

INDIA-RUSSIA FRIENDSHIP HAS STOOD TEST OF TIME, SAYS MODI

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The India-Russia friendship has “stood the test of time”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Friday while virtually addressing the Far Eastern Economic Forum 2021, currently under way in the Russian port city of Vladivostok.

Mr. Modi’s remarks came days after Russia abstained from a crucial Afghanistan and terrorism-related resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where India served as the President for August.

He mentioned a number of areas spanning connectivity, space research and ship-building, which, he stated, were redefining the strategic bilateral partnership. “The friendship between India and Russia has stood the test of time. Most recently, it was seen in our robust cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the area of vaccines. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of the health and pharmaceutical sectors in our bilateral cooperation. Energy is another major pillar of our strategic partnership,” he noted and asserted that the India-Russia energy partnership could stabilise the global energy market.

Mr. Modi announced that an energy and trade bridge from Vladivostok to Chennai was taking shape.

The speech, however, did not mention the situation in Afghanistan even though substantial consultation had taken place between the two sides on the deteriorating security situation in the war-torn country. Mr. Modi called up Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 24 to discuss Afghanistan among other issues. While India is concerned about the fallout of the Taliban takeover of Kabul on Kashmir, Russia is worried about a similar spillover along its southern borders. During the discussion on the UNSC Resolution 2593 on August 31, Russia claimed that the draft statement divided terrorists as “ours versus theirs” and abstained alongside China.

Mr. Modi said Vladivostok was the confluence of Eurasia and the Pacific. “In Indian history and civilization, word, the term ‘*sangam*’ has a special meaning. It means confluence or coming together of rivers, people or ideas. In my view, Vladivostok is truly a ‘*sangam*’ of Eurasia and the Pacific. India will be a reliable partner of Russia in realising this vision,” he observed.

The modern ship-building facility at Zvezda and the Mazagaon Docks Limited would work together for the “construction of some of the most important commercial ships in the world”.

The Eastern Economic Forum is being attended by Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

The forum was set up by a decree of Mr. Putin in 2015 to support the economic development of Russia’s far east and “expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region”.

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