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**Indian Council of World Affairs**

**Sapru House, Barakhamba Road**

**New Delhi**

**Report**

on

**Book Discussion**

**Canada-India: Partners in Progress**

**authored by**

**Ambassador P. K. Budhwar**

Sapru House, New Delhi

15 March, 2016

The Indian Council of World Affairs organized a Book Discussion Event on '**Canada-India: Partners in Progress**', authored by Ambassador P. K. Budhwar, at the Sapru House, New Delhi, on 15 March 2016. The event was chaired by Ambassador Rajiv Sikri. The discussants for the book discussion event were Prof. Abdul Nafey of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Ambassador R.L. Narayan, and Dr. Stuti Banerjee from the ICWA. The book, 'Canada-India: Partners in Progress' has been published by the ICWA and Vij Books India Private Limited.

Ambassador Sikri in his remarks said that there is little difference between India and Canada. Canada is among the most developed countries and there is scope for India-Canada cooperation in different fields. He underlined four such areas: Canada has nuclear technology to offer; it has large amount of investment capital to invest; cooperation in defence sector; and Indian diaspora in Canada. Ambassador further mentioned that the Modi government in India is trying to connect with the Indian diaspora, which makes Canada an important partner in future as it has significant population of Indian origin. However, he cautioned that the diaspora can play both negative and positive roles in bilateral relations. Ambassador Sikri lauded the author and said that this is the first book on India-Canada bilateral relations.

While introducing his book, 'Canada-India: Partners in Progress', Ambassador P. K. Budhwar termed India-Canada bilateral relations as a 'roller coaster' ride, from being a 'Special Relationship' in 1950s to the souring of ties after India's testing of nuclear device in 1974 to 'nose-diving' of relations following the Kanishka bombing in 1985 killing more than 300 people and Canada's handling of the case. Ambassador Budhwar, who has served as India's High Commissioner to Canada, said that there are no serious differences between India and Canada relations. He said that people in India and Canada are generally not aware of each other and many people in India tend to see Canada as a country similar to the US, which is not correct. He cited an example that very few people in India know that about 40 per cent of pulses consumed in India come from Canada. The Ambassador urged the media to play greater role in informing the people of the two countries about each other's potential and success stories.

Speaking about the changing nature of India-Canada relations, Ambassador Budhwar said that it has evolved from the donor-recipient relations in the past to 'genuine bilateral'

relationship at present. He added that the bilateral trade is of about US\$ 6 billion (however, a representative from the Canadian High Commission in Delhi attending the event said that the latest figures are of US\$8.2 billion). Despite global economic slowdown, the bilateral trade, which is slightly in favour of India, is growing. The second change in India-Canada relations, the Ambassador observed, is that the two countries now focus more on commonality, not allowing minor issues to deviate from the main thrust. He concluded that things have changed for better now.

Ambassador R.L. Narayan called Canada as a 'mosaic' where different cultures are encouraged, and not as a 'melting pot'. He mentioned that Canada is the second largest country in the world having 35 million people and it has sustained as a federation over the years. He said that India's nuclear tests and the Kanishka bombing incident affected the ties between the two countries to an extent. Ambassador Narayan mentioned that Canada is an advanced country and world leader in technology, particularly in sustainable energy and environment friendly technologies, such as generating electricity through tidal waves in coastal areas or through geo-thermal energy. The two countries can cooperate in these areas. Prof. Abdul Nafey talked about the nature of Canadian nation and called it a 'pioneer' in the concept of a multicultural society and declaring it publicly. Talking about leveraging Indian diaspora, he said that this aspect of relationship must be attended with greater care. Discussing bilateral economic relations, Prof. Abdul Nafey said that biotech, water resource management, energy, food processing and long distance transportation of food items can be the areas of cooperation between the two countries. He added that Canada has high quality uranium ore, which India needs for its nuclear installations. Further, he added that Canada is an ageing society and it has to depend more on immigration. India is seen as a source of engineers and skilled persons to sustain the current level of development in Canada. The Professor underlined that Canada has huge natural gas and oil deposits and the country can emerge as a future gas supply source to India. He added that Canada is a resource rich country and it needs access to markets and purchasing guarantees.

Referring to the book 'Canada-India: Partners in Progress', Professor Abdul Nafey said that the book is a 'contextualised treatment' of issue. He particularly appreciated its chapter on Indian diaspora in Canada.

Dr. Stuti Banerjee underscored the open debate on different issues in Canada, including on the autonomy of provinces in the country. She mentioned that India and Canada can cooperate in the advanced technology fields. She said that the Indian diaspora in Canada is politically and economically strong; however, a section of that diaspora has no favourable view towards India. She opined that it will be interesting to know how the Canadian government deals with it and what measures it takes. Dr. Banerjee also suggested greater use of India's soft power in Canada. Highlighting the significance of the book, she said that it emphasizes on the economic aspects of India-China relation, which must be of interest for a wider section.

The remarks were followed by a Q&A session. In this section, comments and questions about diaspora; alleged pro-Khalistan sentiments in Canada, particularly in Vancouver area; Kanishka bombing incident; different areas of cooperation between the two countries; role of ethnic media and development regarding the Arctic region were raised. In response, it was mentioned that the Canadian government is focusing on civil nuclear energy cooperation. A suggestion was also made that the two countries can explore the potential in mountain training. On the Canadian government's response to the reported pro-Khalistan sentiments, it was suggested that domestic politics plays a role in this regard as it affects the voting in elections in Canada. It was said that though a small but vocal minority supports it, a vast majority of diaspora from Punjab does not support such sentiments. About the Arctic region, it was said it is important from three perspectives. First, there is a territorial dispute that should be resolved. Second, the region can emerge as maritime transport corridor and it is to be seen how other countries access this route. Third, Arctic has vast but untapped natural oil and gas reserves.

The event was attended by members of diplomatic corps in Delhi, academia, media persons, scholars and researchers. The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Dr. Athar Zafar, Research Fellow, ICWA.

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