

# Canada India Insight

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## “ India Canada relations are too multi-faceted and people-centric to ever be in cold storage ”

By: Vipul Jani

The new High Commissioner of India to Canada, His Excellency Mr. Ajay Bisaria took charge at a time when we were just waking up to the rapidly growing threats of Corona Virus. The world, as we know it, has changed dramatically since then.

With all the bilateral visits and personal meetings off for months, how do one understand the intricacies of Canada India file, where are the bilateral relations headed in the short and long term ? Canada India Insight Editor Vipul Jani discussed it with the High Commissioner in an e-mail interview :

**• You came to Canada on March 01 and soon after things started closing down. How challenging has it been to get to know the Canada file as you can't meet a lot of Policy makers, Captains of Industry and Policy Think tanks in person right now ?**

I came to Canada in interesting times. We are all trying to adapt to re-defined work spaces and digital

interactions. In keeping with social distancing norms, we have avoided face to face meetings, but I do the introductory tele-meetings with movers and shakers in Canada. I had a wonderful start with meeting the Hon'ble Governor General



High Commissioner of India to Canada

**Mr. Ajay Bisaria**

when I presented my credentials to her. I have had detailed and candid discussions with our colleagues in Global Affairs Canada, with Minister Navdeep Bains and Minister Bardish Chagger. I had a detailed discussion with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Marta Morgan and with Canada's Chief Trade Commissioner Ailish Campbell.

On the business side, I had

the pleasure of joining a video conference organized by CII with Indian companies working in Canada. I have similarly held video conferences with Indian community organizations and Indian student leaders in Canada. I think this style of working is a precursor to a more efficient workplace of the future. We can't replace that eye contact and handshake, but the video call is here to stay.

**• Corona has put everything else in a deep freeze, however, can you share positive developments that indicate Canada India relations are coming out of the cold storage it has been in lately ?**

India Canada relations are too multi-faceted and people-centric to ever be in cold storage. We see a global dip in traditional diplomatic activity as governments quite rightly prioritize handling the current pandemic. But the Indo-Canadian strategic partnership remains warm and strong. The last few years have seen an

intensification of cooperation and collaboration. Our bilateral trade in goods has grown from about \$8 billion in 2015 to over \$10 billion in 2019. Trade in services is over C\$ 4 billion. Portfolio investments from Canada to India have jumped from US\$5 billion to US\$45 billion in the same time. Our steel and pharmaceutical exports to Canada have grown. India has become a major buyer of Canadian products ranging from potash to coking coal to uranium.

There has been a massive upsurge in number of students from India to Canada for post-secondary education. With 225,000 students now, India is the largest contributor of international students in Canada. These students bring in almost \$7 billion every year as tuition fees alone. We have seen a spurt in PhD collaborations between Canadian Universities and Indian counterparts. We have similarly seen collaboration in science and technology,

**Continued on Page 9**

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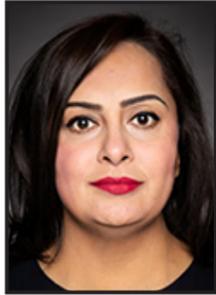
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- Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention, 2017



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- Food & Function,  
DOI:10.1039/C7FO00900C

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diabetes risk

- Nutrients,  
2016 Jan;  
8(1): 17



A trial found that  
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- Br J Nutr. 117(4):519-531



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# Editorial

- Vipul Jani



Between the last edition (March) and this one (April), thousands of Canadians, Indians and close to two hundred thousand people globally have lost their lives to Corona / Covid / Chinese Virus, whatever you want to call it. Being diplomatic about the name doesn't change a thing. Fact is, people and businesses are dying everywhere, everyday, with no visible consequences for either China or the WHO. President Trump's withholding funding for WHO may actually have a completely opposite effect than what he wished for. China may fill that gap and the US will lose prominence at one more global platform.

Anyway, I don't want to write more about the Virus as we are already being bombarded with a serious overdose of virus coverage. As a Print Journalist for 31 years, I am appalled at the carpet bombing of Corona Coverage on all news channels in India, Canada and USA. I mean, any day, anytime, any channel, all they are talking about is Corona Corona Corona. Have they all gone mad collectively? People are already stressed out, depressed, looking for a break, don't make it impossible for them.

