a dedicated bilateral working group on women's economic empowerment, distinct from the multilateral BRICS process, focused specifically on expanding female participation in the sectors this framework identifies as priorities for bilateral cooperation, including science and technology, space, and industrial manufacturing. The working group should include representatives from relevant ministries, research institutions, universities, business associations, and women's professional networks from both countries, enabling policy commitments to be translated into practical programmes and measurable outcomes. It further recommends that Russia be an early adopter of the BRICS Digital Repository of Best Practices and BRICS Women Digital Capacity Building Guidelines proposed by India, given the strength of the underlying bilateral relationship. India and Russia should establish joint digital-skills programmes targeting women entering science, technology, engineering, mathematics, entrepreneurship, and emerging technology sectors. Particular attention should be given to artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, space technology, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, and digital financial services, thereby connecting women's empowerment with the strategic economic and technological pillars of the bilateral relationship.

Finally, an annual **India-Russia Women and Development Dialogue** should review progress, identify sector-specific barriers, and publish measurable indicators covering women's employment, entrepreneurship, research participation, leadership positions, digital-skills training, and labour mobility. Such institutionalization would ensure that gender cooperation becomes an integrated component of the broader bilateral economic, technological, and human-capital partnership rather than remaining primarily within multilateral declarations.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Women and Child Development and the corresponding Russian federal authority responsible for family and social policy, operating primarily through the BRICS Women Track during India's 2026 chairship, with the recommendation that a dedicated bilateral channel be established going forward.

23. Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation

Overview

Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation has become one of the most consequential and closely watched pillars of the India-Russia relationship following the signing of a labour mobility agreement during President Putin's December 2025 visit to New Delhi, a development driven by acute Russian labour shortages and India's large working-age population.

The Labour Mobility Agreement

India and Russia signed the labour mobility agreement during President Putin's visit to New Delhi in December 2025, establishing a legal framework for the systematic recruitment of skilled Indian workers, particularly in information technology, construction, and healthcare, to address Russia's substantial labour shortages (Eurasia Review, 2026). For 2026, Russia set a quota of more than 70,000 Indian citizens permitted to work in the country under the agreement (MP-IDSA, 2026; Eurasia Review, 2026). Official estimates suggest that by the end of 2025, before the agreement's formal implementation, between 70,000 and 80,000 Indian citizens were already working in Russia, according to figures cited by India's Ambassador to Russia, Vinay Kumar (MP-IDSA, 2026; Migrant Times, 2026). Russia's special representative for relations with international organizations on sustainable development, Boris Titov, stated that at least 40,000 additional Indian nationals were expected to arrive in Russia as workers during 2026 under the new framework (Migrant Times, 2026).

The scale of Russia's underlying labour need is substantial. Russia has stated an intention to recruit up to 1 million foreign workers, including from India, with the Russian Labor Ministry estimating that the country's labour shortfall could expand to 3.1 million workers by 2030 (Korybko, 2025). This context helps explain the urgency both governments have attached to formalizing the labour mobility framework, with Indian officials framing it as opening new avenues for economic and technology partnership collaboration (Kathmandu Post, 2026).

Worker Protection Concerns

This framework treats worker protection as a central and unresolved challenge within this pillar. Independent reporting has documented concerns over migrant worker rights and safety, including reports of Indian nationals in Russia having been forcibly drafted into military service connected to the war in Ukraine, with some reported deaths among affected individuals (Kathmandu Post, 2026). Indian workers seeking employment in Russia through government-accredited recruitment firms have expressed some reassurance regarding the labour mobility agreement's potential to enable Indian authorities to track citizens travelling to Russia for work, although the agreement remained not fully operationalized as of early

2026, according to reporting from that period (Kathmandu Post, 2026). India's Ministry of External Affairs has acknowledged the agreements as opening new avenues for bilateral collaboration while noting the ongoing work required to translate the framework into operational practice (Kathmandu Post, 2026).

This framework recommends that the labour mobility agreement's implementation include a mandatory, verifiable worker registration and tracking system operated jointly by both governments, addressing directly the safety concerns raised by independent reporting, and that this system explicitly prohibit and provide legal recourse against any diversion of civilian labour migrants into military-related roles. The system should record employment contracts, employers, job locations, occupational categories, duration of employment, and relevant worker documentation, while incorporating appropriate privacy and data-protection safeguards.

It further recommends that India's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Employment establish a dedicated consular support unit specifically for Indian workers in Russia, building on the broader consular capacity recommendations made in the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework. This unit should provide multilingual assistance, emergency support, contract-related guidance, and mechanisms for reporting exploitation, non-payment of wages, unsafe working conditions, or unauthorized changes in employment.

Sector-specific skill certification standards should be harmonized between the two countries to streamline recruitment in priority sectors including information technology, construction, healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics. Mutual recognition of qualifications would reduce recruitment delays while improving the alignment between workers' skills and employer requirements.

Finally, the annual worker quota should be reviewed jointly on a data-driven basis, reflecting Russian labour-market demand, recruitment outcomes, wage conditions, and documented worker welfare indicators rather than being determined unilaterally. A bilateral annual review mechanism should publish aggregate statistics and recommendations, strengthening transparency, accountability, and the long-term sustainability of India-Russia labour mobility cooperation.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Employment, together with the Russian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, operating through the labour mobility agreement signed in December 2025 and India's diplomatic missions in Russia.

24. Tourism Cooperation

Overview

Tourism Cooperation has become one of the fastest-moving pillars of the India-Russia relationship, marked by a rapid succession of visa liberalization measures on both sides culminating in landmark announcements at the December 2025 summit, and by steadily rising visitor numbers in both directions.

Growth in Visitor Numbers

Indian tourist arrivals to Russia have grown substantially. Moscow alone received 35,200 Indian tourists in the first half of 2025, an increase of 23 percent over the 28,500 recorded in the first half of 2024, with full-year 2025 projections placing arrivals at 85,000, up 42 percent from 60,000 in 2023 (VisaVerge, 2026). Across Russia as a whole, the country hosted 122,000 Indian tourists in 2025, ranking India fourth among non-CIS source countries behind China, Turkey, and Iran, while India also placed second among non-CIS business visitor source countries to Moscow, with 12,400 arrivals in the first half of 2025, a 35 percent increase (VisaVerge, 2026). Earlier baseline figures placed annual Indian tourist arrivals to Russia at around 61,000, underscoring the pace of recent growth (Travel And Tour World, 2025a).

