**PM to attend G-7 outreach in Italy; all eyes on possible interaction with Zelenskyy, Trudeau**

Just four days after being sworn in for a third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to the Apulia region of Italy on Thursday to attend the G-7 outreach meet.

Mr. Modi will meet Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said at a briefing on Wednesday, but declined to comment on specific questions on which other leaders he would hold bilateral meetings with.

Apart from leaders of other G-7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. — and the European Union leadership, Mr. Modi will be among leaders of 12 countries invited to the outreach on Friday, including Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkiye, and the UAE. All eyes will be on a possible meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is also expected.

The event will give Mr. Modi the opportunity to meet a host of leaders to discuss his plans for his new term in office, even as many of the leaders such as U.S. President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak face elections in the next few months, while countries such as Italy, Germany, and France witnessed the European Parliament polls on Sunday.

This is the 11th time that India has been invited to the G-7 outreach, and the fifth that Mr. Modi will participate. He will take part in a special session for discussions on artificial intelligence, energy, Africa and the “Mediterranean”, Mr. Kwatra said, indicating that the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel’s war in Gaza will also be on the agenda.

“India’s regular participation at the G-7 summit clearly points to increasing recognition and contribution of the efforts India has been consistently making in trying to resolve global challenges, including those of peace, security, development, and environmental preservation,” Mr. Kwatra told presspersons.

Peace summit

While most of the G-7 leadership with the exception of Mr. Biden will travel directly from Apulia’s Borgo Egnazia luxury resort to the Swiss town of Burgenstock for a peace conference on Ukraine, India is yet to announce the level of its participation at the conference.

“India will be participating at the Peace summit in Switzerland on the [June] 15th,” Mr. Kwatra said when asked for a response. “That consideration is currently going on in the system and as and when we have a decision on the representative from India who would be participating, we would be happy to share that with you.”

Any interaction between Mr. Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be closely watched, given the tense ties over Mr. Trudeau’s allegation that “Indian government agents” were behind the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada last June.

The Khalistan issue has sparked a row after a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, due to be inaugurated in the town of Brindisi not far from the G-7 venue, was defaced with graffiti hailing Nijjar. Mr. Kwatra called it “deplorable”.

While he said that Italian authorities had “rectified” the situation, he took aim at Canada for support to Khalistani activism.