Turkey and Kashmir Issue

Why in news?

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President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit to New Delhi generated intense debate about India-Turkey relations.

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What are the issues?

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- Turkey has in the past as well issued **statements supportive of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.**
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- But this has not prevented Turkey from seeking good relations with India, specifically to tap the potential for improving bilateral trade and commerce and in enhancing counter-terrorism cooperation.
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- Now Erdogan suggested for a **‘multilateral dialogue’** to resolve the Kashmir issue.
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- This **suggestion is against the Indian position** that the Kashmir issue has to be resolved through bilateral negotiations with Pakistan based on the Shimla Agreement and Lahore Declaration.
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- There are also other problem areas including Turkey’s position on India’s membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
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- Turkey maintains that there needs to be a procedure that should be equally applicable to all and argues that both India and Pakistan have a fair claim for NSG membership.
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What was India’s Response?

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- India was careful in its response to the raising of the Kashmir issue.
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- Since India has been apprehensive of the Turkish position and rhetoric on Kashmir, New Delhi scheduled **engagements with Armenia and Cyprus** close to Erdogan's visit.
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- A week before Erdogan's visit, India hosted Cyprus President, given the Turkish involvement in the Cyprus conflict. (**Click here** for Cyprus conflict).
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- India has maintained good relations with Cyprus since its independence and has supported its stand on the conflict with Turkey.
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- Vice President Hamid Ansari visited Armenia and the Armenian genocide memorial and paid his tributes to the victims.
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- This is a sensitive issue for Turkey because of the historical involvement of the fathers of the modern Turkish republic in the killings of Armenians at the height of their national struggle.
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- Turkey has been wary of the world recognizing the **'Armenian genocide.'**
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- India was engaging with Turkey's adversaries while at the same time signalling its ability to raise controversial issues detrimental to Ankara's interests.
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What should be done?

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- Despite the major differences, there are **some common grounds** which the two sides are looking to capitalize on.
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- From the bilateral viewpoint, the visit was focused on **three aspects** — improving trade; enhancing two-way flow of investments; and establishing closer counter-terrorism cooperation.
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- Both sides had then expressed the desire to realize trade and business potentials.
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- Turkey's support for the UNSC reform as well as India's bid for a UNSC seat reflects mutual concerns about global affairs.

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- India and Turkey are driven by the desire to tap the possibilities for business, trade and investments.
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- Moreover, the number of Indian tourists visiting Turkey is increasing significantly in the past decade.
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- The popularity of the Indian entertainment industry and films in Turkey has witnessed a rise.
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Source: ISDA

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