Visa Liberalization

Russia introduced a group tourist e-visa pilot in 2025 for organized Indian tour groups of at least three people, offering a 16-day permit targeting wedding tourism specifically, with more than 2,500 Indians having used it by the fourth quarter of 2025 (VisaVerge, 2026). At the December 2025 summit, Prime Minister Modi and President Putin tasked ministers with finalizing a full visa-free travel arrangement by 2027, building on negotiations for a visa-free group travel corridor that would allow organized tourist groups of five to fifty people to visit Russia for up to 21 days without individual visas, with technical negotiators completing a second round of talks on draft protocols covering security vetting, tour operator registration, and data-sharing in late 2025 (Happy Fares, 2026; Visa Verge, 2026). The Moscow Tourism Committee has forecast that a finalized visa-free arrangement could bring 150,000 Indian visitors annually, adding an estimated 400 million dollars to the Russian economy, with Moscow's broader long-term strategy targeting six million international tourists annually by 2030 (VisaVerge, 2026; Travel And Tour World, 2025b).

India moved first on unilateral liberalization. In December 2025, coinciding with the summit, India introduced free 30-day e-tourist and group visas for Russian travellers, with officials hoping the fee waiver, combined with Aeroflot's planned return to the Delhi-Moscow route, would help restore at least 100,000 incremental Russian arrivals in the 2026-27 fiscal year (VisaHQ, 2026). India's Association of Tour Operators described the Russian visa waiver as a potential template for similar cost-neutral bilateral arrangements with other countries, while

also calling for reciprocity from Russia (VisaHQ, 2026). The concession is strictly leisure-focused, with business, conference, and medical travellers still required to obtain paid e-visas or consular visas (VisaHQ, 2026).

Connectivity Constraints

Air connectivity remains a constraint on tourism growth in both directions. As of early 2026, only ten weekly flight services linked India and Russia, with Air India operating a daily Moscow-Delhi route and IndiGo running a weekly St. Petersburg-Mumbai service (VisaVerge, 2026; VisaHQ, 2026). Expansion of these routes, including potential additional carrier capacity from IndiGo and Vistara, would require bilateral traffic-rights expansion beyond current arrangements (VisaHQ, 2026). Russian airports have begun adapting to growing Indian visitor numbers, adding Hindi-language signage and Indian cuisine options in airport lounges (VisaVerge, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments adhere to the 2027 deadline set at the December 2025 summit for finalizing full visa-free travel, prioritizing completion of the pilot visa-free group travel corridor ahead of that date given that technical protocols were substantially agreed by late 2025. It further recommends that both countries expand bilateral air traffic rights to support additional direct flight capacity beyond the current ten weekly services, that Russia consider extending free e-visa treatment to Indian leisure travellers on a reciprocal basis matching India's December 2025 concession, and that both tourism authorities develop joint marketing campaigns highlighting complementary destinations, positioning Russia's cultural and historical sites alongside India's, to support Moscow's stated ambition of six million international visitors annually by 2030.

Both sides should also strengthen tourism infrastructure, multilingual visitor services, digital booking systems, and travel-information platforms to improve accessibility for Indian and Russian tourists. A bilateral tourism working group should monitor visitor numbers, connectivity, visa processing times, and emerging barriers, while encouraging cooperation between tour operators, airlines, hotels, and cultural institutions.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of External Affairs, together with Russia's Federal Agency for Tourism and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, operating through the bilateral visa negotiation track established at the December 2025 summit.

25. Sports Cooperation

Overview

Sports Cooperation between India and Russia remains a comparatively underdeveloped pillar relative to the depth of political, economic, and defence ties, and this framework identifies chess as the most concretely institutionalized area of bilateral sporting engagement, alongside India's broader emergence as a major international sporting events destination in which Russian participation forms one part of a wider pattern.

Chess as an Anchor of Sporting Engagement

Chess has historically served as a distinctive point of connection between Indian and Russian sporting culture, reflecting both countries' status as leading chess nations. Around the time of President Putin's December 2025 visit, Russian chess grandmaster Sergey Karjakin publicly described India as a friendly country, commenting on the broader significance of the visit for strengthening cooperation across defence, trade, science and technology, and cultural and humanitarian affairs (Doordarshan News, 2025). This engagement builds on India's rapid rise as a global chess power, exemplified by Gukesh Dommaraju's position as reigning World Chess Champion, alongside a packed 2026 international chess calendar including the Candidates Tournament held in Paphos, Cyprus, which produced challengers Javokhir Sindarov and Vaishali Rameshbabu for the 2026 World Chess Championships, and the 46th Chess Olympiad scheduled for September 2026 in Samarkand (Wikipedia, 2026).

India's Broader Sporting Events Capacity

India's capacity as a host for international sporting events, in which Russian athletes and federations participate as part of the broader international circuit, has expanded rapidly. Between January 2025 and June 2026, India successfully hosted 36 international sporting competitions across more than 15 cities, spanning athletics, hockey, badminton, shooting, boxing, table tennis, football, aquatics, para sports, chess, cycling, fencing, volleyball, rugby, and surfing, according to India's Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya (ANI, 2026). This capacity building is explicitly oriented toward India's preparations to host the Commonwealth Games in 2030 and its bid for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2036, with a further eleven international competitions scheduled between July and December 2026 alone, including the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships and the Asian Junior Chess Championships (ANI, 2026).

Priority Actions

Given the comparatively thin institutional base of this pillar relative to others in this framework, this framework recommends that India and Russia establish a dedicated bilateral sports cooperation memorandum of understanding, distinct from general cultural exchange agreements, covering athlete training exchange, coaching collaboration, and joint sports

science research, building specifically on the two countries' shared strength in chess as an initial anchor discipline. It further recommends that Russian sporting federations be actively invited to participate in India's expanding calendar of hosted international competitions as India builds toward its 2036 Olympic bid, and that a joint Olympic training partnership be explored, drawing on Russia's historical strength in wrestling, gymnastics, and athletics and India's growing strength in shooting, badminton, and chess.

Both governments should establish an India-Russia Sports Cooperation Council comprising representatives of national sports federations, Olympic committees, sports universities, athletes, coaches, and sports-science institutions. The council should prepare a three-year action plan identifying priority disciplines, exchange targets, training programmes, research projects, and competition opportunities. Particular attention should be given to sports science, biomechanics, nutrition, injury prevention, rehabilitation, performance analytics, and high-performance training methodologies. Joint laboratories or research programmes could be established between leading sports institutions to facilitate scientific exchange and athlete development.

Youth sports should constitute another important component of the partnership. India and Russia should organize annual youth sports camps and school-level exchanges to promote grassroots participation, cultural understanding, and early identification of sporting talent. Special programmes could support athletes from smaller cities and regions who have limited access to international training opportunities. Cooperation in chess should be expanded through school competitions, online tournaments, coaching exchanges, and joint academies, creating a practical people-to-people dimension to bilateral relations.

Finally, the two countries should explore cooperation in sports infrastructure, event management, sports technology, and broadcasting. Russian expertise in selected high-performance disciplines could complement India's expanding sports economy and infrastructure base.

