Canadian PM attends Khalsa Day

What is the issue?

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s presence at a Khalsa Day event raises troubling questions.

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What happens on Khalsa day?

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- In the parade organised by the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council on “Khalsa Day”, the images of pro-Khalistani militants are often brought out.
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- Many of the marchers also call for the establishment of a separate Khalistan.
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- India ensured that Mr Trudeau’s predecessor didn’t attend the same event.
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- Now Mr Trudeau chose to make his appearance in a year he plans to visit India.
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Why it is important?

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- India is not against free speech or freedom of association.
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- Neither has it denied the brutal, shameful anti-Sikh violence of 1984.
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- In India too, organisations are allowed to protest the events of 1984, as well as other wrongs perpetrated in India.
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- But the occasion had several other issues with it.
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- It included several posters and floats that **glorified militants who included**

who died in Operation Blue Star, those who carried out the bombing of Air India's 'Kanishka' flight in 1985 as well as a related bombing incident in which two Japanese baggage handlers were killed in Tokyo.
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- The celebrations also honoured two legislators who had authored resolutions in the Ontario Assembly which **declared events of 1984 as "Genocide".**
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- **India had objected to the resolution** both in official statements and in the meetings with visiting Canadian Defence Minister.
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- The Genocide resolution in the Assembly, which was hailed at the parade wasn't restricted to the anti-Sikh riots, but to "events of 1984".
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- It criticises the Indian Army's actions in Operation Blue Star as much as the riots.
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- It also displayed flags and signs for **"Referendum 2020",** a plan by local groups for a worldwide vote for all Sikhs, including those in Punjab, to vote for a separate homeland.
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What is India's reaction?

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- For the past four decades, terrorism has been an important factor in India's foreign policy.
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- At the UN in 1996, India first introduced the concept, proposing a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
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- India's position has become more strident, with a push for the UN designation of terrorist groups as well as raising the issue of Pakistan-based terrorists at international fora including the G-20, BRICS and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.
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- But now it took more than a week for the MEA to respond mildly, in an answer to a question.
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- India cannot afford to handle the issue lightly.
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Source: The Hindu

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