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ACADEMY



• GLOBAL

Putin's visit: The long arc of India's ties with Russia, the road ahead



SHUBHRAJIT ROY

Russian President Vladimir Putin first came to India for a summit with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in October 2000. Putin was then new to the President's job — having been elected earlier in 2000 — and Vajpayee was also in the early years of his Prime Ministership.

New Delhi was under sanctions from the West for the Pokhran-II nuclear tests, while Russia was a pale shadow of the erstwhile Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union's collapse, the US dominated the scene in a unipolar world.

India and Pakistan were in a bitter relationship, after the Kargil war and the IC-814 hijack in 1999. In fact, Putin's visit took place months before the Red Fort attack in December 2000.

In short, Russia was weak and India was facing the brunt of Western sanctions.

Now, 25 years later, Putin will come to India on December 4-5 for the 23rd annual summit between India and Russia.

This is his first visit to India after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Putin's Russia is facing sanctions from the Western world, while India is also at the receiving end of secondary sanctions and high tariffs from the US. India and Pakistan have once again seen conflict in May, and Delhi just witnessed a blast near the Red Fort.

There are too many similarities in the global and regional context in the quarter century, but India and Russia have evolved not just in their bilateral relationship but also in terms of their place in the world.

India has built a strong and robust relationship with the West, including the US, forging security, defence, economic and people-centric partnerships.

With Russia, it has maintained a strong defence partnership — a legacy from the Soviet Union era — but has also diversified to other sources for technology.

Defence ties

Over time, India has reduced its defence import dependence on Russia. But there is legacy equipment that needs spares and servicing from Russia, and thus, about 60 % of the defence equipment is still from the country. India has bought



Narendra Modi and Vladimir

the S-400 air defence system from Russia. Moscow has been able to deliver 3 out of 5 batteries, and now there is a demand for another 5 of them. But mired in the Ukraine war, Russia has not been able to deliver the entire equipment on time.

European analysts say the sanctions on Russia have also slowed down its capacity to manufacture cutting-edge defence equipment — something that Moscow rejects.

Syllabus

General Studies paper II

- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

India–Russia Relations: Continuity, Change, and Strategic Balancing

- ❑ India–Russia relations have evolved dramatically over the last 25 years.
 - ❑ From a period marked by Western sanctions on India and a weakened post-Soviet Russia in 2000, to the current complex geopolitical environment shaped by the Ukraine war, US–China rivalry, and shifting global alignments, the partnership continues to remain strategically significant.
 - ❑ The upcoming December 4–5 visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi for the 23rd annual India–Russia summit underscores both the resilience and the challenges of this long-standing relationship.
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Historical Context: From Pokhran Sanctions to Strategic Engagement

- ❑ Putin's first visit to India in **October 2000** occurred when both nations were navigating uncertain global dynamics.
 - ❑ India was under **Western sanctions following the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests**, and Russia was still recovering from the Soviet collapse.
 - ❑ Despite these constraints, the two countries sought to reinvigorate traditional ties, setting the stage for a new era of cooperation.
 - ❑ At the time, South Asia was also unstable, with India–Pakistan relations strained following the **Kargil War** and the **IC-814 hijacking**.
 - ❑ The geopolitical fluidity made Russia an important partner in India's quest for strategic autonomy.
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Defence Partnership: Deep Roots, Changing Dependencies

- ❑ The defence relationship has long been the backbone of India–Russia ties.
 - ❑ Even today, **about 60% of India's military equipment** originates from Russia, a legacy built over decades.
 - ❑ Major acquisitions such as the **S-400 air defence system** reflect continuing trust; Russia has delivered **3 of the 5 ordered batteries**, though the Ukraine conflict has slowed supply timelines.
 - ❑ India has diversified its defence imports, increasingly sourcing from the US, France, and Israel.
 - ❑ Yet legacy systems require Russian spares and maintenance, keeping Moscow central to India's long-term defence planning.
 - ❑ Analysts note Western sanctions may have slowed Russia's production of advanced military platforms, a claim Moscow denies, but India must navigate these constraints carefully.
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Economic Ties: Oil-Driven Trade Boom

- ❑ Economic relations have seen a major shift since the Ukraine conflict began in **February 2022**.
 - ❑ India capitalized on discounted Russian crude oil, enabling domestic fuel price stability.
 - ❑ As a result, bilateral trade hit a **record \$68.7 billion in FY 2024–25**, though the balance is heavily skewed: India exported **\$4.9 billion**, while Russian imports—primarily oil—totaled **\$63.8 billion**.
 - ❑ However, secondary sanctions from the US and Europe have eroded India's cost advantage in Russian oil purchases.
 - ❑ This puts pressure on the ambitious **\$100-billion trade target for 2030**.
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Geopolitical Balancing: Navigating Great-Power Rivalries