Is there absolutely nothing else happening anywhere, worth showing for half an hour or an hour a day? Nothing? Giving updates is very important, but what we are getting in the name of coverage is making me sick big time. Do they never discuss

among themselves what they are doing, for so many weeks now? Non stop one point bombing of Corona. As they say, if you can't make something better, at least don't make it worse.

While we hear some chatter about some sectors of the economy opening up sooner than others, some countries becoming more liberal than the rest in terms of relaxing norms, these are still very early days. India and Canada are relatively better off, if we can call it that, as compared to Italy or Spain or UK or USA. But, this thing is not over yet.

People are worried for their jobs and whether they will get it back when things do restart. Businesses are worried of going under for good. The new workplace may not be the same as we know it today. Companies will go for more and more automation, people will have to learn new technology and skills and self employment will become a necessity, not a choice, for millions of people in Canada, India and everywhere else.

In our 3rd edition of Canada India Insight, we have interviews with the new High Commissioner of India to Canada, with the Chief Economist at Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Guest Columns and more. A YouTube Channel is also on the way where you will be able to see the Interviews. The Canada India Insight Conference in Vaughan, originally scheduled for March 25 has now been rescheduled for October 23 at

the same venue.

In an interview given to Times Now News Channel in India, Steve Bannon, a very influential US strategist, once very close to President Trump (he was also part of Trump administration in the first year) called Corona a "bio-Chernobyl" moment and strongly urged nations to take on China now, before it's too late. He called Prime Minister Modi a visionary leader, praised his efforts profusely and hoped the US could follow his lead. Bannon also called for countries like USA, India, Japan, Australia and Brazil, with possibly UK and France joining later, to come together to counter China's aggressive predatory economic policies and activities (he compared them to the infamous East India Company)

Whether such a coalition takes shape or not, the present situation can be a blessing in disguise for Mr. Modi's flagship "Make in India" program. Countries like Japan are actively

encouraging their companies to move out of China (according to several news reports) and with China's labour costs also moving upwards, this can be a god-send opportunity for India to get it's act together, amend / tweak a few rules and attract global companies to shift their manufacturing bases to India.

On the bilateral front, while Canada India bilateral trade is going up (from \$ 8 billion in 2015 to \$ 10 billion in 2019, trade and investment pacts - the CEPA and BIPPA need to be taken up for a time bound discussion and completion. The usual fault lines still remain and have to be addressed to see real movement on other fronts. Corona is forcing people to rethink their priorities, appreciate what they have and stay away from people that may cause trouble (social distancing) It's time countries do the same, including Canada.

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## How China weaponized its supply chain

**When the coronavirus emergency transitions to a post-COVID-19 economic Order, securing the critical needs of Canadians, and the supply chains that meet them will be an essential and historic undertaking**

**By : Marcus Kolga, Kaveh Shahrooz and Shuvaloy Majumdar**

In homes and hospitals across the country, Canadians are now directly encountering the existential threat that authoritarian forces pose to their lives. As leaders navigate public health and economic crises caused by COVID-19, our foreign policy establishment has opportunity to dispense with ideological fantasies of post-nationalism, and embrace the reality that nations are comprised of citizens, borders and interests.

Instead of pursuing genuine cooperation when confronted by the virus, authoritarian regimes in Beijing, Tehran and Moscow facilitated its transmission by concealing their failures, proliferating disinformation about its source, and expending immense resources exploiting this crisis for their exclusive economic advantage. They are weaponizing medicine to advance their standing in the world order.

The implications of this subversion of Canadian interests are immense, and place two crucial objectives before our leaders. First, Canada must ensure that our vital supply chains are not at the mercy of non-democratic adversaries; and second, we must deepen resilience and cooperation among other democracies.

At the very intersection of the present debate between globalization and nationalism, featuring economic dislocation and global disruption, are questions around the critical supply chains that cross sovereign borders. For decades, dictatorships in China, Russia and Iran have manipulated uncritical assessments of their

true nature, gaining leverage over nations made vulnerable by the seduction of economic supply. Across the free world, Holland, Spain, Italy, Australia and others now contend with the threat of junk supplies masquerading as “aid” from China, while public health systems are strained or overrun. Canadians are contending with precisely these same challenges.

