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Institute Of Civil Services

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TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

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1.	LEVERAGE SIMILARITY, COMPLEMENTARITY IN NIGERIA
2.	HOW WILL SDS VISA MOVE HIT STUDENTS?
3.	BASIC COUNTRIES ASK NATIONS AT COP 29 TO HONOUR COMMITMENTS FOR CLIMATE FINANCE

LEVERAGE SIMILARITY, COMPLEMENTARITY IN NIGERIA

Leverage similarity, complementarity in Nigeria

In November 16-17, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and second largest economy. Though on his first visit to that country, he may still find it familiar: from Airtel to Bajaj, Bollywood to Cipla and TVS to Tata, India is ubiquitous in Nigeria. Thanks to a shared Commonwealth legacy and similar challenges, the two multi-ethnic, large developing democracies face identical issues: improved governance, socio-economic development, terrorism and corruption. At the same time, they have complementarity in such strategic areas as hydrocarbons, defence, institution building, health care and education. Leveraging this milieu of similarity and complementarity can catapult the Abuja Summit from "successful" to "historic".

Substantive assets on the ground are available for this endeavour. There are more than 150 Indian companies with footprints in Nigeria with investments estimated at \$27 billion. With bilateral trade at \$7.9 billion, India is Nigeria's second largest trading partner. Nearly 50,000 Indians in Nigeria, the largest *Oyibo* (non-African) group in the country are well regarded for their low profile, professionalism and integrity. Nigerians flock to India for trade, medical treatment and education.

India's hard and soft power in Nigeria might look impressive, but it has lost ground over the past decade. The bilateral trade is half its peak a decade ago when India was Nigeria's largest trading partner. Despite being the top buyer of Nigerian crude, India has no upstream assets there. There are multiple reasons behind this stagnancy. To begin with, a more effective and comprehensive framework is indispensable for bilateral renewal and upgrading through frequent contacts. The Prime Minister's visit takes place after 17 years and the last meeting of the bilateral joint commission, this year, was after 13 years. Nigeria is too big and important a partner for India to channel its development assistance multilaterally through the African Union. India also needs to better leverage the local Indian



Mahesh Sachdev

former Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria and the author of the book, 'Nigeria: A Business Manual'

India's hard and soft power in Nigeria might look impressive, but much ground has been lost over the past decade

diaspora, Nigeria's second-largest employer. The two vibrant private sectors should be better empowered through a platform, preferably with financial and underpinning. With foresight and a judicious mix of ambition and sensitivity, India and Nigeria can forge a win-win synergy.

Nigeria, which is currently facing several economic and security headwinds, is looking for friends such as India for help. Since coming to power in 2023, President Bola Tinubu has acted with political courage. Unlike most of his predecessors who merely kicked the can of worms down the road, he has confronted long-standing national challenges. The measures taken include withdrawing petroleum subsidies costing \$10 billion annually, freeing the national currency, the Naira, of controls (leading to a steep depreciation and 32% annual inflation), and dismissing several functionaries including the Central Bank Governor, Head of Secret Service and military brass. These have upended the economy and caused public disaffection. In a recent speech, President Tinubu defended these stiff measures as necessary for national rejuvenation and assured the public that the worst was over.

Where India could help

Despite the current eco-political conundrum, Nigeria retains its long-term attractiveness for India as a major hydrocarbon supplier, a large market with physical and social infrastructure deficit, and growth potential. While its occasionally stained reputation calls for due diligence and caution, macro-economic management is quite competent and the sovereign commitments are upheld.

The Nigerian leadership has high expectations from the Modi visit. Among its top concerns is upgrading its defence and security services to meet the terrorism and economic anarchy-related challenges such as Boko Haram, oil bunkering, Gulf of Guinea piracy, and a turbulent neighbourhood. Having overcome similar challenges at home, India is well experienced and

equipped to help Nigeria through a comprehensive package of defence supplies, training, and remote sensing. This can, in turn, boost India's defence exports and revive bilateral defence ties epitomised by seven Nigerian Presidents since independence in 1960 being trained in India as defence officers.

An equally urgent Nigerian requirement would be to seek India's help for economic stabilisation as it faces a critical foreign exchange shortage. India could best do so through some strategic initiatives such as partnerships for upstream hydrocarbons and infrastructure, a bilateral comprehensive economic partnership agreement and large financial facilitation through lines of credit and barter arrangements. India can provide the Nigerian requirements of petroleum products, foodstuffs (rice, wheat, milk powder), consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, compressed natural gas conversion kits, textiles and garments, agricultural inputs, and power equipment. The possibility of rupee-based trade can also be put on the table. Other complementarities to be leveraged would include importing palm oil, hides and skins, ginger, and Gum Arabic. Such moves would arrest the 29.7% year-on-year decline in India's exports in 2023-24 to \$3.6 billion. Moreover, it would help locate other drivers for bilateral trade as India now buys less Nigerian crude. Though less tangible, India's services exports in areas such as Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled services, banking, financial services and insurance, health care, skilling and education also deserve support.

