



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seen in New Delhi in May, has been invited by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to attend the Group of Seven summit in Alberta this month. REUTERS

Carney defends inviting Modi to G7 despite Nijjar slaying

Liberal MP says his constituents are upset by invite

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Prime Minister Mark Carney is defending his decision to invite Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Group of Seven summit in Alberta this month despite a continuing investigation into the country's involvement in the 2023 slaying of Canadian Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Mr. Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau publicly accused India of a role in the gangland-style murder of Mr. Nijjar, a prominent advocate for a separate state for Sikhs in the Indian state of Punjab. India has denied the allegation.

The Prime Minister declined to answer a question Friday on whether he believed Mr. Modi was involved in the death of Mr. Nijjar, who was shot dead outside a Sikh gurdwara in Surrey, B.C.

"There is a legal process that is literally under way and quite advanced in Canada, and it's never appropriate to make comments with respect to those legal processes," Mr. Carney said.

The Prime Minister's decision to invite Mr. Modi drew public criticism from inside the governing Liberal caucus.

Liberal MP Sukh Dhaliwal, whose B.C. riding includes the temple where Mr. Nijjar was slain, said he doesn't agree with the government's decision to invite Mr. Modi. He said voters in Surrey Newton are upset with the signal it sends to India.

"My constituents are telling me the message that we are sending is they can come and kill Canadians on Canadian soil and they won't even get a slap on the wrist," he said.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Carney defended welcoming Mr. Modi to the meeting in Kananaskis, Alta., on June 15 to 17, even though last year the RCMP publicly said it has strong evidence that the "highest levels" of the Indian government were involved

in orchestrating a campaign of violence and intimidation on Canadian soil.

Mr. Carney said the most populous country in the world, with the fifth-largest economy, should be present at this year's G7, where leaders will hold discussions on energy security, critical minerals and infrastructure projects in the developing world.

"As chair of the G7, it is important to invite the most important countries to attend to talk about important issues such as energy, artificial intelligence, critical minerals, and India is really at the very centre of global supply chains," Mr. Carney said.

There's been no public indication that India has agreed to cooperate in Canada's investigation of the Nijjar slaying. However, the Prime Minister said Friday that both countries have resolved to "continued law enforcement dialogue." Mr. Carney did not say if that included the Nijjar killing.

Mr. Modi indicated in a post on X on Friday that he would be attending the G7 after an invite from Mr. Carney.

Canada-India relations suffered a major rupture in September, 2023, when Mr. Trudeau told Parliament that Canada's national security agencies have reason to believe "agents of the Indian government" killed Mr. Nijjar.

Twenty months after this diplomatic breach, Canada's and India's ambassador-level posts in each other's country are still vacant.

Mr. Modi said in his post that he congratulated Mr. Carney on his election win.

"As vibrant democracies bound by deep people-to-people ties, India and Canada will work together with renewed vigour, guided by mutual respect and shared interests," he wrote. "Look forward to our meeting at the Summit."

G7 members include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and Italy. Others invited to the summit include Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum.

The Canada-based World Sikh Organization condemned Mr. Carney's decision to invite Mr. Modi to the G7 as shameful and dangerous.

"For Sikhs in Canada, this is a betrayal, not just of our community, but of core Canadian values," WSO president Danish Singh said in a statement.

"We would never welcome leaders from Russia, China, or Iran under such circumstances. Yet India has done far more on Canadian soil in terms of foreign interference and transnational repression, including orchestrating murders, and is being rewarded with a red carpet welcome."

Meanwhile, Goldy Hyder, president of the Business Council of Canada, welcomed Mr. Modi's inclusion at the G7 leaders' summit. He said there is a clear opportunity ahead for Canada and India to reset their relationship and determine next steps in the coming months.

"On the global front, it's important that democracies work in concert at a challenging and uncertain time like this," Mr. Hyder said.

Last week, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand said Canada is looking forward to rebuilding ties with India "one step at a time" as part of an effort to diversify trade away from the United States – even as the RCMP investigation into Mr. Nijjar's murder continues.

The Carney government, which also talked about repairing ties with China on Thursday, is strengthening overseas relations as ties with the United States erode under U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mr. Carney won April's federal election after campaigning on a plan to diversify trading partners as a way of reducing the country's dependency on the United States, which he painted as increasingly unreliable.

Mr. Dhaliwal, the Liberal MP, noted the recent foreign interference inquiry found that India has become the second most active country engaging in electoral foreign interference in Canada.

"The way I see it is, fundamental rights and the delivery of justice for the victims is non-negotiable," he said. "Prime Minister Modi should take responsibility for the acts of his citizens and also should have co-operated with the with the investigation" in Canada.