This pandemic is forcing our leaders to prioritize the medical security of Canadians, competing for supplies with even our closest ally, the United



Courtesy : scientificamerican.com

States. When the immediate emergency transitions to a post-COVID-19 economic order, understanding and securing the critical needs of Canadians, and the supply chains that meet them will be an essential and historic undertaking.

The coronavirus has highlighted the vulnerability that global value chains (GVCs) present when non-democracies exploit the rule-of-law cooperation that underpins them. China, for example, has steadily climbed the medical device GVC as a result of their Made-in-China 2025 policy. One of China’s goals is to transition from being on the low-value-added end to the high-value-added end of the GVC in 10 manufacturing sectors, including

medical devices.

As a result, when faced with such an immediate crisis, Canada’s own supply chain was disrupted by China’s shutdown, with grave consequences today for our frontline health care workers. Damningly, while President Xi Jinping tried to suppress the pandemic brewing in Wuhan, his senior advisors conspired to weaponize China’s medical supply chain by draining high-quality medical supplies from Western sources, flooding desperate ones with bad equipment, and controlling

a global position in pharmaceutical manufacturing. This represents a whole new unimaginable concept for Canadian foreign policy to contend with: weaponized

medicine.

Dependence on China’s supply chains extend beyond medical supply to several products integral to our survival. With “China and India providing an estimated 80 per cent of raw ingredients of the world’s drugs,” a full review is needed around the complex risks China’s state-run economy poses, alongside mitigation measures to reorder these vital economic supply chains. There will be opportunities for economic self-reliance, in how much Canadians can produce and manufacture alone. There will also remain the need for secure supply chains, and those will need to preference the world’s democracies.

Tools are indeed available to protect the Canadian market

economy against those that seek to upend it, including the Investment Canada Act. Matters of critical infrastructure, both physical and digital, are manifest in the national debate over Huawei’s role in Canada’s 5G network because of that Act, and establish important hurdles enshrined in law to secure the interests of Canadians. The same needs to be applied when it comes to the security of our drugs and medical supplies.

As long as the critical needs of Canadians are dependent on authoritarians, we remain at the mercy of such regimes’ incompetence or, worse, malevolence. Difficult days are ahead as we seek to understand the new economic realities of the post-COVID-19 world. Canadian national interests demand economic independence from authoritarians.

Authoritarians have become masters at subverting the postwar democratic order, while democracies have confused pluralism with moral relativism and equivocation. Canada should now take the lead in promoting a democratic national interest that boldly strengthens the bonds between new and established democracies, and that builds resilience in vulnerable democracies.

The Chinese government’s failures were aided by uncritical foils in Western media and apologists in international organizations. Chinese officials continue to aggressively promote false narratives about its origins, ridiculously propagating the myth that COVID-19 is an American biological weapon. Iran’s regime, too, played a role in the growth of the epidemic

in Canada. After Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei directed the Iranian regime to cover up the outbreak for domestic political reasons and refused to quarantine the population, COVID-19-positive Iranians began to arrive in Canada in late February. And earlier this month, the European Union warned that Russian disinformation about COVID-19 was putting lives at risk, while accusing Vladimir Putin's regime of "playing with people's lives." In addition to suppressing information about the virus's spread in Russia, state media platform Sputnik also promoted false narratives about the origins



of coronavirus, speciously suggesting that it originated in Latvia, where Canada is leading NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence.

These regimes reject responsibility for their role in the global spread of the virus, unencumbered by domestic accountability and obsessed with repression and lifetime rule. Rather, they have resorted to igniting obvious disinformation and misinformation about the pandemic, contributing to what can only be called an "infodemic." And now they seek to capitalize on the global

chaos they have principally engendered.

China has been particularly brazen, using this opportunity to deepen its control and material influence across UN agencies, including the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and INTERPOL. The Iranian regime, too, is taking advantage of this international emergency. Despite refusing medical help from Doctors Without Borders and the United States, it continues to pressure the international community for sanctions relief in the form of cash. If the past is any indication, it could use that relief to fund terrorist adventures abroad. Russia is exploiting the pandemic and energy price war to further erode EU and NATO cohesion on sanctions levied against Putin regime officials and kleptocrats. Russia's recent "aid" delivery to Italy—of which 80 per cent was discovered to be "useless" according to a recent report—was clearly part of what the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell identified as a "struggle for influence through spinning and the politics of generosity."

