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Prime Minister Mark Carney and Diana Fox Carney board a government plane in Ottawa on Thursday as they depart for overseas trade trips that will take them to India, Australia and Japan.

# PM's India visit strictly business

STEPHANIE TAYLOR

in Ottawa

Prime Minister Mark Carney departed Thursday on his first travels to India, Australia and Japan as prime minister.

While Carney seeks to deepen his focus on economic diversification, he must manage continuing concerns of transnational repression from India, the unravelling of which led to the rupture in the relationship that the prime minister has been trying to repair.

**Here is what to expect from Carney's trip to India.**

## DOMESTIC SECURITY TENSIONS

A senior government official speaking at a not-for-attribution briefing to reporters Wednesday made a significant statement about the state of Canada's security issues against India.

Since 2023, ministers and other officials have said the country had concerns over agents of the Indian government being linked to homicides and other violence in Canada.

Asked whether it still believed Indian government agents were involved in such crimes, a senior government official said: "We have a very robust diplomatic engagement, including between national security advisers. And I think we can say we're confident that that activity is not continuing, or we would not be having this type of discussion."

That same day, Sikh groups gathered on Parliament Hill to decry Carney's trip for the message it sent to the community, particularly those involved in pro-Khalistan activism who say they remain targets of India.

The World Sikh Organization issued a statement after the briefing by officials to reject their assessment.

"I can say with complete conviction that the claim made by this senior government official is utterly false. It does not align with what Sikh Canadians are experiencing on the ground and what we are seeing firsthand," said its president, Danish Singh.

"Nothing has been presented publicly to suggest that Indian criminal net-

## Delegation's focus is on easing tensions and broadening trade — but don't expect any costumes

works have been dismantled, that accountability has been secured, or that safeguards have been implemented to protect Canadian citizens. We can't deny what we are seeing with our own eyes."

Sukh Dhaliwal, the Liberal MP whose B.C. riding was where Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar was killed in 2023, said he has been in contact with the Prime Minister's Office to express concerns from constituents who say that the rule of law ought to take precedence as Canada normalizes relations with India.

"They are concerned," he said.

Earlier in the week, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand told reporters that the government takes the concerns of the Sikh community "very seriously," and that senior officials from the Canadian and Indian governments speak regularly to discuss security issues, including the "rule of law."

Government officials both on Wednesday and in public at previous times have said India has been collaborating with investigations, which former prime minister Justin Trudeau's government had said was not the case. India has denied any involvement in Nijjar's killing, with its envoy to Canada recently underscoring its position it was not provided with evidence at the time that accusation was made.

While Carney will travel to Mumbai and New Delhi, he will not stop in Punjab, the state home to a majority of Sikhs that the pro-Khalistan movement wants to see carved out into a separate state. That breaks from the trips taken by Trudeau and former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper who each visited Punjab.

The senior official said given the prime minister's focus on shoring up investment and diversification, he will visit India's financial capital and its government capital, noting also Carney's schedule, with him set to visit three countries on his second trip to Asia this year.

## TRADE DEAL LAUNCH

Government officials say

Carney's visit will formalize the launch of negotiations of a long-sought comprehensive trade deal with India.

"We have ambitious timelines for its formalization, but it's being formally launched now and it will take a number of months to reach maturity, but we have already begun the process. Ministers have been in touch, our negotiators have been touch. The process of negotiating the (agreement) is underway. The formal launch will take place during the visit, but the negotiations have begun," the official says.

At the same time, the government expects "a number of" memorandums of understanding to be signed and different "commercial arrangements deals" throughout the trip to Australia and Japan.

Dinesh Patnaik, India's High Commissioner to Canada, says he expects agreements covering at least 20 to 30 issues. He also expects a Canada-India trade deal could be signed within a year.

Canada re-engages with India at the time when both are facing tariffs from the United States, although India recently struck a deal with the U.S. and Canada enjoys exemptions under goods covered by the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement.

Government officials named India's demand for energy, agricultural products and critical minerals, which they say is matched by Canada's ability to provide it.

"We have the world's fourth-largest oil reserves. We are the world's fifth-largest producer of natural gas with an electricity grid that is over 80 per cent clean. We are one of the world's largest suppliers of uranium providing around 24 per cent of the world's supply in 2024," the official said.

Carney is set to meet with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday in New Delhi after spending the first part of his trip meeting with Indian business leaders in Mumbai.

## NO COSTUMES

Most Canadians remember Trudeau's first trip to India in 2018 for the ridicule he endured for donning lav-

ish traditional garb while those he met wore regular business attire.

Government officials, when asked Wednesday whether that would be the case for Carney, said that to their knowledge, the answer was simply "no."

## DAVOS 2.0?

Carney will be the first prime minister to address Australian Parliament in almost 20 years, with Harper being the most recent prime minister to do so.

It will be the first international speech Carney will give since he earned global applause in January at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he urged middle powers to unite in the face of "hegemons."

Australian lawmakers were among those who publicly backed Carney's words, with Canada viewing Australia as a like-minded middle power.

Government officials said the prime minister will emphasize "the need to diversify, the needs for middle powers to work together." He was not only set to address Australia's parliament, but also take part in a separate fireside chat.

Carney is set to visit Sydney, where he will meet Australian business leaders. While in Canberra, he will meet with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and other members of cabinet.

After Australia, Carney will visit Japan, where he will meet with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and members of its business community in Tokyo.

## PREMIERS INVITED

While Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe and New Brunswick Premier Susan Holt will join the delegation, government officials said all premiers were invited as Carney seeks to deepen ties across the federation.

This marks the second time Moe has travelled with Carney. Last month he accompanied him to China.

Also joining the ministers of finance, defence, international trade and foreign affairs will be Matt Jeneroux, Carney's newest MP after crossing the floor from the Conservatives, who was named as a special adviser on economic and security issues.

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