An annual India-Russia Sports Dialogue should review athlete exchanges, joint training camps, research outputs, international competition participation, and youth programmes, ensuring that sports cooperation develops into a sustained institutional partnership rather than remaining dependent on individual sporting events or informal federation-level contacts.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, together with the Russian Ministry of Sport, operating through direct federation-to-federation agreements given the absence of a comprehensive standing bilateral sports commission.

26. Culture and Heritage Cooperation

Overview

Culture and Heritage Cooperation is among the most institutionally developed people-to-people pillars of the India-Russia relationship, anchored by a legal framework of bilateral cultural agreements, a network of five Russian Houses across India, and a rapidly expanding film and media cooperation track formalized at the December 2025 summit.

Institutional Infrastructure

Cultural cooperation operates on the legal basis of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of India on cultural cooperation, implemented through Rossotrudnichestvo, Russia's Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation, which maintains five Russian Houses in India, located in New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Trivandrum (Russian House New Delhi, n.d.). These centres conduct regular programming including creative evenings and artist meetings, art and book exhibitions, photo exhibitions, concerts, performances, conferences, and seminars, alongside libraries holding Russian, English, and Indian-language literature (Russian House New Delhi, n.d.). Reciprocally, India's Festival of India in Russia, most recently held from September 2018 to March 2019 across 22 Russian cities including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Vladivostok, and Grozny, featured 58 main artists and their troupes performing across 31 venues, encompassing classical and contemporary Indian dance and music, film, food festivals, and art exhibitions (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

Film and Media Cooperation

Film cooperation has emerged as a particularly active recent growth area. On December 5, 2025, coinciding with President Putin's visit, the Russian Film Festival opened in New Delhi, inaugurated by Gazprom Media Holding chief executive Alexander Zharov, who described such festivals as building real bridges between cultures (Pravda Germany, 2025). A parallel Russian Film Festival dedicated to Russia's Unity Day was also held in Chennai in association with the Russian House, screening feature films including biographical works on the history of Russia's counter-terrorism forces (Chennai International Film Festival, 2025). Russian cinema also featured prominently at the 23rd Chennai International Film Festival, which showcased more than 110 films from 51 countries in December 2025 (TV BRICS, 2025).

During President Putin's December 2025 visit, several landmark media agreements were signed, including agreements between India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati and Russian media groups Gazprom Media, National Media Group, RT, and Big Asia, as well as an agreement between Russia's TASS news agency and India's Press Trust of India, and the launch of RT India, an English-language broadcast service for Indian audiences (Sberbank,

2026). Industry analysis describes 2026 as a significant growth point for Russia-India cooperation in film, media, and creative industries more broadly, noting that Indian studios are already developing projects using Russian filming locations, production crews, and rebate mechanisms, supported by Moscow's expanding Moskino production cluster and modernized regional filming facilities from St. Petersburg to the Nizhny Novgorod region (Sberbank, 2026). Complementing this cinematic cooperation, the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg is set to host a major exhibition dedicated to modern Indian art, supported by Sberbank, reflecting deepening museum-level cultural exchange (Sberbank, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the newly signed Prasar Bharati and TASS-PTI media agreements be used as a foundation for a broader bilateral content co-production framework, with specific incentives for Indian studios to utilize Russian production infrastructure and for Russian producers to access India's film production ecosystem. It further recommends that the Festival of India in Russia, last held in 2018 and 2019, be revived on a regular cycle, potentially aligned with major anniversary years in the bilateral relationship, and that the network of five Russian Houses in India be matched by an expansion of equivalent Indian cultural centres in additional Russian cities beyond Moscow, building on the momentum of the Gujarat Russian Culture Centre proposal raised in the Youth Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework. Priority could initially be given to cities with significant educational, commercial, and cultural links with India, allowing these centres to function as platforms for language education, exhibitions, academic seminars, film screenings, business-cultural networking, and youth programmes. Both governments should also establish a joint cultural industries fund supporting collaborative projects between filmmakers, publishers, artists, musicians, museums, universities, and digital creators. An annual India-Russia Cultural and Creative Industries Forum could bring together public institutions and private-sector stakeholders to identify investment opportunities and promote creative-sector partnerships. Greater cooperation in translation, digital archiving, preservation of cultural heritage, and online cultural platforms should further improve access to each country's literature, historical materials, and artistic traditions. These measures would transform cultural cooperation from periodic events into a sustained institutional ecosystem supporting creative industries, public diplomacy, tourism, and people-to-people relations.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, together with Russia's Ministry of Culture and Rossotrudnichestvo, operating through the bilateral cultural cooperation agreement and direct institutional partnerships between media and cultural organizations.

27. Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation

Overview

Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation operates through the Inter-Parliamentary Commission between India's Lok Sabha and the Russian State Duma, co-chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairperson of the State Duma, a mechanism that has anchored legislative-level exchange for more than two decades, alongside a growing pattern of direct parliamentary delegation visits in both directions (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

Recent Parliamentary Engagement

Parliamentary contact has intensified through 2025 and 2026. In early 2025, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla welcomed a Russian parliamentary delegation led by State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin to witness Lower House proceedings, describing the India-Russia friendship as a model for cooperation and diplomacy worldwide (Doordarshan News, 2025). Individual member-level engagement has continued alongside formal delegations: Lok Sabha member Dr. Shashi Tharoor held meetings during a personal visit to Russia in June 2025 with Konstantin Kosachev, Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council, and Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, while an Indian parliamentary delegation including members from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha participated in the Asian Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee meetings in Moscow in October 2025 (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

The most significant recent development came in April 2026, when a Russian Parliamentary Delegation led by Vladimir Yakushev, First Deputy Chairperson of the Federation Council, called on Speaker Birla at Parliament House. The Speaker congratulated Yakushev on his appointment as Chairman of the Parliamentary Friendship Group of the Federation Council, a role Birla described as reflecting Russia's continued commitment to enhancing parliamentary cooperation with India, and both sides acknowledged the importance of collaboration across multilateral parliamentary platforms including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the BRICS Parliamentary Forum, and the G20 (Lokmat Times, 2026). Discussions during this visit also covered cooperation in trade, technology, and cultural linkages (News on Air, 2026a). India's Parliament has since moved to formalize this relationship further through the establishment of an India-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group, part of a broader initiative by Speaker Birla to constitute Parliamentary Friendship Groups with more than 60 nations to strengthen structured, long-term legislative engagement grounded in democratic values (Tribune India, 2026; Doordarshan News, 2026a).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that the Inter-Parliamentary Commission, whose most recent full session on record was held in December 2018, be convened on a regular biennial schedule going forward rather than allowed to lapse for extended periods. It further

recommends that the newly established India-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group be resourced with a standing secretariat to organize regular study visits and joint discussions, consistent with the structured engagement model announced for all Parliamentary Friendship Groups, and that parliamentary committee-level exchange be formalized on specific policy areas addressed elsewhere in this framework, including trade, technology, and defence oversight, to complement the executive-level dialogue conducted through the Intergovernmental Commission.

