

Canada and India throw out diplomats in row over killing

By Our Foreign Staff

CANADA and India each expelled six diplomats yesterday in tit-for-tat moves as part of an escalating dispute over last year's assassination of a Sikh activist in British Columbia.

Relations have been fraught since the incident, when Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, said he had evidence linking Indian agents to the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist leader.

The 45-year-old was shot dead last June by masked gunmen in a car park.

India has denied Mr Trudeau's accusation, and yesterday said that it had withdrawn six diplomats, including the country's ambassador in Ottawa, after they were declared "persons of interest" in the investigation into the killing.

It dismissed Canada's move and accused Mr Trudeau of pursuing a "political agenda".

India's foreign ministry said: "We have no faith in the current Canadian government's commitment to ensure their security. Therefore, the government of India has decided to withdraw the high commissioner and other targeted diplomats and officials."

Canadian sources said they had been expelled, not withdrawn.

India later said it had asked the six

Canadian diplomats to leave by Saturday Oct 19.

Canada's government has not publicly confirmed that it has named any Indian official as a person of interest.

Stewart Wheeler, the Canadian Charge d'Affaires, yesterday repeated Mr Trudeau's accusation, saying: "Canada has provided credible, irrefutable evidence of ties between Indian agents and the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil. It is time for India to live up to what it said it would do and look

'We have provided credible evidence of ties between Indian agents and the murder of a Canadian'

into those allegations."

India has repeatedly said Canada has not shared any evidence to back up its claims. Canada withdrew more than 40 diplomats from India in October 2023 after New Delhi asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence.

The US has also alleged that Indian agents were involved in a plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh separatist leader. However the plot was thwarted before Mr Pannun could be targeted in New York last year.