

India hints at restarting Canada visas 'very soon'

'Difficult Phase' For Relationship, Says Jaishankar

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New Delhi: The government looked to fend off the visa blowback from the diplomatic row with Canada as it signalled on Sunday it might resume visa services for Canadian nationals. After external affairs minister S Jaishankar said this could happen "very, very soon", government sources said India was reviewing the security situation that forced it to suspend visa services in Canada exactly a month ago.

India had also suspended visas for Canadians in third countries as well as e-visas.

The development came notwithstanding fresh tensions over India's decision to

'HAD CONCERNS ON INTERFERENCE'

- India says reviewing security situation that forced it to suspend visa services in Canada
- India had invoked parity over concerns about 'continuous interference' by Canadian personnel, says Jaishankar
- Reasserts India's actions backed by Vienna Convention
- India's problems are with a 'certain segment of Canadian politics', says minister

ensure parity in diplomatic presence with Canada by expelling 41 Canadian diplomats. While the US and the UK backed Canada's position that India acted unilaterally and violated the Vienna Convention, Jaishankar on Sunday asserted that India's action was backed by the convention.

Canada had retaliated to the expulsion by "unilateral-

Canada oppn leader looks to 'restore' ties

Canada's opposition leader Pierre Poilievre has said that he would work to restore a "professional relationship" with India if his party came to office in the next elections. Describing Canadian PM Justin Trudeau as "unprofessional and incompetent", he said he was not worth the cost as he had turned Canadians against each other at home and blown up relations abroad. **P 18**

ly" shutting services in its three consulates in Chandigarh, Mumbai and Bengaluru, raising concerns about possible disruption in visa services for Indian nationals.

Jaishankar also said the relationship with Canada right now was going through a difficult phase.

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Israel 'accidentally' fires at Egyptian post; 2nd aid convoy on way to Gaza

Cairo: A second convoy of aid trucks entered the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing on Sunday, heading towards the Gaza Strip, according to Egyptian security and humanitarian sources. Shortly after the convoy entered the crossing, witnesses said a blast was heard in the vicinity and that ambulances could be heard deploying from the Egyptian side. Seven people were wounded and taken to hospital, a witness and a medical source said.

The Israeli military said one of its tanks had accidentally fired and hit an Egyptian position near the border, expressing sorrow for the incident but giving no further details. The Egyptian military said the

blast had caused "minor injuries" said Israel had "immediately expressed its regret over the unintentional incident and an investigation is underway".

A total of around 19 trucks in Sunday's convoy carrying medical and food supplies had been inspected by the UN's Palestinian refugee agency, the sources said. A first convoy of 20 trucks of badly needed supplies had entered Gaza on Saturday through Rafah. Distribution of those supplies began on Sunday, but aid officials are warning of a humanitarian disaster as supplies of food, water and fuel run low. UN officials say at least 100 trucks a day would be required in Gaza to cover urgent needs. REUTERS

Army, BRO reconnect North Sikkim

GUWAHATI, Oct 22 (IANS)

TROOPS of Trishakti Corps of Army along with Border Roads Organisation (BRO) assisted by civil administration and locals are undertaking operations at a massive scale to reconnect North Sikkim, officials said.

Lieutenant Colonel Mahendra Rawat, defence PRO at Guwahati said that while BRO is trying to reconnect the main route Mangan-Tung-Chungthang, troops of Trishakti Corps along with BRO and assistance of locals and civil administration is making efforts to open up the alternate route Mangan - Sanklang - Theng - Chungthang.

"This requires construction of two bailey bridges over Teesta River at Mangan-Sanklang Crossing. Working round the clock, the first bridge was completed on Sunday," he



Troops of Indian Army's Trishakti Corps undertaking construction of Bailey Bridge over the Teesta river in North Sikkim on Sunday. (ANI)

said. Notably, areas of North Sikkim ahead of Mangan have remained cut off since October 4. As an immediate response, foot bridges and zip lines were constructed at Chungthang and Sanklang-Mangan Crossing.

The officer said that these have enabled movement of people on foot and provision

of relief material through the ziplines established. According to Rawat, due to large-scale damage to main road Mangan-Tung-Chungthang, fresh alignment of road through Naga Village is being made before the damaged bridge site at Toong can be approached and a new bridge constructed which will take some time.

1st Agniveer dies in line of duty, former officers slam policy denying pension

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: An Agniveer, Gawate Akshay Laxman, died in the forbidding Siachen Glacier on Saturday, making him the first such casualty in the line of duty since the short-term recruitment of soldiers under the Agnipath scheme began last year.

Agniveer (operator) Laxman, a resident of Aurangabad in Maharashtra, died due to "medical complications arising out of high-altitude conditions", an officer said on Sunday.

