

India warns nationals against Russian army recruitment

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

India's Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday warned Indian nationals against offers to join the Russian army amid new media reports that recruitment was continuing despite Moscow's assurances that it had stopped enlisting Indian citizens.

Testimonies of Indian men hired as "army security helpers" for Russian troops and their families made the rounds in the media last year, when reports emerged that they had been sent to the frontlines of Russia's war on Ukraine.

The issue was raised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Moscow in July 2024 and a month later Russia's embassy issued a statement saying it no longer admitted Indians into its army.

But this week, Indian media reported that a number of Indian nationals were again caught on the battlefield in Ukraine. The Hindu daily spoke to two of them, who claimed with another 13 Indians that they had been "forced to serve on the Russian side," and that all of them had gone to Moscow this year, arriving on

student or visitor visas.

"We have seen reports about Indian nationals having been recruited recently into the Russian army," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement.

"We once again strongly urge all Indian nationals to stay away from any offers to join the Russian army as this is a course fraught with danger."

The ministry said it was "in touch with the families of the affected Indian citizens" and had "taken up the matter with

Russian authorities, both in Delhi and Moscow, asking that this practice be ended and that our nationals be released."

The sources cited in The Hindu report claimed they had been duped into serving in the army after being hired by an agent to work as construction workers.

Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, president of the Congress Party in Punjab, on Thursday shared on social media a recording showing three Indian men in fatigues, who say in Punjabi that they were deceived into being sent to the Russian frontline.