For all their machinations, these authoritarian regimes have a clear mission: disrupt democracies and disrupt their cooperation. It is noteworthy that some of the democracies whose security is most imperilled by neighbouring authoritarianism (Israel, South Korea, and Taiwan) have been

especially adept at delivering for their citizens unsentimental safety alongside successful democracy.

Fortunately, established democracies have significant institutional resilience in the face of crises, balancing tensions between security and liberty. Even in Canada, this precarious balance demands vigilance. Where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau failed, Hungary's Viktor Orban succeeded, both pursuing a naked power grab in the midst of this crisis.

This is of course not to say that democracies have acted perfectly in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. One need



**World Health Organization**

only look at Italy or the United States to realize that is not the case. However, our democratic allies have, in large part, been transparent about their challenges and have cooperated with Canada to limit the impact. Conversely, our adversaries have been anything but helpful. The lesson we should draw from this experience is that deepening democratic resilience, and forging stronger bonds with democratic allies, ought to become central goals of our foreign policy.

This cannot be accomplished by diminishing

Canadian democratic convictions in pursuit of a seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC), a project which has occupied an outsized obsession of the foreign policy establishment. Simply put, there can be no consequential Canadian leadership in such a role, especially in the aftermath of China's farcical UNSC presidency. For all the investment, expertise and diplomacy that has captivated Canadian leadership around this project, it has distracted the country from guarding against the threat of emboldened authoritarians, and undermined our ability to advance the national interests of Canadians. As we rebuild, Canadians will rightly insist that a democratic and economic logic inform our interests in a world order where medicine is now weaponized. They would rightly insist that the supply chain decisions on essential matters provide for an independent Canada. And they would be right to insist that our leaders show resolve in standing with democratic allies against the world's principal despots whose interests are so clearly in opposition to our own.

**(Marcus Kolga, Kaveh Shahrooz and Shuvaloy Majumdar are senior fellows at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's Centre for Advancing Canada's Interests Abroad. The Article first appeared in April Edition of MacLean's Magazine)**



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(Recognizes national service or achievement), Member ( Recognizes outstanding contributions at the local or regional level or in a special field of activity)

The Order of Canada is awarded to individuals only, not to groups or couples and there are no posthumous appointments. There is no deadline for submissions.

Nominations are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The Advisory Council for the Order of Canada is an independent advisory council that is chaired by the Chief Justice of Canada.

It reviews all nominations and transmits its decisions to the Governor General. A vote is held on each nomination and there must be a majority

of votes for the candidate to be appointed to the Order of Canada. A person's appointment to the Order of Canada may be terminated by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Advisory Council. Living non-canadians are also eligible if their contributions have brought benefit or honour to Canadians or to Canada.

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Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian honour in India. Introduced in 1954, Bharat Ratna is given for exceptional service towards advancement of Art, Literature and Science and in recognition of public service of the highest order. There is no written provision that Bharat Ratna should be awarded to Indian citizens only.

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# “ Canadians will need reskilling, upskilling and skills training programs to get back to work ”

By : Vipul Jani

Canadian businesses are facing an unprecedented challenge right now. It's not about profits or bigger market share, they are fighting just to survive, just to weather this Corona Storm.

How desperate is the situation, where can we go from here, what will the future look like for businesses big and small. These are the questions every business leader has on his or her mind right now.

To get a real sense of what's going on, from people in the know, Canada India Insight Editor Vipul Jani interviewed Trevin Stratton, Chief Economist and Vice President, Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Excerpts from an e-mail interview :

**• Do you think small businesses can ride over this tsunami with a \$ 40,000 loan from the govt ? Even if the markets open up in 2-3 months, which is far from certain at this time, things will nowhere be close to normal till atleast the new year. Do you foresee a collapse for many family owned, small businesses in Canada ?**

The federal government recently expanded the eligibility for the \$40,000 Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loans to businesses with payrolls as low as \$20K and as high as \$1.5M. The business community certainly welcomes this announcement. Relaxing the payroll eligibility criterion is a positive step, one that will help more small and

medium businesses. However, we continue to advocate that the government consider removing payroll criteria from the program to ensure that any business that needs bridge financing can access this desperately needed assistance.

