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Russia to Ease Tourist Visa Requirements for 'Friendly States'

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **duma.gov.ru**

Russia is planning to introduce visa-free travel for citizens of up to 11 states as well as ease entry requirements for citizens of some six others, including India and Indonesia, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced on Wednesday.

Lavrov also announced Russia would be restarting its e-visa program, which was introduced in 2020 but then almost immediately suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic. The e-visa program will be relaunched in an abbreviated format that will be inaccessible to holders of passports from most Western countries.

"I don't believe there will be any issues for friendly states," state-run TASS quoted Lavrov as saying at a State Duma meeting.

The Russian government is expected to announce the e-visa program restart date by 1 June.

The measures are being taken to help boost Russia's inbound visitor numbers after the

country saw tourist entries drop by more than 96% last year following the invasion of Ukraine and international sanctions being imposed on Moscow.

Lavrov however stressed that Russia's visa requirements weren’t to blame for the drop off in tourist numbers, blaming instead “the decision to stop direct flights” to Russia.

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