Half a millennium of shared history

A less-known but interesting historical snippet is about the first direct bilateral contact. A hazy legend traces it to the arrival around 1500 AD of Baba Ghor, a gem merchant from Kano (now in northern Nigeria) who settled down in Ratanpur in Gujarat. He is still revered as a saint and for devising a method to polish agate stones. We need a similar impetus today to make the natural bilateral ties more lustrous.

Nigeria

- ❖ **Location:** Situated on the western coast of Africa; often called the "Giant of Africa."
- ❖ **Boundaries:**
 - **North:** Bordered by Niger
 - **East:** Bordered by Chad and Cameroon
 - **South:** Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic Ocean)
 - **West:** Bordered by Benin
- ❖ **Independence:** Gained independence from Britain in 1960.
- ❖ **Area:** Approximately 9.24 lakh square kilometers.
- ❖ **Population:** Africa's most populous country.





- ❖ **Capital:** Abuja
- ❖ **Official Language:** English
- ❖ **Other Languages:** Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, among many others.
- ❖ **Currency:** Naira

★ 1st country globally to introduce Men5CV vaccine for meningitis → serious infection of meninges (the membranes covering the brain and spinal chord) ←

Nigeria

Relief features

- ★ Sokoto plains (NW)
- ★ Borno plains (NE)
- ★ Jos Plateau
- ★ Adamawa Plateau
- ★ Mambilla plateau

Geography and Climate

- ❖ **Diverse Geography:** Encompasses a range of climates, from arid in the north to humid equatorial in the south.
- ❖ **Drainage Basins:**
 - **Major Basins:** Niger-Benue basin, Lake Chad basin, and Gulf of Guinea basin.
 - **Principal Rivers:** The Niger River (after which the country is named) and the Benue River, its largest tributary.
- ❖ **Mountain Range:** Cameroonians Highlands, located along the eastern border with Cameroon.

Natural Resources

- ❖ **Rich in Natural Resources:** Known for large deposits of petroleum and natural gas, key to Nigeria's economy.





Introduction to India-Nigeria Relations

❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2024 Visit

- **Date:** November 16-17, 2024
- **Importance:** First visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Nigeria in 17 years, underscoring a renewed focus on strengthening bilateral relations.
- **Objective:** Aims to elevate India-Nigeria relations by building on historical ties and addressing contemporary challenges faced by both nations.
- **Significance:** Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and the continent's second largest economy, making it a key partner for India.
- **Historical Connection:** Both India and Nigeria share a Commonwealth legacy, multiethnic societies, and similar developmental challenges, such as improving governance, combating corruption, and fostering socio-economic growth.

Economic Cooperation

❖ Trade:

- India is Nigeria's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade estimated at \$7.9 billion.
- Peak trade reached over a decade ago when India was Nigeria's top trading partner.
- Potential for expanding trade, especially in sectors like hydrocarbons, health care, and infrastructure.

❖ Investment:

- Over 150 Indian companies operate in Nigeria, with investments totaling approximately \$27 billion.
- Indian businesses, like Airtel, Cipla, and Tata, contribute significantly to Nigeria's economy.
- India is the second-largest employer in Nigeria's private sector due to its sizable diaspora and company footprint.

Strategic Sectors for Cooperation

❖ Hydrocarbons:

- India remains a major buyer of Nigerian crude oil.
- Strategic importance lies in enhancing India's energy security.
- However, India lacks direct upstream assets in Nigerian oil production.

❖ Defence:

- Opportunities for cooperation in counter-terrorism, security training, and sharing expertise in defense manufacturing.

❖ Institution Building and Governance:

- Both countries share experiences in managing large, diverse democracies.
- India could support Nigeria in institutional capacity-building, especially in governance reforms.

❖ Health Care and Education:

- Many Nigerians travel to India for advanced medical treatment and educational opportunities.
- Potential to expand collaborations in medical services and educational institutions.





Diaspora and Cultural Ties

- **Indian Community:**
 - Approximately 50,000 Indians reside in Nigeria, forming the largest non-African community.
 - Indian diaspora is recognized for its professionalism and positive contributions to Nigerian society.
- **Cultural Influence:**
 - Bollywood, Indian food, and festivals are popular in Nigeria, strengthening people-to-people connections.
 - Nigerian students and tourists increasingly visit India for education, business, and cultural experiences.