In addition, we remain concerned that defining payroll



Trevin Stratton  
Chief Economist & VP – Policy  
Canadian Chamber of Commerce

as that provided via T4 excludes many entrepreneurs from qualifying. Many small business owners pay themselves through dividends (T5) and have only contractors as employees. The government should expand the definition of payroll to capture the ways different types of business calculate it.

Many businesses who meet the criteria outlined in the program are being

denied financing. We urge the government to work closely with Canada's financial institutions to ensure that all businesses receive the financing they need. Earlier in this crisis, the government expanded the list of financial institutions eligible to deliver the

CEBA to include credit unions. We encourage the government to expand this to alternative financial institutions, which many SMEs rely upon.

**• We hear words like Greatest recession ever, great depression etc. How severe can this be going forward ?**

We have a few projections already. According to the International Monetary Fund's projections, the Canadian economy will decline 6.2% this year with the global economy declining 3%. The uncertainty surrounding the outlook is exceptionally high though. Our economy is expected to rebound once the health crisis subsides, but the timing and strength of any recovery will depend on how the pandemic unfolds and what measures are put in place to protect Canadians. The recovery will also depend on how consumers and businesses behave in response. Because of this it is very difficult to forecast the economy with any degree of confidence.

**Will this give an excuse to companies to go for even more automation, thereby reducing millions of jobs in the coming days and years ? Where will all these people go ?**

Canada's workforce will not be the same when it comes time for recovery. In the span of one month, we went from one of the tightest job markets in history to over one million job losses. Unemployment may not return to pre-crisis levels at any

point soon. Available jobs and the skills required will shift. Employers might increasingly look to automation to maintain operations during future crises and reduce risk. Canadians will need reskilling, upskilling and skills training programs to get them back to work. Education and training will also change, including more online learning and durable skills, with a focus on both work-integrated and lifelong learning. Ensuring all Canadians have opportunities to participate in the recovery will be essential for inclusive growth and widespread job creation.

**When the dust settles, what will the Canadian and world economy in general look like and where will China be in that picture ?**

The reversal of decades of economic globalization and international supply chains will create challenges for a trading nation like Canada. International trade patterns and global capital flows will shift as the pandemic disrupts the global economy. The pull of protectionist policies will grow as countries look inwards to recover from COVID-19, and barriers erected during the crisis could be slow to come down. Restructuring will take place in international tourism and transportation sectors, and impacts will linger for attracting international students. Canadians will have to reconcile our tradition of internationalism with a dramatically new global environment. China, like every country, will have to navigate this global fragmentation.



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# Coronavirus reminds us of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

By: Tarek Fatah

What prophets and philosophers could not achieve over centuries of preaching holy books read in sacred places of worship, a deadly virus can accomplish in a matter of mere months, if we let it.

The coronavirus pandemic can wake us from the slumber of living as warring tribal, ethno-racial identities delineated by the colour of our skin and religious conflicts going back many millennia. It has the potential of making us recognize our common humanity.

Shakespeare tried to infuse that thought in 1599 when he wrote, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," in the pastoral comedy "As You Like It." One would have thought the Bard's plea would have resonated among at least the British, but that was not to be.

Instead, the 17th century was the harbinger of untold misery where Black-skinned Africans were bought and sold by Christian Europeans and Muslim

Arabs while the rest of the world was carved into colonies by competing royal families of the Portuguese, Spaniards, British, French, Italian, Germans and, of course, the Ottoman Turks.

Only one people and one land stood out in embracing all



**Tarek Fatah**

humans as one and opened its doors to both friend and foe.

Thousands of years ago, Hindustan or today's India sounded the slogan that still resonates across the length and breadth of the country of 400 languages, 29 states, six major religions. That slogan is

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which is a Sanskrit phrase found in ancient Hindu texts such as the Maha Upanishad, which means "The World is One Family."