Another Agniveer, Amritpal Singh, had died by suicide while on sentry duty in Rajouri sector of J&K on October 11. Since the death was "self-inflicted injury", no guard of honour was provided to him.

Laxman, however, will be accorded all honours as a "battle casualty". As per entitlements of Agniveers, his family will get Rs 48 lakh



Soldiers pay tribute to Akshay Laxman, who died due to 'medical complications arising out of high-altitude conditions' at Siachen

non-contributory insurance, ex gratia of Rs 44 lakh, Seva Nidhi contributed by the Agniveer (30%), with an equal matching contribution by the government, and interest thereon. His next of kin will also receive pay for the balance tenure from the date of death till the completion of four years (more than Rs 13 lakh) and contribution of Rs 8 lakh from the Armed Forces Battle Casualty Fund, government sources said.

However, unlike 'regular'

soldiers, there will be no family pension or ex-servicemen benefits, which once again led to some criticism of the Agnipath scheme.

"In all other services, death in an operational area would result in liberalised family pension equal to the last pay drawn and lifelong service benefits to the family. Nothing in the case of Agniveers," said Major Navdeep Singh (retd), a practising high court lawyer, on 'X'.

Air Vice Marshal Manmo-

His family will get Rs 48 lakh in insurance, ex gratia of Rs 44 lakh plus Seva Nidhi relief. They will also receive pay for the balance tenure (more than Rs 13 lakh) and Rs 8 lakh from the Armed Forces Battle Casualty Fund

han Bahadur (retd), in turn, said if a 'regular' jawan had died alongside Laxman in Siachen, his family would have got all the benefits for the "same task, same threat and in the same service".

Major Singh added, "The family of a temporary trainee civil employee even if she/he dies in an accident on getting drunk while on leave or by suicide, would be entitled to family pension, but not the family of this Agniveer battle casualty in Siachen."

IMEEC work begins with ₹3.5L crore rlys plan to link 8 ports on west coast

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New Delhi: Putting aside concerns over the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) due to the tension in West Asia, the government has begun work on the project in all earnest. Indian Railways is ready with a Rs 3.5 lakh crore plan to link eight ports on the west coast, including Karwar, and the proposed one in Vadhanvan, with its network and bolster the link in the east.

While the shipping ministry is looking for more cues, customs authorities have been alerted about the need to ensure facilitation and accordingly tweak rules. Work on Vadhanvan port is expected to commence in a few months, with capacity at some of the existing ports also proposed to be augmented. A senior government official said consulta-

'NO GAZA IMPACT'

- **Railways to link eight ports on the west coast with its network, boost link in the east**
- **Will step up investment to improve connectivity so the ports can be reached within 36 hours from any part of the country: Minister Vaishnav**
- **₹3.5L-cr plan includes Son Nagar-Andal link upgrade**
- **Amid West Asia tension, govt maintains there will be no impact on the project**

tions with stakeholders had begun so that the project could be rolled out quickly.

IMEEC is aimed at reducing transit time, while opening new markets and reducing reliance on shipping goods to Europe via Suez Canal.

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'Vienna convention provides for Diplomatic Parity'

NEW DELHI, Oct 22 (Agencies)

INDIA invoked the provision of parity in Canada's diplomatic presence in the country in view of concerns over interference in New Delhi's affairs by Canadian personnel, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said while addressing the Kautilya Economic Conclave closing plenary session.

The External Affairs Minister also said that India is likely to resume issuance of visas to Canadians if it sees progress in the safety of Indian diplomats in Canada.

"If we see progress in safety of our diplomats in Canada, we would like to resume issuance of visas there," Jaishankar said at an event while replying to a question on India-Canada ties.

On downsizing Canada's diplomatic presence in India, he said diplomatic parity is very much provided for in the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations.



“ No danger is too distant anymore. Consequences of various conflicts in a globalised world spread far beyond immediate geographies. ”

"Parity is very much provided for by the Vienna Convention, which is the relevant international rule on this. In our case, we invoked parity because we had concerns about continuous interference in our affairs by Canadian personnel," Jaishankar said. Canada has already withdrawn 41 of its diplomats from India. Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, announcing the return of the diplomats from India, on Thursday described New Delhi's action "contrary to international law," and in violation of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations. India has already rejected the charge. Jaishankar said the relationship between India and Canada right now is going through a difficult phase, adding that India has problems with certain segment of Canadian politics.

Any expectation that conflicts and terrorism can be contained in their impact is no longer tenable, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday. In an address at an event, Jaishankar, delving into geopolitical upheavals witnessing the world, said the ripple impact of what is taking place right now in the Middle East is still not entirely clear.

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