

## Heart bleeds' for children killed, Modi tells Putin

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday that the death of innocent children was painful and terrifying, a day after a lethal strike on a children's hospital in Kyiv. The pointed remark by the visiting Indian leader was an implicit rebuke to Putin, who moments earlier had welcomed him to the Kremlin with a warm statement on the importance of the strategic ties between the two countries. Ukraine says it has recovered fragments of a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile at the children's hospital, which was hit on Monday during a wave of Russian attacks that killed at least 41 Ukrainians across the country. Russia said, without providing evidence, that it was a Ukrainian anti-missile system that struck the hospital. "Whether it is war, conflict or a terrorist attack, any person who believes in humanity, is pained when there

is loss of lives,” Modi said. “But even in that, when innocent children are killed, the heart bleeds and that pain is very terrifying.” It was not the first time that Modi has appeared to criticise Russia over its actions in Ukraine. In September 2022, he told Putin that “today’s era is not an era of war”, and Putin said at that time he understood Modi’s concerns. India, however, has not condemned Russia’s invasion and has taken the opportunity to buy record amounts of discounted Russian oil as sanctions have decimated Moscow’s trade with the West. For Russia, India has become an increasingly important partner, both economically and diplomatically, as Moscow seeks to demonstrate that Western attempts to isolate it have failed. Putin, speaking before Modi, said their two countries enjoyed a “particularly privileged strategic partnership” and thanked him for his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the war. “I thank you for the attention you are paying to the most acute problems including trying to find ways to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, above all by peaceful means, of course,” he said. Modi responded: “As a friend, I have always said that peace is necessary for our future generations. Solutions are not possible on the battleground. Amidst guns, bullets and bombs, peace talks cannot be successful. We have to find the path to peace only through talks. The timing of the Ukrainian hospital incident was embarrassing for Modi as he began his two-day visit on Monday. As Modi shared his image hugging Putin on social media platform X, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that it was a “huge disappointment and

a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day". The US State Department said on Monday it had raised concerns with India about its relationship with Russia. Separately, President Joe Biden called the latest attacks on Ukraine "a horrific reminder of Russia's brutality". Russia said it struck military targets and the Kremlin repeated its insistence that Russia does not target civilians.