The original verse appears in the Upanishad and is also found in the Rig Veda, it is considered the most important moral value in Indian society and as such, it is engraved in the entrance hall of the Parliament of India.

The COVID-19 outbreak reminds us that in the eyes of the killer virus, whether we are billionaire capitalists or communist cadres, black or white, politicians or padres, it will strike as if we are one and the same. In the eyes of the coronavirus, whether we are Iranian or Italians, ayatollahs or atheists, we are all in its gun sight. Just as an army of ants. Have we cared for one ant over the other? No. Never.

Now is the time to set

aside hatred, be it political or racial; religious or tribal. Does the virus care which side of the civil war you are on in South Sudan or Somalia? The recent locust attacks in East Africa should've made the Eritreans and Ethiopians wake up to a common cause, if not the universal message, but it did not.

Closer to home, the hatred towards Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Donald Trump reached an unheard of pitch. One social media user posted: "I hope Justin Trudeau dies of Coronavirus"

Unfortunately, it will be our fellow humans who will work to divide us even as both the coronavirus and the Vedas remind us: "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," The World is One Family.

**(Tarek Fatah is a Toronto based Author, Columnist, Broadcaster, Commentator. The Article first appeared in The Toronto Sun)**

## Did you know?

- World's highest cricket ground is in Chail, Himachal Pradesh. Built in 1893 after leveling a hilltop, it is 2444 meters above sea level.

- The largest religious building in the world is Angkor Vat, a Hindu temple in Cambodia, built at the end of the 11th century.

- The state Emblem of India is an adaptation from the Sarnath Lion capital of Ashoka.



सत्यमेव जयते

In the original, there are four Lions standing back to back. In the state emblem, adopted by the Govt of India on 26 January

1950, only three lions are visible. The wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus with a bull on right and a horse on left and the outlines of other wheels on extreme right and left. The bell-shaped lotus from the original has been omitted. The words Satyameva Jayate from Mundaka Upanishad, meaning Truth Alone Triumphs, are inscribed below the abacus in Devnagari script.

- Kirsten Hillman has been appointed as Canada's Ambassador to the United States. Ms. Hillman has served as Canada's Acting Ambassador to the USA since August 2019 and was previously the Deputy Ambassador from August 2017 to August 2019. Prior to joining the Embassy of Canada to the US, Ms. Hillman held the position of Assistant

Deputy Minister of the Trade Agreements and Negotiations Branch at Global Affairs Canada, overseeing all of Canada's trade policy and trade negotiations. Before joining Global Affairs Canada, Ms. Hillman practiced Law in the private sector in Montreal and at the Department of Justice in Ottawa.



- Canada is represented in India by the High Commission of Canada in New Delhi. Canada also has Consulates General in Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Mumbai, as well as trade offices in Ahmedabad, Chennai,

Hyderabad and Kolkata. The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi is home to Canada's largest Visa office abroad. India is represented in Canada by a High Commission in Ottawa and Consulates in Toronto and Vancouver.

- Canada is the largest customer for the United States, buying more goods from them than China, Japan and UK combined. Canada is also the top trading partner for most US states.

- More than 9,000 students have received aid at Toronto's Seneca College, thanks to \$ 1.8 million provided by the College, \$ 400,000 from the student association and \$ 400,000 from the Ontario Government. Seneca has also loaned 1200 Laptops to students for online learning.

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ranging from polar studies to space sciences. More than 1000 Canadian companies are now active in India. It's a two-way street. Indian companies have invested in Canada, in sectors ranging from pharmaceuticals to IT to auto and have generated employment for more than 18,000 Canadians here.

**• As they say every dark cloud has a silver lining. Many see this present pandemic and China's current troubles as an opportunity for Make in India to take off in a big way. However, is India ready to grab the opportunity by easing tariffs and making the process a bit more easier for manufacturers and investors? Just the emotional appeals to the diaspora won't be enough to compete against China and other emerging markets?**

We are encouraging Canadian companies to look at India as a dependable supplier in global value chains, as a destination for manufacturing and as a profitable investment destination. The COVID-19 crisis has underlined the need to diversify supply sources. Global supply chains emanating from India will be more reliable and trust-worthy. To enhance this trust, I would like to enlist the support of the Chambers of Commerce in Canada and particularly of the Indo-Canadian business community.

