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Jordan first stop on Clark's tour

AMMAN (AP) — External Affairs Minister Joe Clark begins an 11-day Middle East tour today with a low-key visit to Jordan.

The minister is scheduled to sign an economic-co-operation agreement, to meet Jordanian officials and to visit several tourist sites before heading to Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

From there, he will go to Egypt and Israel before returning to Canada.

Clark is set to meet Crown Prince Hassan and Foreign Minister Taher Masri. But he will not see King Hussein or Prime Minister Zaid Rifai, who are touring the Far East.

A spokesman at the Canadian Embassy said Clark is coming to Jordan "to listen, to establish the positions of the protagonists (in the Arab-Israeli dispute) and also to explore bilateral issues."

Clark's most famous encounter with Middle Eastern politics came in 1979, when the then-prime minister angered the Arab world and Canadian companies doing business there by promising to move the Canadian Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Israel captured the eastern portion of Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 and has since annexed it.

Clark backed down after Arab countries threatened economic reprisals and a special envoy, former Conservative party leader Robert Stanfield, reported that moving the embassy would be a mistake.

On Tuesday, Clark aides, insisting on anonymity, said the incident is "ancient history" and has not been mentioned by Arab diplomats during planning for Clark's trip.



Joe Clark

Canada has minimal economic links with Jordan. It last year exported only \$5-million worth of goods to Jordan and imported \$117,000 worth.