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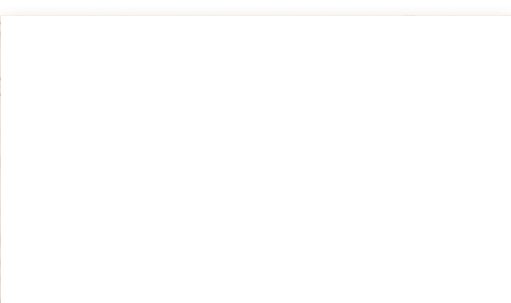
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Premium

# India withdraws its Canada envoy, expels 6 Canadian diplomats as row over Nijjar murder escalates

The day of fast-paced development in India saw the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issuing a hard-hitting statement, rejecting “baseless imputations” on the involvement of External Affairs (MEA) issuing a hard-hitting statement, rejecting “baseless imputations” on the involvement

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8 min read



Terming it as "preposterous imputations", the MEA also said that Canada has not shared "a shred of evidence" with the Indian government despite several requests since the time Prime Minister Trudeau made "certain allegations" in September 2023. (Image source: X)

In A sharp escalation of the row between the two countries, India on Monday ordered the expulsion of six Canadian diplomats, while also announcing its decision to withdraw the Indian High Commissioner to Canada and "other targeted diplomats", citing security concerns after Ottawa identified them as "persons of interest" in its investigation into the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

While a Reuters report, citing a Canadian government source, said Canada had "expelled six Indian diplomats", India said the diplomats were being withdrawn due to security concerns. In a seemingly tit-for-tat response late on Monday evening, India announced its decision to including Acting High Commissioner Stewart Wheeler Block earlier in the day for an explanation.

Naming the Canadian diplomats in a pre been

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The deepening chill between the two countries came days after the meeting between Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Laos last week.

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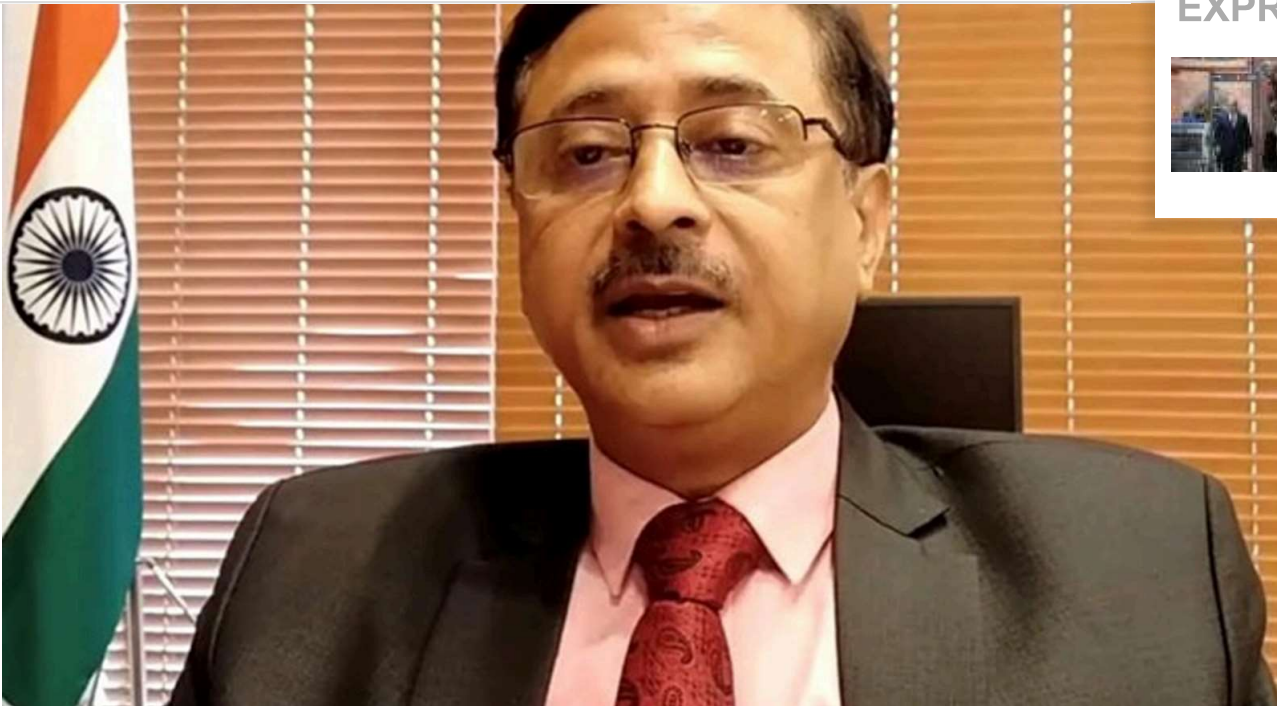
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Indian High Commissioner to Canada, Sanjay Verma. (Express)

The day of fast-paced developments began with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issuing a hard-hitting response to Canada's "preposterous imputations" on the involvement of Indian diplomats in the Nijjar case, warning that India "reserves the right to take further steps in response".

