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**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Prime Minister's Office**

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Prime Minister's statement prior to his departure to Russia

Today I will commence my visit to Russia, my first bilateral visit after we formed the Government. I am very optimistic about the outcome of this visit.

History is witness to the close ties India and Russia have had over the decades. Russia remains one of India's most valued friends in the world.

My mind goes back to 2001. I had just assumed charge as Gujarat CM and had accompanied Atal ji to Russia. This was, perhaps, one of the first India-Russia annual Summits, a practice that goes on till date.

My visit will deepen the cooperation between India and Russia in the economic, energy and security spheres. We also want to increase cooperation in science and technology, mining among other sectors. Trade ties between India and Russia can increase even further, to benefit not only our two nations but also the world.

The visit will witness extensive deliberations with President Putin. There will be an interaction with Russian businesspersons to invite them to invest in India. I will also attend a 'Friends of India' programme. I am certain that this visit will substantially take forward the already strong people to people ties between our nations.

AKT/NT