



EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

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India-Canada bonding that is in danger of snapping

Syllabus: GS2/ India & Foreign Relations, International Organisations & Groupings

In Context

- The current state of Canada-India diplomatic relations has evoked a mountain of uncertainty for **emigrants and prospective ones**.

India-Canada Bilateral Relations

- **About:**
 - India **established diplomatic relations with Canada in 1947**.
 - Prime Minister of India's visit to Canada in April 2015 elevated the **bilateral relation to a strategic partnership**.
 - In recent years, both countries have been working to enhance bilateral cooperation in a number of areas of mutual importance.
 - **Bilateral Mechanisms:**
 - Both sides pursue bilateral relations through dialogue mechanisms such as Ministerial-level- Strategic, Trade and Energy dialogues; Foreign Office Consultations; and other sector-specific **joint working groups (JWG)**.
- **Commercial relations:**
 - The India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations were formally re-launched in March 2022 and the two countries had been keen on completing the negotiations by 2023-end.
 - Nine rounds of talks had already taken place till July 2023, and negotiations on topics like goods, trade remedies and rules of origin were underway.
 - India was also Canada's ninth largest trading partner in 2022, with bilateral trade between them touching \$8.16 billion in FY23.
- **Investments:**
 - India has been a key destination for Canadian investments from entities such as the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board and

asset management firm Brookfield in sectors ranging from infrastructure to start-ups.

- According to Invest India, Canada is the 18th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of \$3.3 billion between April 2000 and March 2023, representing 0.5 per cent of the total FDI inflows into India.
- **Security and Defence:**
 - India and Canada collaborate closely in international fora, particularly **through the UN, Commonwealth and G-20**.
 - Defence ties have been expanding with mutual ship visits.
 - There is **robust cooperation on counter terrorism** issues particularly through the framework of the JWG on Counter Terrorism.

Recent tensions between India & Canada

- **Canada's allegations of killing KTF Chief Nijjar:**
 - Tensions between the two countries escalated after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that there were “credible allegations” of the **Indian government being behind the killing** of Canadian citizen **Hardeep Singh Nijjar**.
 - Nijjar was the **Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief** and a **designated terrorist in India**.
- **Pause on FTA talks:**
 - After the Nijjar killing, Canada **cancelled a trade delegation visit to Delhi**, put FTA talks on pause and the \$55 billion investment in India from Canadian Pension Funds may also be affected.
- **India's response:**
 - While India has **strongly denied the allegation**, a full-blown diplomatic war has flared up between the two nations.
 - India's Ministry of External Affairs pointed out that **not just Nijjar**, many people wanted for **Khalistani separatist violence in India** received “**safe haven**” in Canada, despite a number of representations by India for their extradition.
- **India's cancellation of visa services:**
 - **India has also suspended visa services across Canada**, and will not accept applications from Canadians at any other mission worldwide,

Case of Indian Migrants & immigrants in Canada

- **About:**
 - India is a **prime origin country of immigrants to Canada**, who have settled there as **naturalised citizens**.
 - Most hold the **Overseas Citizenship of India(OCI)**, a life-time Indian visa or **semi-dual-citizenship**.

- As well as **permanent residents (PRs)** who range from investors, industrialists and business people, the highly skilled “knowledge professionals” to low- and medium-skilled “service workers”.
- Apart from the settled Indian diaspora, there are “**temporary visitors**” who are international students, trainees, exchange scholars, tourists, and their families.
- **Data of Canadian Government:**
 - According to the **Census of Canada 2021**, the country is home to over 1.86 million people of Indian origin, i.e., about 5% of the country’s 36.99 million population, and 5.8% of the 32 million strong global Indian diaspora.
 - According to **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data**, 225,940 or over 40% of 549,260 total study permits to international students were issued to Indians in 2022.
- **Significance:**
 - Thus, most of these immigrants comprise **a substantial share of India’s human capital abroad**.
 - Some of them even costing India much in terms of large-scale brain drain.
 - **Remittances** to India are from mainly migrant workers in West Asia/the Gulf countries. **PRs and diaspora members** in developed countries such as Canada are the source of investments in both countries.
 - Visitors from India comprised **Canada’s fourth-largest international air travel market**.

Challenge ahead

- **Affecting People to people ties:**
 - India’s decision to suspend visas to Canadians **could see reciprocal action by Canada** that would affect hundreds of thousands awaiting their visas including students and professionals.
- **Travel ban:**
 - **Previously**, In **2022**, Canada and India agreed to **remove restrictions** on the number of bilateral flights, which was previously limited to 35 per week.
 - **Now, there is practically a travel ban** with visa issuance withheld and/or restricted on both sides.
- **Lowest Point between the countries:**
 - Already, the cancellation of trade talks and visas means this is the lowest point in decades.
 - As in the past clashes between the two, political engagement was called off, and people-to-people ties had been allowed to continue.

Need to protect & empowering immigrants & way ahead

- **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration Agreement:**
 - Canada and India are not only members of the Commonwealth but also signatories to the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration agreement**, which was adopted at an intergovernmental conference on migration in Marrakesh, Morocco in December 2018.
 - Among the **23 objectives** of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration **aimed at making migration “safe, orderly and regular” worldwide**, objective number 19 is noteworthy:
 - To “create **conditions for migrants and diasporas** to fully contribute to **sustainable development in all countries**”.
- **Uncertainty for Indian immigrants:**
 - The present diplomatic tensions between the two governments seem to be undermining objective 19 of this Global Compact.
 - It has cast a shroud over migrants and the diaspora in terms of uncertainty about their own status in Canada and India.
 - If the issue is not resolved soon, the strain in ties would irreparably erode the cherished values of trust, time and loyalty to the detriment of this Global Compact.
- **Need of an unwavering commitment:**
 - The driver for reinstating the willingness in both governments would be an **unwavering commitment** by each side to regain the values of **trust, time and loyalty** of their migrants and diaspora, and above all their citizens.

Daily Mains Question

[Q] Discuss the challenges faced by migrants and the diaspora in terms of uncertainty about their own status in Canada and India. Suggest ways to protect & empower the immigrants.