

INDIA SNUBS PAK. OFFER TO REOPEN KARTARPUR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

India on Saturday said Pakistan's proposal for reopening the Kartarpur Corridor to mark the death anniversary of Ranjit Singh was a "mirage of goodwill".

India's ambiguous response came after Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi offered access to the Kartarpur gurdwara for Indian pilgrims on the death anniversary of the early 19th century ruler of Punjab.

COVID-19 curbs

"Cross-border travel has been temporarily suspended as part of measures to prevent and contain the spread of coronavirus. Further view would be taken in consultation with health authorities and other stakeholders concerned," said an informed source, who said Pakistan was "trying to create a mirage of goodwill by proposing to resume Kartarpur corridor".

Earlier, Mr. Qureshi had announced on social media that Pakistan proposed to open the religious corridor on June 29 on the occasion of the death anniversary of the founder of the 19th century Sikh empire. Ranjit Singh passed away on June 27, 1839, in Lahore and events are organised in Pakistan as well as India in his memory on this day.

"As places of worship open up across the world, Pakistan prepares to reopen the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor for all Sikh pilgrims, conveying to the Indian side our readiness to reopen the corridor on June 29, the occasion of the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh," said the Pakistan Foreign Minister in a social media message.

Short notice

India, however, said Pakistan had not followed the procedure laid down for the reopening of the corridor, saying a "short notice of two days" is insufficient to organise the logistics as at least seven days of notice period is necessary "to open up the registration process well in advance".

India also expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of infrastructure on the Pakistani side of the border which is necessary for ensuring a comfortable journey of the pilgrims.

"Pakistan has not built the bridge on their side across the flood plains of the Ravi river despite having committed to it in the bilateral agreement. With the advent of the monsoon, it would need to be evaluated whether pilgrim movement is possible though the corridor in a safe and secure manner," the source said.

The Kartarpur Corridor was inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan in the presence of Indian dignitaries on November 9 last year to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. The gurdwara at Kartarpur is sacred to pilgrims as it is believed that the guru spent a considerable part of his life at this place.

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Indian official

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