We will pursue commercial engagement more pro-actively once the crisis is over but even now we are open for business and would be very happy to guide and support Canadian business as they emerge from the crisis and explore newer possibilities in India.

In the new scenario, global manufacturers, long settled elsewhere, are looking to diversify their manufacturing bases. Much groundwork has been done and new policy changes are being made even as you print this. New schemes

like Production-linked initiative (PLI), Scheme for promotion of manufacturing of electronics components and semiconductors (SPECS) and Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) 2.0 introduced by India are game changers. Several measures had been announced in our budget 2020 proposals, like abolishing the Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT), increase in foreign portfolio investors limit, and lowering of corporate taxes, along with measures to improve ease of doing business to make India a more attractive destination, particularly for Canadian investments.

In order to make the investments from Canada more



**Mr. Ajay Bisaria**

attractive, we made further changes in our final budget. Pension funds from Canada will now get the same benefits as extended to sovereign wealth funds. Our tax regime has been tweaked and the pass-through for REITs/ InvITs with exemption from Dividend Distribution Tax will also continue.

**• What kind of assistance / help is the High Commission / Indian Missions in Canada providing to people of Indian Origin in Canada and Canadians working / stranded in India. In close co-ordination with the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi or otherwise?**

There is a sincere desire to take our bilateral relations to greater heights. With the two governments re-elected in India and Canada, we expect much forward movement. My External Affairs Minister visited Canada in December 2019 with a strong message of collaboration. In fact he was the first Foreign

Minister from any country to visit Ottawa after the re-election of the government here. He had very positive meetings with the Canadian Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and with the Minister for International Trade. Since then, the two Ministers have spoken to each other several times over the phone. Our Commerce and Industry Minister was scheduled to visit Canada in April at the invitation of the Canadian Minister for International Trade, but the meeting was deferred due to COVID-19. The two Ministers have, however, spoken to each other on phone several times. As soon as international travel normalizes, we can expect to see several high profile bilateral visits.

As I said earlier, COVID-19 is a global crisis. Its ravages are global. So its solutions need to be global, collaborative. We have facilitated arrangements of multiple evacuation flights so far from India for Canadian nationals. We have been particularly sensitive to Canada's needs for medical supplies.

Canadian authorities have been actively involved in ensuring the well-being of Indian students in Canada. I have personally intervened with Premiers and University authorities. We have been reassured that Universities and Colleges will keep campus residences open for Indian and other international students.

India is in a state of lockdown till May 3. In Canada too, the quarantine act has been invoked and most provinces have extended medical emergency. There are no flights operating to India till May 3. Our advice to Indians here is to stay where they are, to avoid all travel and to follow the advisories and instructions of the Canadian authorities.

In the High Commission, we have established an automated help-desk that provides answers and updated information to most common issues that people here have. Our Mission in Ottawa and our Consulates in Toronto and

Vancouver have helplines and can be approached by e-mail for addressing any specific problem that any Indian national in Canada faces.

**• This may not be a good time to talk about the stalled free trade agreement between Canada and India or high level, bilateral visits etc, but can we expect any real progress on that front, anytime soon?**

This is, in fact, a good time to talk about the pending trade and investment pacts, the CEPA and BIPPA. We must prepare for the new world order that emerges after the COVID-19 crisis, where trade and investment would need to be revived. Our political leadership has already given guidance that we want to accelerate our negotiations. The differences between the two sides are not insurmountable and focused negotiations can yield productive results. Officials from both the sides have been discussing the matter in video meetings even before the current crisis. We are hopeful that we will make early progress.

**• Pl tell us about your To Do List and how can we Indo Canadians - both Individuals and Organizations - help?**

The overall agenda is quite clear. We wish to focus on a strong economic blueprint-placing business, trade and investment front and centre.

Our excellent political ties need to be reinforced with high level exchanges to help realize this central objective. We need to work on the business agenda, beginning with a focus on the current crisis and on immediate post pandemic times.

As medium term goals, we have on our radar a bilateral trade agreement and an investment treaty. Technology and education are the areas of long-term promise. Indian community could help us realize this agenda through their amazing networks, their efforts in forging business links and in guiding the political process to strengthen our partnership.