Revisiting the Indo-Canadian Bilateral

Why in news?

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Canadian PM Justin Trudeau is slated for a comprehensive week long bilateral visit to India in some time.

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How influential are the Canadian Indians?

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- This is Mr. Trudeau's first trip to India after becoming PM in 2015, but he has always had Indians around.
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- Notably, Indian Diaspora comprises 3.6% of the Canadian population and is well-educated, affluent and politically suave.
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- Currently, there are 19 persons of Indian origin are members in the House of Commons, of which 17 (15 Sikhs) represent Mr. Trudeau's Liberal Party.
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- He is particularly close to the Sikh community and 4 sikhs are part of the cabinet too.
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- While these should've put Indo-Canadian ties at a high, the resurgence of anti-India activities in Canada due to pro-Khalistani elements is forming a stress point.
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Are pro-Khalistan factions prominent?

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- The Ontario Provincial Parliament adopted a resolution moved by the Harinder Malhi, terming the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as 'genocide'.
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- India termed this a "misguided motion based on a limited understanding of

India, its Constitution, society, ethos, rule of law and its judicial process.”
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- Subsequently, Mr. Trudeau himself showed up at the Toronto nagar kirtan where Khalistani flags and pictures of slain Sikh terrorists were displayed.
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- This is in striking contrast to the former PM Stephen Harper, who had consciously shunned such platforms during his years in office.
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- Emboldened by these developments, self-appointed radical leaders even imposed a ban on the entry of Indian officials in Canadian Gurdwaras.
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- Thankfully, some sober voices within the Canadian Sikhs have criticised such dictates and argued that these are against the very spirit of the Sikh faith.
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- Khalistan issue has always figured prominently in Indo-Canada talks, as political parties in Canada continue to pander extremists for electoral gains.
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- But the bizarre aspect is that the current Trudeau government seems to be going beyond the needs of mere electoral arithmetic in courting the radicals.
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- As Canada has started becoming conscious of the electoral fallout of such a trend, it is now strategising to balance sikh assertions and India’s concerns.
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How has the economic ties shaped up?

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- Indian diaspora have emerged as one of the most culturally vibrant immigrant communities and integrated well into the Canadian mainstream.
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- They have also become a major investor in India.
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- Additionally, in recent years has been a spike in investments by the well-endowed Canadian Pension Funds like CPPIB and CDPQ into India.
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- Together, some $12-15 billion Canadian dollars have flown to India in sectors like real estate, financial services, logistics and e-commerce.
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- Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPA), have been struck for long.
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- Fast tracking and early conclusion of these would help in boosting bilateral

economic trade, investments and related partnerships.
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- This will open up the services sector, and make it easier for highly skilled Indian professionals, to work in Canada.
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What are the other significant aspects of the relationship?

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- During PM Modi's Canadian visit in 2015, both sides agreed to elevate their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership.
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- Pulse import from Canada is another significant aspect in bilateral trade, along with the other multiple agri-tech collaborations between both nations.
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- **Liberal Visa -** As migration has been tightened in Britain and US, Indian students have begun heading in large numbers to Canada for higher education.
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- An added attraction is that Canada routinely provides a 3-year work visa upon completion of studies, which opens up avenues of employment and citizenship.
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- Notably, Canada continues with a liberal immigration policy and 2016 alone some 40,000 Indian immigrants getting admitted there.
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Source: The Hindu

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