- ❑ As India deepens ties with the US and Europe—its key sources of technology, capital, and migration opportunities—it must simultaneously preserve its strategic partnership with Russia.
 - ❑ Moscow's growing closeness with China complicates matters, especially with **50,000 Indian troops stationed along the India–China border** after recent tensions.
 - ❑ Former NSAB chairman P. S. Raghavan notes the importance of monitoring Russia–China military cooperation to ensure sensitive technologies shared with India are not transferred to Beijing.
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SC flags issues in payouts, free care for acid attack survivors

Bench headed by Justice B.V. Nagarathna to examine what ails disbursement of compensation to survivors; court mandates that its orders be brought to notice of State Chief Secretaries for action

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to look into a plea that acid attack survivors, mostly young women, have neither been paid in full the minimum ₹3 lakh in compensation nor provided free critical care by private hospitals.

A Bench headed by Justice B.V. Nagarathna decided to examine what ails the disbursement of compensation to acid attack survivors despite repeated judicial orders from the top court spanning years.

The court had in 2006 taken judicial cognisance of the trauma undergone by acid attack survivors after witnessing and hearing Laxmi, who was ambushed by a trio of men, one of whom she had refused to marry.

The top court had ordered States to pay survivors a minimum ₹3 lakh compensation, of which ₹1 lakh was to be given within 15 days of the incident and the balance within two months. The court had banned over-the-counter sale of acid. It had declared

Justice delayed

Despite judicial orders, survivors face delays in compensation and essential medical care

- **2006:** SC takes cognisance; acknowledges trauma of 15 year old Laxmi, who was attacked by three men
- **2013:** Court orders minimum of ₹3 lakh, free or tical care at private hospitals and ban on over-the-counter sale of acid
- **2015:** Orders on hospital compliance reiterated; district legal services authorities directed to function as criminal injuries compensation Boards
- **2025:** Survivors given liberty to approach State or district authorities for delayed or defaulted payments

that private hospitals would be held criminally liable for refusing free treatment to victims before referring them to a specialised facility. These directions were passed in judicial orders in 2013 and reiterated by the top court in 2015.

In April 2015, the court had directed that district legal services authorities would function as criminal injuries compensation boards and take up the compensation claims made by survivors.

On March 20 this year, the Supreme Court gave acid attack survivors liber-

ceived by victims as part of the ₹3 lakh compensation, particularly in States like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Private hospitals were refusing treatment until victims had paid up in full. "That is what really hurts us, not only as lawyers, but as human beings," the NGO counsel submitted.

The court issued notice and impleaded the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) in the case. The Bench directed NALSA to collect data from State legal services authorities about the amounts disbursed to acid attack victims as compensation.

A counsel appearing for NALSA orally submitted that ₹484 crore, approximately, was disbursed as compensation from March 2024 to April 2025.

The court further directed that its judicial orders be brought to the notice of the State Chief Secretaries for issuing directions for disbursement of funds to the State legal services authorities, which would in turn forward the funds to district bodies for payment to survivors. The next hearing is on February 3, 2026.

Syllabus

General Studies paper II

- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Acid Attack Survivors in India: Persistent Gaps in Compensation and Care

- ❑ Acid attacks remain one of the most violent forms of gender-based crimes in India, disproportionately affecting young women.
- ❑ Despite multiple Supreme Court directives aimed at ensuring compensation, medical care, and regulation of acid sales, implementation remains critically weak.
- ❑ The Supreme Court's fresh intervention in 2025 highlights the systemic failures that continue to deny justice and dignity to survivors.

POLICY DRAWN UP BY CENTRE, NALSA

Particulars of loss/injury	Minimum compensation (Rs)	Upper limit of compensation (Rs)
Loss of Life	5 lakh	10 lakh
Gang rape	5 lakh	10 lakh
Rape	4 lakh	7 lakh
Unnatural sexual assault	4 lakh	7 lakh
Miscarraige due to assault	2 lakh	3 lakh
In case of pregnancy due to rape	3 lakh	4 lakh
In case of disfigurement due to burning/acid attack	7 lakh	8 lakh
In case of 50% injury	5 lakh	8 lakh

Note—In case woman victim is covered under one or more category, she shall be entitled for combined value of compensation; In case of minor victim, the limit of compensation shall be 50% higher than the above mentioned amount

Judicial Framework and Court Directives

Early Interventions

- In **2006**, the Supreme Court took cognisance of the trauma faced by survivors after hearing the case of **Laxmi**, a young woman attacked by three men, one of whom she had refused to marry.