Both countries should establish thematic parliamentary dialogues involving relevant standing committees and specialized legislative bodies. These dialogues could examine issues such as economic cooperation, emerging technologies, energy security, critical minerals, cybersecurity, labour mobility, and environmental cooperation. Parliamentary researchers and legislative staff should also be included to facilitate evidence-based exchanges and comparative analysis of policy and regulatory frameworks.

The Inter-Parliamentary Commission should additionally produce a joint communiqué after each session identifying agreed areas of cooperation, outstanding issues, and recommendations for government action.

A follow-up mechanism could then review implementation before the subsequent session, creating greater accountability and preventing parliamentary engagement from becoming purely ceremonial. Parliamentary exchanges should also include opportunities for interaction with universities, research institutions, industry representatives, and civil society, enabling legislators to gain practical perspectives on the implementation of bilateral initiatives.

Finally, India and Russia should consider establishing an annual parliamentary policy forum for younger legislators and parliamentary staff, focusing on leadership, legislative research, diplomacy, and emerging bilateral challenges.

This would create a pipeline of institutional knowledge and strengthen long-term political understanding between the two countries. Together, these measures would give parliamentary diplomacy a more regular, substantive, and outcome-oriented role within the India-Russia strategic partnership.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with the Lok Sabha Secretariat and the Russian State Duma and Federation Council, operating through the Inter-Parliamentary Commission and the newly formed India-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group.

28. Legal and Judicial Cooperation

Overview

Legal and Judicial Cooperation between India and Russia rests on a well-established treaty framework dating to 1998 and 2000, distinguishing this relationship from India's comparatively thin extradition treaty network with several other major partners.

Treaty Framework

India and Russia signed an Extradition Treaty in New Delhi on December 21, 1998, with instruments of ratification exchanged in Moscow on May 30, 2000, formally bringing the treaty into force (LatestLaws, n.d.). This places Russia among a relatively select group of India's extradition treaty partners, which as of the most recent parliamentary disclosure by India's Ministry of Home Affairs numbered 43 countries in total, with Russia's treaty dating to 1998 alongside similarly aged treaties with countries such as Bulgaria, Tajikistan, and South Korea (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024). Independent legal analysis has noted that India maintains a comparatively small number of bilateral extradition treaties relative to other major powers, observing that Russia itself maintains extradition treaties with 64 countries, more than double India's total, underscoring room for India to expand this pillar with other partners even as its treaty with Russia specifically remains well established (International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation, n.d.).

Alongside the Extradition Treaty, India and Russia signed a parallel Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, along with a Consular Convention, during the same bilateral visit that produced the extradition treaty, together forming the core legal architecture governing cross-border criminal justice cooperation between the two countries (Embassy of India in the United States, n.d.). India's Ministry of Home Affairs continues to administer requests for service of judicial processes on persons residing in Russia through its designated legal division, working in conjunction with the Ministry of External Affairs and India's diplomatic missions in Russia (Ministry of External Affairs, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that both governments conduct a formal joint review of the 1998 Extradition Treaty and the accompanying Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement, now more than a quarter century old, to ensure their provisions remain fit for purpose given the substantial growth in bilateral trade, investment, and labour mobility addressed elsewhere in this framework, particularly given the scale of Indian worker migration to Russia under the December 2025 labour mobility agreement. It further recommends that a dedicated legal cooperation working group be established to address commercial dispute resolution mechanisms relevant to the growing investment relationship, including arbitration frameworks for disputes arising under the prospective Bilateral Investment Treaty discussed in the Investment Cooperation pillar, and that consular protection protocols under the existing

Consular Convention be specifically reviewed and strengthened in light of worker welfare concerns raised in the Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation pillar.

Both governments should also strengthen cooperation against human trafficking, migrant exploitation, financial fraud, document-related offences, and cybercrime through regular information exchange and specialized training for law-enforcement and judicial authorities. A secure institutional channel should facilitate the timely transmission of requests for evidence, witness statements, financial information, and other legally admissible materials required for criminal investigations and prosecutions.

The two countries should explore greater cooperation between their judicial academies, prosecution services, legal institutions, and professional bodies through seminars, judicial exchanges, comparative legal research, and capacity-building programmes. Particular attention should be given to commercial law, digital evidence, intellectual property, arbitration, insolvency, cybercrime, and cross-border enforcement. Such engagement would help legal professionals understand the respective regulatory systems and reduce procedural obstacles in bilateral economic activity.

Both governments should also establish dedicated contact points within relevant justice and interior authorities to accelerate urgent legal-assistance requests and improve coordination in time-sensitive cases. Cooperation should include periodic assessments of procedural delays, documentation requirements, and barriers to enforcement, with recommendations for streamlining processes while preserving judicial independence and due process.

Finally, an annual India-Russia Legal and Judicial Cooperation Dialogue should be established to review implementation of existing agreements, identify emerging legal challenges, and recommend amendments where necessary. The dialogue should maintain a structured implementation matrix covering extradition, mutual legal assistance, commercial arbitration, consular protection, labour mobility, and emerging areas of digital and economic law. This would ensure that the legal architecture of the bilateral relationship evolves alongside expanding trade, investment, migration, technology cooperation, and people-to-people interaction, providing a stronger institutional foundation for the long-term India-Russia strategic partnership.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law and Justice, together with Russia's Ministry of Justice and Prosecutor General's Office, operating under the 1998 Extradition Treaty and the accompanying Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement.

29. Multilateral and Regional Cooperation

Overview

Multilateral and Regional Cooperation addresses the coordination between India and Russia within international institutions and regional groupings, a domain that has grown substantially in significance as India assumed the BRICS chairship for 2026 and as both countries have deepened engagement within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

BRICS

BRICS cooperation stands as the most consequential multilateral venue for India-Russia coordination in the current period. At the December 2025 summit, Russia pledged full support for India's BRICS chairship in 2026, and both countries committed to strengthening the grouping's work across its three organizing pillars, political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation, guided by the BRICS principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus (Eurasia Review, 2025). BRICS has expanded to eleven member countries, comprising Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates, together accounting for approximately 40 percent of global gross domestic product and 49.5 percent of the global population (DD India, 2026). India's chairship theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," has already produced concrete outcomes referenced elsewhere in this framework, including the BRICS Women Ministerial Meeting in Kochi and the associated joint statement on women-led development, illustrating how the multilateral BRICS platform functions as a delivery mechanism for several of this framework's other pillars.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Within the SCO, India commended Russia for successfully hosting the SCO Council of Heads of Government Meeting in Moscow on November 17 and 18, 2025 (President of Russia, 2025). Both countries continue to coordinate positions within the SCO framework on regional security, counterterrorism, and economic connectivity, building on the organisation's historical role, including its 2006 Declaration on International Information Security referenced in the Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework.

