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Kremlin Urges De-Escalation as India-Pakistan Tensions Rise Over Kashmir Attack

By AFP

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Dmitry Peskov. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

The Kremlin on Monday called for de-escalation between India and Pakistan amid rising tensions following a deadly attack on tourists in the Indian-administered side of the disputed Kashmir region last month.

New Delhi has blamed Islamabad for the April 22 attack in the town of Pahalgam that killed 26 people, triggering a series of diplomatic expulsions and heated rhetoric between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

"We hope that the parties will be able to take measures... that will reduce tensions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "We are following the tense atmosphere that has developed on the border with great concern."

Russian President Vladimir Putin told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a phone call Monday that the "particularly privileged partnership" between Moscow and New Delhi was "not subject to external influence and continues to develop dynamically in all areas," the Kremlin said in a statement.

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Russia has offered to mediate the crisis, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov having held calls with both sides last week.

Pakistan's military said Monday it had conducted its second missile test since the standoff began.

Russia has long-standing ties with India dating back to the Soviet era and remains the country's largest arms supplier.

"India is our strategic partner. Pakistan is also our partner. We value our relations with both Delhi and Islamabad," Peskov said.

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