Compensation Orders

- In **2013**, the Court mandated a **minimum compensation of ₹3 lakh**, with:
 - **₹1 lakh within 15 days** of the incident.
 - The remaining **₹2 lakh within two months**.
 - The directives were **reiterated again in 2015**, underlining continuing non-compliance.
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Medical Care Mandate

- The Court banned **over-the-counter sale of acid**.
- Private hospitals were made **criminally liable** for refusing free treatment.
- Hospitals must treat victims first and refer them later to specialised centres.

Legal Services Authorities and Compensation Mechanism

- From 2015, **District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)** were directed to function as **Criminal Injuries Compensation Boards**.
 - On **March 20, 2025**, the Court allowed survivors to directly approach State or district legal services bodies for delays in compensation.
 - These bodies must also ensure private hospitals do not deny treatment.
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Current Status: Persistent Non-Compliance

- Petition by NGO **Acid Survivors Saahas Foundation** revealed:
- Victims received only the **initial ₹1 lakh**, with the remaining compensation pending in States like **Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh**.
- Private hospitals continue to demand upfront payment, violating Court orders.

Data from NALSA

- NALSA informed the Court that **₹484 crore** was disbursed as compensation between **March 2024 and April 2025**, though effective distribution to individual survivors remains unclear.

Way Forward

- Court has issued notices to States and directed Chief Secretaries to ensure funds reach DLSAs for timely disbursement.
 - Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, penalising non-compliance by private hospitals, and simplifying compensation processing are essential for survivor-centric justice.
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Man-animal conflict frays India's wildlife conservation principles

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



CARE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

India's countryside continues to witness a deepening crisis of human-wildlife conflict, with increasing instances of wild animals straying into farmland and towns that often result in deaths of both wildlife and people, and calls to 'contain' animal numbers.

In many parts of Assam, Odisha, Karnataka and other States, farmers now regularly report herds of wild elephants entering paddy, sugarcane or banana fields during the night. According to a report by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), this kind of human-wildlife conflict has become "one of the main threats to the long-term survival of many emblematic species in India."

As India's infrastruc-

tural footprint expands, natural habitats shrink and become fragmented. That fragmentation forces animals to cross into human-dominated landscapes in search of food or migration routes, raising the odds of conflict.

About 186 elephants were killed after being hit by trains across India between 2009-10 and 2020-21, according to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

As per the data furnished by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry, Assam accounted for the highest number of elephant casualties on rail-

way tracks (62), followed by West Bengal (57), and Odisha (27).

"Within a human lifetime, we have witnessed extraordinary and unprecedented changes to our planet," warns Margaret Kinnaird, Global Wildlife Practice Leader at WWF Global. "Human-wildlife conflict, in tandem with other threats, has decimated species that were once common – and pushed rarer ones to the brink."

Agriculture near forests draws elephants into human fields, increasing conflict. Villages in the vicinity of several tiger reserves in India have seen instances of crop raids by nilgai, deer and bison, prompting calls by angry locals to declare these species as 'vermin'.

Meanwhile, sensitive scavengers such as vultures suffer silently. Once numbering in the tens of millions across South Asia,

several vulture species have seen catastrophic declines – over 95% in some species – driven by a combination of habitat disruption, poisoning from veterinary drugs, and disturbance around their traditional carcass-feeding sites. Without vultures to dispose of animal carcasses, rural India has witnessed a rise in rotting carcasses, stray dogs, and associated public health risks.

Recognising the urgency, the Centre has rolled out a national-level strategy. The National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan seeks to address key drivers of conflict – habitat fragmentation, damaged corridors, and retaliatory killing – by promoting mitigation measures, data-driven monitoring, and stronger habitat protection.

Syllabus

General Studies paper III

- Conservation, environmental pollution and environmental degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Human–Wildlife Conflict in India: Causes, Impacts and Policy Response

- ❑ Human–wildlife conflict (HWC) has emerged as a serious ecological and socio-economic challenge in India's countryside.
- ❑ Increasing encounters between people and wild animals, resulting in casualties on both sides, reflect deepening stress on natural ecosystems.
- ❑ As per a joint report by the **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** and **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**, HWC is now among the **major threats to the long-term survival of key wildlife species in India**.



Rising Incidents Across States

Elephant–Human Conflict

- ❑ States such as **Assam, Odisha, and Karnataka** frequently report herds of wild elephants raiding paddy, sugarcane, and banana fields, especially at night.
- ❑ According to the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, **186 elephants were killed by trains** between **2009-10 and 2020-21**.
 - **Assam:** 62 deaths
 - **West Bengal:** 57 deaths
 - **Odisha:** 27 deaths

These figures underscore the high-risk interface between wildlife habitats and expanding infrastructure.