United Nations and Global Governance Reform

Russia reaffirmed its support for India's candidacy for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council at the December 2025 summit, a position it has maintained consistently across successive summits (Drishti IAS, 2026). Both countries have used their combined multilateral weight to advocate for reform of global governance institutions more broadly, including within the G20, where India's 2023 presidency and subsequent continued

engagement have provided an additional venue for bilateral coordination on international economic governance questions.

Regional Initiatives

India and Russia have also extended cooperation into specialized regional and thematic multilateral bodies. At the December 2025 summit, Russia expressed interest in joining both the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, both Indian-led international initiatives, reflecting India's growing role as a convenor of thematic multilateral coalitions and Russia's interest in participating in that architecture (Drishti IAS, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India use its 2026 BRICS chairship to institutionalize regular thematic working group meetings, following the model established by the Women Working Group and Women Ministerial Meeting in Kochi, across additional sectors addressed in this framework, including science and technology, agriculture, and disaster resilience. It further recommends that both countries formalize Russia's accession process to the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure with specific implementation timelines, building on the interest expressed at the December 2025 summit, and that India and Russia establish a standing bilateral consultation mechanism specifically on Security Council reform advocacy, distinct from general multilateral coordination, to sustain momentum on this long-standing Russian commitment.

Beyond these priorities, both governments should strengthen coordination within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, G20, BRICS, the United Nations, and other relevant multilateral institutions through regular pre-summit consultations. Joint diplomatic briefings could identify areas where coordinated positions would advance shared interests, including sustainable development, international economic governance, climate change, counter-terrorism, food and energy security, and reform of global financial institutions. An annual India-Russia Multilateral Cooperation Review should assess progress and establish priorities for the following year, ensuring that bilateral diplomacy and multilateral engagement remain mutually reinforcing.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of External Affairs and Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, operating through India's BRICS chairship secretariat, the SCO Secretariat, and standing missions to the United Nations in New York.

30. Sustainable Development Cooperation

Overview

Sustainable Development Cooperation examines how India and Russia engage with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, both bilaterally and through the broader multilateral architecture addressed in the Multilateral and Regional Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework. This pillar is distinguished by an honest divergence in trajectory between the two countries that this framework treats as a candid starting point rather than a shortcoming to be minimized.

Diverging SDG Trajectories

The Sustainable Development Report 2026, published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, records that among major powers, India has achieved one of the largest gains in its SDG Index ranking of any country assessed, rising 18 places, while Russia's ranking has remained unchanged over the same period (Sustainable Development Report, 2026a). This divergence reflects India's sustained domestic investment across health, education, energy access, and infrastructure over the past decade, while Russia's ranking stability reflects a period focused substantially on economic resilience amid sanctions rather than accelerated SDG-specific investment. This framework treats this divergence as a rationale for asymmetric cooperation, in which India can offer relevant scaled implementation experience in areas such as renewable energy deployment, digital financial inclusion, and public health delivery, while Russia offers complementary strengths in energy transition engineering, cold-region infrastructure, and applied science relevant to specific goals.

Both countries remain part of the broader Global South coalition, alongside Brazil, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, whose voting patterns at the United Nations General Assembly continue to demonstrate strong and consistent support for resolutions affirming the 2030 Agenda, with global support exceeding 170 of 193 member states on most 2025 sustainable development resolutions (Sustainable Development Report, 2026b).

Renewable Energy as a Cooperation Frontier

Independent scenario analysis of the broader India-Russia economic partnership has specifically identified renewable energy integration as a pathway that could accelerate progress toward the 100 billion dollar trade target referenced throughout this framework, noting that technology collaboration expansion into renewable sectors creates concrete opportunities for solar panel manufacturing, wind energy component production, and energy storage system development, potentially through joint development of projects in third countries as well as bilaterally (Discovery Alert, 2026). This framework treats such diversification into renewable energy manufacturing as directly complementary to, rather

than competing with, the hydrocarbon and nuclear energy cooperation addressed in the Energy Cooperation pillar earlier in this document, since a broader energy technology partnership reduces dependence on any single energy modality and positions both countries to benefit from global decarbonization trends.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia establish a dedicated joint working group on Sustainable Development Goal implementation, distinct from the general Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation roadmap, with an initial focus on renewable energy manufacturing, given the concrete complementarities identified by independent analysts. The working group should bring together relevant ministries, research institutions, development agencies, financial institutions, and private-sector stakeholders to identify projects capable of producing measurable contributions to the SDGs. Particular attention should be given to renewable energy equipment, energy storage, grid modernization, energy efficiency, and clean-technology manufacturing.

Both countries should use India's 2026 BRICS chairship to advocate jointly within the BRICS framework for the global governance reforms identified as priorities in the Sustainable Development Report 2026, including strengthened development financing and reform of international financial architecture. India and Russia should coordinate positions on expanding access to affordable development finance, strengthening the role of developing economies in international financial institutions, and improving financing mechanisms for climate adaptation and sustainable infrastructure.

Finally, an annual India-Russia Sustainable Development Dialogue should be convened alongside existing bilateral mechanisms to review implementation and align bilateral initiatives with the 2030 Agenda. Universities, civil-society organizations, businesses, and development practitioners should be invited to contribute evidence and practical recommendations. This would ensure that sustainable development becomes an integrated dimension of the bilateral partnership rather than remaining confined to multilateral declarations, while allowing both countries to demonstrate concrete contributions to global development cooperation.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's NITI Aayog, as the nodal agency for SDG coordination, together with the corresponding Russian federal body responsible for national development planning, operating in coordination with both countries' missions to the United Nations.

31. Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation

Overview

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation addresses the startup, small business, and venture financing dimension of the India-Russia relationship, distinct from the large-scale research collaboration addressed in the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework. This pillar has historical roots extending back nearly a decade and has recently gained renewed momentum through dedicated institutional partnerships.

Historical Foundation

India-Russia cooperation on technology investment and innovation financing has an earlier precedent in the 200 million dollar IT and Innovation Fund established through a memorandum of understanding between India's Srei Infrastructure Finance and Russia's state development institution Vnesheconombank, intended to serve as a two-way bridge between Indian and Russian markets and to explore investment opportunities in technology companies across both countries and other selected regions (Business Standard, n.d.). While that specific fund reflects an earlier period of the bilateral relationship, this framework identifies it as an instructive precedent for the kind of dedicated bilateral innovation financing vehicle this pillar should aim to reestablish at greater scale.