"We have received a diplomatic communication from Canada yesterday (Sunday) suggesting that the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats are 'persons of interest' in a matter related to an investigation in that country. The Government of India strongly rejects these preposterous imputations and ascribes them to the political agenda of the Trudeau Government that is centred around vote bank politics," the MEA said.

While the MEA statement did not name Nijjar, it referred to "certain allegations" made by Trudeau in September 2023, which the Indian government's "potential" involvement in the Nijjar case was based on. The statement also mentioned that the Indian government had as "absurd" and "motivated", the ties between India and the Khalistan separatist on June 18, 2023. With the Nijjar case as a setback since then.

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“High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma is India’s senior most serving diplomat with a distinguished career spanning 36 years. He has been Ambassador in Japan and Sudan, while also serving in Italy, Turkiye, Vietnam and China. The aspersions cast on him by the Government of Canada are ludicrous and deserve to be treated with contempt,” it said.

Warning of action, the MEA said: “The Government of India has taken cognizance of the activities of the Canadian High Commission in India that serve the political agenda of the current regime. This led to the implementation of the principle of reciprocity in regard to diplomatic representation. India now reserves the right to take further steps in response to these latest efforts of the Canadian Government to concoct allegations against Indian diplomats.”

By evening, the MEA summoned Wheeler and “informed (him) that the baseless targeting of the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats and officials in Canada was completely unacceptable”.

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“It was underlined that in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, the Government’s actions endangered their ( ) and there was no faith in the current Canadian Government’s co ( ) ty.



Commissioner and other targeted diplomats and officials, it said.

“It was also conveyed that India reserves the right to take further steps in response to the Trudeau Government’s support for extremism, violence and separatism against India,” the MEA said.

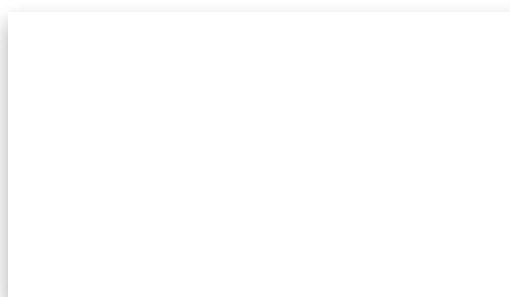
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Meanwhile, speaking to reporters outside South Block, Wheeler said: “Canada has provided credible, irrefutable evidence of ties between agents of the Government of India and the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil. Now, it is time for India to live up to what it said it would do and look into all those allegations. It is in the interest of both our countries and the people of our countries to get to the bottom of this. Canada stands ready to cooperate with India.”

Besides Wheeler, the list of expelled diplomats included Patrick Hebert, deputy high commissioner; Marie Catherine Jolie, first secretary; Ian Ross David Trites, first secretary; Adam James Chuipka, first secretary; and Paula Orjuela, first secretary.

In its statement, the MEA reiterated that the Canadian government had not shared a “shred of evidence” ever since Trudeau made the allegations in September last year. “This latest step follows interactions that have again witnessed assertions without any facts. This leaves little doubt that on the pretext of an investigation, there is a deliberate strategy of smearing India for political gains,” the MEA said.

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India reiterated its allegation that the Trudeau government has “consciously provided space to violent extremists and terrorists to harass, threaten and intimidate Indian diplomats and community leaders in Canada”, including “death threats to them and to Indian leaders”. “Some individuals who have entered Canada illegally have been fast-tracked for citizenship. Multiple extradition requests from the Government of India in respect of terrorists and organised crime leaders living in Canada have been disregarded,” it said.

Citing instances of Trudeau’s “hostility to India”, the MEA said: “In 2018, his visit to India, which was aimed at currying favour with a vote bank, rebounded to his discomfort. His Cabinet has included individuals who have openly associated with an extremist and separatist agenda regarding India. His naked interference in Indian internal politics in December 2020 showed how far he was willing to go in this regard.” In December 2020, Trudeau had extended his support to farmers protesting against the farm laws, calling the situation “concerning”.

“Under criticism for turning a blind eye to foreign interference in Canadian politics, his Government has deliberately brought the next step in that direction. It is no coincidence that it Trudeau is to depose before a Commission on foreign anti-India

narrow political gains, it said.

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Last week, [Trudeau had said he had a “brief exchange” with Modi in Lac](#) October 11, where he “emphasised that there is work that we need to do”. “I go into details about what we talked about, but what I have said many times is that the safety of Canadians and upholding the rule of law is one of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian government, and that’s what I’ll stay focused on,” he had said.



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Trudeau had said he stands by his allegations on the Nijjar killing, and national security and law enforcement agencies “continue to be deeply engaged on this issue.”

Sources in New Delhi had said there was “no substantive discussion” between the two leaders, and India continues to expect that “anti-India Khalistani activities will not be allowed to take place on Canadian soil and that firm action, which is lacking thus far, will be taken against those advocating violence, extremism and terrorism against India from Canadian territory”.

That was the second meeting between the two leaders since Trudeau’s allegations on the Nijjar killing last September. Earlier, they met in June on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy.



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