Crop Raids

- ❑ Villages near many tiger reserves experience regular crop depredation by **nilgai, deer, and bison**.
 - ❑ Such incidents often fuel demands to declare these species as '*vermin*', threatening ecological balance.
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Ecological Pressures Behind the Conflict

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

- Expanding **infrastructure projects**, highways, and human settlements have fragmented natural habitats.
- Animals are increasingly forced to cross farmlands and villages in search of food or migratory corridors.

Decline of Key Species

- Species such as vultures have witnessed **over 95% population declines** due to:
- Habitat disruption
- Poisoning from veterinary drugs
- Disturbance at traditional feeding sites



Government Initiatives

National Mitigation Strategy

- The Centre has launched the **National Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan**.
- Key focus areas include:
- Strengthening **habitat connectivity** and corridors
- Data-driven monitoring of wildlife movement
- Reducing retaliatory killings
- Long-term habitat protection and community engagement



Centre is not considering any proposal to classify denotified tribes, RS told

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Five years after the Union Government initiated an ethnographic effort to classify 268 denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes who were thought to have never been classified before, the Union government told Parliament on Wednesday that it is not considering any proposal to classify these communities into Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and OBC categories afresh.

This comes two years after the Anthropological Survey of India completed the ethnographic study of these communities and recommended their reclassification.

In their report submitted in 2023, the AnSI had recommended fresh classification of 85 of these communities, reclassification of nine others, and noted that many others were only partially classified.

This exercise was initiated in 2019 after the government constituted the Deve-

Anthropological Survey of India had recommended reclassification of these communities

lopment Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC). This board was set up following the Idade Commission's report of 2017, which had also flagged the need for these communities' proper classification into SC, ST, or OBC lists, as have previous Commissions that have looked into denotified communities.

While setting up the board, the government entrusted the task of classification of these communities to a NITI Aayog panel, which had commissioned the Anthropological Survey of India to study them.

Pressure for quota

Responding to questions in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday about this study and the government's plans to

finalise the classification of these communities, the Social Justice Ministry said, "There is no proposal under consideration."

This comes even as civil society organisations representing the denotified communities in north India have been pushing the government to recognise them as a separate scheduled category akin to SCs, STs, and OBCs. Their rationale has been that very few States were issuing community certificates to these communities, in the absence of which, they are unable to claim benefits meant for them.

The Ministry said that the Development Welfare Board was already administering the SEED scheme for the welfare of all denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic communities. However, officials of the Board have told *The Hindu* previously that a major reason for the slow uptake of the SEED scheme was the lack of clarity on how to classify these communities.

Syllabus

General Studies paper II

- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Issues in Classification of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DNCs)

- ❑ Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DNCs) constitute some of India's most marginalised and historically excluded groups.
 - ❑ Despite multiple commissions recognising their vulnerability, the lack of proper classification into **Scheduled Castes (SC)**, **Scheduled Tribes (ST)**, or **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** continues to hinder their access to constitutional protections and welfare schemes.
 - ❑ Recent developments in Parliament show persistent ambiguity in the government's approach to their reclassification.
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Background: Historical Neglect

- ❑ Many DNCs were labeled as “criminal tribes” under colonial laws and denotified only after Independence.
- ❑ Because of their mobility, oral traditions, and weak documentation, numerous groups were **never properly classified** under SC/ST/OBC lists.
- ❑ This has resulted in chronic exclusion from education, healthcare, livelihoods, and social security benefits.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES - MEANING

- **DE notified Tribes** (DNTs), also known as *Vimukta Jati*, are the tribes that were originally listed as "Criminal Tribes" and "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences."
- Once a tribe became "notified" as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a "crime" under the Indian Penal Code.



Government Initiatives Since 2019

- In **2019**, the Union Government set up the **Development and Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC)**.
- A NITI Aayog–appointed panel commissioned the **Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)** to conduct a nationwide ethnographic study of **268 communities**.

Key Findings (2023)

AnSI recommended:

- **Fresh classification of 85 communities**
 - **Reclassification of 9 communities**
 - Highlighted that many groups were **only partially classified**, leading to inconsistent benefits across States.
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Government Response

- On Wednesday, the Ministry of Social Justice informed Parliament that “**there is no proposal under consideration**” for reclassifying these communities.
- This stance comes despite the AnSI report and earlier recommendations from:
 - **Idate Commission (2017)**
 - Multiple earlier commissions on DNC welfare

Demands from Civil Society

- Civil society organisations representing DNCs have demanded:
 - Recognition as a **separate Scheduled category**, similar to SCs, STs, and OBCs.
 - Their argument: **States rarely issue community certificates** to DNCs.
 - Without such documentation, beneficiaries **cannot access welfare schemes**, leading to repeated exclusion.
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Thank you

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