Current Institutional Engagement

Multilateral platforms have become an increasingly important channel for startup ecosystem cooperation. India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, through its Startup India initiative, organized the first physical Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Startup Forum, bringing together startup ecosystem participants from India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan, with sessions addressing the role of bilateral and multilateral engagement in developing startup ecosystems and an incubator visit to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (Startup India, n.d.a). This SCO Startup Forum model has continued as a recurring feature of India's international startup engagement strategy (Startup India, n.d.b).

Direct bilateral institutional cooperation has also advanced at the business association level. In June 2026, the Indian Small Business and Franchise Association signed a cooperation agreement with Russia's Roscongress Foundation at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, aimed at creating new opportunities for Indian micro, small, and medium enterprises, startups, franchise businesses, investors, and industry leaders to engage with Russian and Eurasian markets, with the partnership explicitly framed as supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and business development between the two countries (Franchise TV, 2026). This agreement connects directly to the broader industrial and trade diversification themes addressed in the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation and Economic and Trade Cooperation pillars earlier in this framework.

Domestic Innovation Infrastructure Relevant to Bilateral Cooperation

India's rapidly expanding domestic innovation financing infrastructure provides an increasingly substantial base from which bilateral cooperation with Russia could draw. The Research, Development and Innovation Scheme, approved by the Union Cabinet on July 1, 2025, aims to catalyze private sector investment in research and development with a total outlay of 1 lakh crore rupees over six years, including 20,000 crore rupees allocated for the 2025-26 fiscal year, and supports transformative, high technology readiness level projects, acquisition of critical technologies, and the creation of dedicated deep-technology funds (Department of Science and Technology, 2025). This scheme, launched at India's Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave in November 2025, is explicitly oriented toward accelerating breakthrough technologies in support of India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, providing a substantial domestic funding pool that could be leveraged for joint India-Russia deep-technology ventures in the priority areas identified throughout this framework, including quantum technology, critical minerals processing, and advanced manufacturing (Department of Science and Technology, 2025).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends that India and Russia establish a revived, larger-scale bilateral innovation financing vehicle, building on the precedent of the earlier Srei-Vnesheconombank IT and Innovation Fund but sized to reflect the current scale of the bilateral economic relationship. It further recommends that Russian participation in the SCO Startup Forum be formalized into a standing bilateral startup exchange track, distinct from the broader multilateral SCO format, and that the Indian Small Business and Franchise Association-Roscongress Foundation partnership be used as a template for parallel sector-specific business association agreements in technology, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals. It further recommends that Indian deep-technology funds established under the Research, Development and Innovation Scheme explicitly consider joint venture structures with Russian research institutions and technology companies in the priority areas this framework has identified across its science, technology, space, and industrial pillars. Both governments should also establish annual bilateral innovation challenges, providing competitive grants and incubation support for startups developing commercially scalable solutions. Priority should be given to artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, cybersecurity, biotechnology, critical minerals, and space applications, with mechanisms for technology transfer and market access in both countries.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Startup India programme, together with Russia's Ministry of Economic Development and Roscongress Foundation, operating through direct business association agreements and multilateral platforms including the SCO Startup Forum.

Implementation Framework

Institutional Mechanisms

The India-Russia Cooperative Framework's 31 pillars depend for their execution on a layered institutional architecture already substantially in place, which this section consolidates and extends. At the apex sits the Annual Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation, held alternately in New Delhi and Moscow, most recently as the 23rd Annual Summit in New Delhi on December 4 and 5, 2025 (Sanskriti IAS, 2025). The Annual Summit provides the political mandate against which every pillar in this framework is ultimately measured, and its joint statements, most recently titled "Russia-India: A Time-Tested Progressive Partnership, Anchored in Trust and Mutual Respect," serve as the authoritative record of priorities for the following year (President of Russia, 2025).

Beneath the Annual Summit, the 2+2 Dialogue between the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries coordinates the intersection of diplomatic and security policy addressed across the Political Cooperation, Diplomatic Cooperation, and Defence and Security Cooperation pillars (Lukmaan IAS, 2026). The India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, operating through its two specialized divisions, IRIGC-TEC for trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural matters, and IRIGC-M&MTC for military and military-technical cooperation, functions as the primary standing government-to-government body coordinating the economic and industrial pillars of this framework, having most recently convened its 25th and 26th sessions ahead of the December 2025 summit (Doordarshan News, 2026; Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.).

A number of pillar-specific mechanisms operate beneath this general architecture. The India-Russia Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation and the India-Russia Working Group on Modernisation and Industrial Cooperation coordinate the Economic and Trade Cooperation and Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillars respectively (PIB, 2025; News on Air, 2025). The Russian-Indian Commission for Emergency Situations governs the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation pillar (Universal Institutions, 2025). The Inter-Parliamentary Commission between the Lok Sabha and the State Duma, together with the newly formed India-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group, governs the Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation pillar (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.; Tribune India, 2026). The India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement negotiating track, launched with the Terms of Reference signed in August 2025, governs the trade liberalization dimension spanning the Economic and Trade Cooperation and Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation pillars (News on Air, 2025).

This framework recommends that these existing mechanisms be explicitly mapped against all 31 pillars, so that every pillar has a clearly designated primary institutional home, a secondary coordinating body where relevant, and an identified reporting line into either the

Intergovernmental Commission or the 2+2 Dialogue, feeding ultimately into the Annual Summit. Where this framework has identified pillars with thin or absent institutional coverage, specifically Water Resources Cooperation, Sports Cooperation, and elements of Sustainable Development Cooperation, dedicated working groups should be established rather than leaving these pillars to informal or ad hoc coordination.

Joint Working Groups

Building on the institutional mechanisms described above, this framework recommends a rationalized structure of joint working groups, organized into five clusters that group related pillars for coordination efficiency while preserving each pillar's distinct workplan and targets.

The Political and Security Cluster encompasses Political Cooperation, Diplomatic Cooperation, Defence and Security Cooperation, Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation, Legal and Judicial Cooperation, and Multilateral and Regional Cooperation, coordinated primarily through the 2+2 Dialogue with support from the IRIGC-M&MTC division for defence-specific matters.

The Economic and Financial Cluster encompasses Economic and Trade Cooperation, Financial Cooperation, Investment Cooperation, Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation, coordinated through the IRIGC-TEC and its associated Working Groups on Trade and Economic Cooperation and on Modernisation and Industrial Cooperation.

The Resources and Connectivity Cluster encompasses Energy Cooperation, Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation, Water Resources Cooperation, Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation, Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation, and Environmental and Climate Cooperation, coordinated through dedicated sectoral working groups reporting into the IRIGC-TEC, with Arctic-specific elements additionally reporting through the bilateral polar research memorandum.

