The Moscow Times
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India’s Modi to Skip Moscow Victory Day Parade Amid Tensions With Pakistan

April 30, 2025



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. **Maxim Blinov / brics-russia2024.ru**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend Russia’s annual Victory Day military parade next week as tensions with Pakistan escalate over a deadly attack in Kashmir, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

At least 20 foreign leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, have accepted President Vladimir Putin’s invitation to attend the May 9 Red Square parade marking the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War II. Modi also received an invitation but had not confirmed his attendance.

“The Indian leader will not come. India will be represented, but at a lower level,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Wednesday.

India’s government later said it would send Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh to attend the parade in Moscow.

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Tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have sharply deteriorated following an April 22 attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 26 Hindu pilgrims.

New Delhi has blamed Islamabad for the attack and granted its military "complete operational freedom" to retaliate. Pakistan, which denies involvement, has warned of a possible Indian strike within the next 24 to 36 hours, citing "credible intelligence."

Meanwhile, in Ukraine, Putin has proposed a 72-hour ceasefire to coincide with next week's Victory Day celebrations — a proposal Kyiv has dismissed as a symbolic gesture meant to buy time on the battlefield.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that the Kremlin is "rightly worried" about security at the Red Square parade. Peskov dismissed any concerns Wednesday, saying: "There will be a Victory Day parade in Moscow, and we'll proudly watch it."

This year's commemoration will be Russia's fourth since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's Defense Ministry has said troops from 19 countries were invited to participate in the parade, with 10 confirming attendance. Japanese media have reported that North Korea is expected to send troops for the first time, though Peskov said he was unaware of those plans.

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