Track 1.5 Dialogue

Why in news?

The third round of India-Canada Track 1.5 Dialogue will take place on a virtual platform.

What will be the agenda?

- The countries will deliberate on and define the role of India and Canada in the post-COVID-19 world.
- The scholars and experts will go into various facets of the strategic partnership linking the two countries.
- They will discuss about the new geo-economics of the Indo-Pacific and digital cooperation, particularly in the areas of fintech and AI.
- This dialogue creates a template for a merger of government to government diplomacy, with public diplomacy.

How did this Dialogue originate?

- The Track 1.5 Dialogue has been piloted since February 2018.
- It was piloted by two think tanks — India's Gateway House and Canada's Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI).
- Their collaboration has encouraged the governments to focus on the immediate opportunities available in investment, technology and geopolitical rearrangements.

What are some Indo-Pacific developments?

- There is an escalating discontent against Beijing's aggressive behaviour.
- There is a growing interest of France, Netherlands and Germany to be active players in the region.
- Also, the Quad grouping is being strengthened.
- [Quad is an informal strategic forum between the US, Japan, Australia and India.]

What does the China-Canada tensions mean to India?

- There is a huge stress in Canada-China relations, turning Canadian public opinion against China.

- This opened the door to a closer relationship with India.
- Canadians sympathise for India's troubles with China's intrusions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh since April 2020.
- In this backdrop, developments concerning the **Indo-Pacific** are of immense relevance to Canada.
- The forthcoming dialogue can deepen the India-Canada convergence on this issue.

What are the other focal points?

- The other major focal point will be the **economic and technological cooperation** between the two countries.
- The recent positive trends are:
    1. Canada-India merchandise trade exceeded C$10 billion in 2019;
    2. Canada's cumulative investment is a substantive C$55 billion.
- Addressing the 'Invest India' conference in Canada, Prime Minister of India assured Canadian investors that no barriers would come in their way.
- Indian students are increasingly being educated in Canada.
- The Indian diaspora in Canada is now 1.6 million-strong, representing over 4% of the country's total population.
- The principal areas of bilateral cooperation are in five Es: Economy, Energy, Education, Entertainment and Empowerment of women.
- In particular, the digital domain holds immense potential, given Canada's proven assets in technology.
- India and Canada are divided by geographical distance but are united through clear common interests and shared values.

Source: The Hindu

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