The Science, Technology and Human Development Cluster encompasses Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation, Space Cooperation, Academic and Educational Cooperation, Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation, and Sustainable Development Cooperation, coordinated through the Roadmap for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation's inter-ministerial working groups.

The People-to-People Cluster encompasses Tourism Cooperation, Sports Cooperation, Culture and Heritage Cooperation, Youth Cooperation, Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation, Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation, Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation, and Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation, coordinated through a combination of the cultural cooperation agreement, the

labour mobility agreement, the Inter-Parliamentary Commission, and the Russian-Indian Commission for Emergency Situations.

Each cluster should convene at the senior official level at least twice annually, with outcomes feeding into the IRIGC-TEC's own annual session and, ultimately, into the Annual Summit's joint statement. This framework recommends that each working group be required to produce a concise annual progress note against the specific targets set out in its constituent pillars, to be consolidated by the Ministry of External Affairs and Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs into a single Cooperative Framework Progress Report ahead of each Annual Summit.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

This framework's 31 pillars each contain specific priority actions, and this section establishes the principles by which progress against those actions should be tracked. The precedent for this kind of target-setting already exists within the relationship: trade targets have been set and revised at successive summits, from 20 billion dollars by 2015, to 30 billion dollars by 2025, achieved ahead of schedule, to the current 100 billion dollar target by 2030, alongside a parallel 50 billion dollar investment target (Embassy of India, Moscow, n.d.; Gulf Today, 2026; CargoNet, 2026). This framework recommends extending this practice of explicit, numerically defined, time-bound targets to all 31 pillars, not solely the trade and investment pillars where it has traditionally been applied.

For each pillar, this framework recommends that the responsible working group establish, within twelve months of this framework's adoption, a baseline measurement and a small set of no more than five key performance indicators tracked annually. Illustrative examples drawn from the pillars already addressed in this framework include, for Economic and Trade Cooperation, progress toward the 100 billion dollar trade target and the Free Trade Agreement utilization rate; for Investment Cooperation, progress toward the 50 billion dollar investment target and Russia's ranking among sources of foreign direct investment into India; for Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation, the number of registered workers under the labour mobility agreement and documented worker welfare outcomes; for Tourism Cooperation, annual visitor numbers in both directions and progress toward the 2027 visa-free travel deadline; and for Space Cooperation, milestones toward the 2028 Bharatiya Antariksh Station core module launch and Gaganyaan's crewed debut.

Where a pillar's current institutional base is too thin to support numerical target-setting, as this framework has candidly acknowledged for Water Resources Cooperation and Sports Cooperation, the initial monitoring objective should instead be the establishment of the institutional mechanism itself, such as the recommended India-Russia Water Partnership or bilateral sports cooperation memorandum, with numerical targets to follow once that mechanism is operational.

This framework recommends that monitoring data be consolidated centrally rather than left dispersed across individual ministries, through the same Cooperative Framework Progress Report proposed under Joint Working Groups above, and that this report be made available, at least in summary form, to the track two research and policy community referenced in the Political Cooperation and Diplomatic Cooperation pillars, to enable independent scrutiny and analysis of the kind reflected throughout the sourcing of this framework document.

Periodic Review Mechanism

This framework recommends a three-tier review cycle. At the annual level, the Cooperative Framework Progress Report should be presented to the Annual Summit itself, ensuring that pillar-level progress is visible at the highest political level each year and that any pillar showing sustained underperformance against its targets receives direct leader-level attention rather than being left to working-level channels indefinitely.

At the mid-term level, this framework recommends a comprehensive five-year review, aligned with the short-term priority horizon set out in the Roadmap for Future Cooperation that follows this Implementation Framework, at which each pillar's targets should be formally reassessed and, where appropriate, revised upward or reprioritized in light of demonstrated progress, consistent with the pattern already established for trade and investment targets. This five-year review should be conducted jointly by the IRIGC-TEC and the 2+2 Dialogue, with a consolidated report presented to the Annual Summit.

At the long-term level, this framework recommends that the full 31-pillar structure itself be reviewed once per decade, aligned with the medium-term and long-term horizons of the Roadmap for Future Cooperation, to assess whether the pillar structure remains fit for purpose, whether new pillars should be added to reflect emerging areas of cooperation not currently anticipated, and whether any existing pillars should be consolidated or retired. This decadal review should draw on the track two research community and should be conducted with reference to the Strategic Vision 2050 set out in the following section, ensuring that periodic adjustments serve the long-term vision rather than merely responding to short-term political pressures.

Roadmap for Future Cooperation

Strategic Vision 2050

By 2050, this framework envisions an India-Russia relationship that has completed its transition from a partnership concentrated in two sectors, energy and defence, into a genuinely diversified architecture spanning all 31 pillars addressed in this document, while preserving the strategic autonomy that both countries have consistently identified as the foundation of their cooperation (Vision IAS, 2025). This vision is not a departure from the trajectory both governments have already set. President Putin's own projection, offered at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, that bilateral trade could reach 100 billion dollars driven by continued cooperation in hydrocarbons, nuclear energy, and investment, points toward a relationship whose economic core remains robust even as this framework argues for expansion beyond it (Doordarshan News, 2026a).

By 2050, this framework envisions India having achieved its own stated ambition of becoming a developed nation, a goal articulated under the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision referenced in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation and Investment Cooperation pillars, with Russia established as one of a small number of partners whose cooperation spans the full spectrum of that development, from nuclear energy contributing toward India's targeted 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity, to critical minerals processing supporting India's electric vehicle and renewable energy manufacturing base, to co-developed defence platforms exported jointly to third countries following the model already established by BrahMos.

By 2050, this framework envisions the trade relationship having moved decisively beyond its current concentration in crude oil and fertilizer, toward a balanced composition in which Indian exports to Russia have grown from their current base of roughly 3 to 5 billion dollars into a diversified basket spanning pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, engineering goods, and digital services, closing substantially the imbalance this framework has identified as the central structural weakness of the current relationship. The India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement, under negotiation as of this framework's drafting, should by 2050 be a mature, multiply-renewed instrument, having long since resolved the settlement and non-tariff barrier challenges addressed in the Financial Cooperation and Economic and Trade Cooperation pillars.

By 2050, this framework envisions Arctic and Far East cooperation, currently an emerging priority reflected in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation, Investment Cooperation, and Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillars, having matured into one of the most substantial dimensions of the relationship, with the Northern Sea Route, the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor, and the Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor functioning as established, high-volume trade arteries, and with Indian scientific and commercial presence in the Russian Far East comparable in scale to established Indian engagement in Southeast Asia or the Gulf.

By 2050, this framework envisions the space partnership between ISRO and Roscosmos having progressed from the current orbital alignment agreement between the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and the Russian Orbital Station into sustained joint human spaceflight operations, potentially extending to joint lunar or deep-space missions building on the propulsion technology cooperation identified in the Space Cooperation pillar.

This Strategic Vision 2050 is deliberately ambitious relative to the current state of several pillars addressed in this framework, particularly Water Resources Cooperation, Sports Cooperation, and Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation, where this framework has candidly documented a thin current base. The vision's function is not to understate that gap but to provide the long-term orientation against which the shorter-term priorities below can be sequenced and measured.

Short-Term Priorities (1 to 5 Years)

Over the next five years, corresponding to the period through 2031, this framework identifies the following as the highest-priority, most immediately actionable objectives across its 31 pillars, drawing directly on commitments and timelines already agreed by both governments.

The India-EAEU Free Trade Agreement negotiations, launched with the Terms of Reference signed in August 2025 and directed to be fast-tracked at the December 2025 summit, should be concluded, potentially through the interim limited and temporary arrangement discussed by Russian officials in 2026, addressed in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar. The Bilateral Investment Treaty, under renewed negotiation since 2024 and elevated to leader-level priority in December 2025, should likewise be concluded, addressed in the Investment Cooperation pillar. Full visa-free travel between India and Russia, targeted by both leaders for 2027, should be implemented, addressed in the Tourism Cooperation pillar. The two remaining S-400 air defence system deliveries, delayed by the war in Ukraine, should be completed on their 2026 schedule, and a decision on Su-57 co-production, under technical discussion since January 2026, should be finalized, both addressed in the Defence and Security Cooperation pillar.

The two planned Indian consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg, announced in 2024, should be fully operationalized, addressed in the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar. The second civil nuclear power plant site, under discussion for several summit cycles, should receive formal allotment, addressed in the Energy Cooperation pillar. The Bharatiya Antariksh Station's core module, targeted for 2028, and the Gaganyaan crewed mission, targeted for 2026, should both proceed on schedule, addressed in the Space Cooperation pillar. The labour mobility agreement signed in December 2025 should be fully operationalized with the worker tracking and protection safeguards this framework has recommended, addressed in the Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation pillar. India's 2026 BRICS chairship should be used to institutionalize the thematic working group model demonstrated by the Women Working Group and Ministerial Meeting in Kochi across additional sectors, addressed in the

Multilateral and Regional Cooperation and Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation pillars.

Medium-Term Priorities (5 to 15 Years)

Over the period from approximately 2031 to 2041, corresponding to the medium-term horizon of this framework, priorities shift from finalizing pending agreements toward scaling the institutional and commercial mechanisms established during the short-term period.

The 100 billion dollar trade target and 50 billion dollar investment target, both set for 2030, should have been achieved and replaced by a new, higher target reflecting the more diversified trade composition this framework envisions, with Indian exports to Russia constituting a substantially larger share of total bilateral trade than the roughly 5 to 7 percent share observed at the time of this framework's drafting. The rupee-rouble settlement mechanism should have matured into a fully interoperable payment system, with the financial messaging integration question, unresolved since at least 2023, definitively settled, addressed in the Financial Cooperation pillar. The Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor, at an early conceptual stage as of this framework's drafting, should have moved into substantial implementation, with Indian shipbuilding capacity actively engaged in supporting Russian Arctic infrastructure development, addressed in the Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation and Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillars. The rare earth and critical minerals partnership between institutions such as TEXMiN and GIREDMET, at a research-stage memorandum as of this framework's drafting, should have scaled into commercial-volume joint production, addressed in the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar. India's National Quantum Mission and Russia's quantum research institutions should have established joint facilities comparable in scale to India's existing bilateral technology partnerships with the European Union and the United States, addressed in the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation pillar. The Bharatiya Antariksh Station should be in sustained operation with demonstrated interoperability with the Russian Orbital Station, addressed in the Space Cooperation pillar.

Long-Term Strategic Goals (15 to 30 Years)

Over the period from approximately 2041 to 2050, this framework identifies the long-term strategic goals that would constitute fulfillment of the Strategic Vision 2050 set out above. These are necessarily framed with less precision than the short and medium-term priorities, given the inherent uncertainty of forecasting three decades forward, but this framework identifies four defining outcomes against which long-term success should be judged.

First, a genuinely balanced trade and investment relationship, in which the current overwhelming concentration in Russian energy exports has been substantially diluted by growth across the diversified pillars addressed throughout this framework, such that no single commodity category constitutes the majority of bilateral trade value, mirroring the

diversification path already achieved in India's relationships with other major partners. Second, a mature co-development defence and space industrial base, in which joint Indian-Russian platforms, following the template established by BrahMos, constitute a meaningful share of both countries' defence and aerospace exports to third countries, and in which the human spaceflight partnership has produced sustained joint operations beyond the current Bharatiya Antariksh Station and Russian Orbital Station alignment. Third, deep institutional integration across the people-to-people pillars, in which youth, educational, and labour mobility between the two countries operates through streamlined, mutually recognized frameworks rather than the ad hoc, rapidly evolving arrangements documented throughout this framework's People-to-People Cluster pillars. Fourth, sustained strategic autonomy for both countries, preserved even as the relationship deepens, consistent with the guiding principle established at the outset of this framework, such that deeper India-Russia cooperation by 2050 continues to coexist with, rather than substitute for, each country's independent relationships with other global powers.

End Note

This framework has traced the India-Russia relationship across 31 pillars of cooperation, from the historically deep foundations of political trust and defence cooperation to newer and, in several cases, still nascent domains including water resources, artificial intelligence, and sports.

Throughout, this framework has aimed to represent the relationship honestly rather than aspirationally alone, documenting not only the record trade figures and expanding cooperation that mark the partnership's current momentum, but also the structural trade imbalance, the settlement bottlenecks, the worker protection concerns, and the thin institutional base in several pillars that will need sustained attention if the Strategic Vision 2050 set out in this Roadmap is to be realized.

The India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership enters the period covered by this framework with considerable momentum, reflected in the 16 agreements signed at the December 2025 Annual Summit alone, spanning defence, healthcare, trade, and culture (Drishti IAS, 2026).

Converting that momentum into the diversified, balanced, and durable partnership envisioned in this framework will require the institutional discipline set out in the Implementation Framework, the honest target-setting recommended throughout the 31 pillars, and sustained political commitment from both governments across the leadership transitions that will inevitably occur over the three-decade horizon this framework addresses.

This framework is offered as a planning document, not a binding agreement, and its value lies in providing a structured reference against which policymakers, researchers, and institutions in both countries can measure progress, identify gaps, and recalibrate priorities as the relationship continues to evolve.

Council for Bilateral Cooperation Frameworks

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