Challenges in Bilateral Relations

- **Decline in Trade:** Bilateral trade has halved since its peak a decade ago, highlighting the need for policy rejuvenation.
- **Underutilized Energy Investments:** Despite being a top crude importer, India's presence in Nigerian upstream oil is limited.
- **Limited Diplomatic Engagements:**
 - The recent India-Nigeria joint commission meeting took place after a 13-year hiatus.
 - Consistent high-level diplomatic exchanges are needed to maintain momentum.
- **Diaspora Engagement:**
 - India has yet to fully leverage its large and influential diaspora in Nigeria.
 - Enhanced partnerships between Indian and Nigerian private sectors could drive growth.

Recent Nigerian Reforms Under President Bola Tinubu

- **Economic Reforms:**
 - Removal of petroleum subsidies, which previously cost \$10 billion annually.
 - Liberalization of the Naira, resulting in a 32% inflation rate but aimed at long-term economic stability.
- **Security and Governance:**
 - Focus on improving national security and addressing economic challenges.
 - Strong political stance on reform, marking a departure from previous administrations.

Opportunities for Strengthening India-Nigeria Relations

- **Bilateral Engagement:** More frequent high-level meetings and structured joint commissions.
- **Development Assistance:** Shift from multilateral African Union channels to direct assistance to Nigeria.
- **Private Sector Empowerment:** Financial support and platforms for Indian and Nigerian companies to expand bilateral trade and investments.
- **Synergy for Global Influence:**
 - Jointly addressing issues on international platforms such as the United Nations and BRICS.
 - Enhancing cooperation in addressing global challenges, such as climate change and sustainable development.

Let's Practice

Q.1 Consider the following statements about the geographical features of Nigeria:

Statement 1: The Niger River is the longest river in Nigeria and flows through the country from the northwest to the southeast.

Statement 2: The Jos Plateau, located in central Nigeria, is known for its rich deposits of tin and columbite.

Which one of the following is **correct** in respect of the above statements?

- Both Statements 1 and 2 are correct, Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- Both Statements 1 and 2 are correct, Statement 2 is not correct the explanation for Statement 1.
- Statement 1 is correct but Statement 2 is incorrect
- Statement 1 is incorrect but Statement 2 is correct

Explanation:

- ❖ Statement 1 is correct because the Niger River is indeed the longest river in Nigeria, flowing from the northwest to the southeast. Statement 2 is also correct as the Jos Plateau is known for its mineral wealth, including tin and columbite. However, Statement 2 is not an explanation for Statement 1.





HOW WILL SDS VISA MOVE HIT STUDENTS?

How will SDS visa move hit students?

What is the Student Direct Stream visa? How did it benefit Indian students seeking to study in Canada? Why did the Canadian government decide to discontinue the fast-track visa programme? What other visa options are available to Indian students?

EXPLAINER

Ram Srinivasan

The story so far:

In a significant development, the Canadian government announced the discontinuation of the Student Direct Stream (SDS) visa in November 2024. This decision has far-reaching implications for Indian students, who have historically been one of the largest groups of international students in Canada. In 2022, India accounted for over 21% of all international students in Canada, with a staggering number of 222,450 Indian students choosing to study in Canadian institutions. Over 189,000 Indian students opted for the SDS visa that year, which significantly simplified their application process. For instance, while non-SDS applicants enjoyed a 63% approval rate, SDS applicants enjoyed a 19% approval rate.

What is the Canadian SDS visa?

The SDS visa, introduced in 2018, was a streamlined pathway designed to expedite the study permit application process for Indian students. It offered a faster processing time and reduced application fees, making it a popular choice among Indian students aspiring to pursue higher education in Canada. However, it also served students from other countries, including Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam. The SDS visa was specifically tailored to offer several key benefits to international students.

One of the primary advantages was its significantly reduced processing time. By meeting specific eligibility criteria, such as a higher level of English language proficiency and a confirmed admission to a Designated Learning Institution (DLI), students could expect a quicker decision on their study permit application.

The SDS visa also offered a lower application fee than the standard study permit, which significantly reduced the financial burden for many international students.

It simplified the application process by requiring fewer supporting documents. By adhering to the specific eligibility requirements, students could submit a more streamlined application, making it easier to navigate the immigration process.

Why was the SDS visa discontinued?
The Canadian government's decision to discontinue the SDS visa program was driven by a combination of factors aimed at addressing various challenges and concerns within the immigration system.

On his X handle on September 19, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, "We are granting 35% fewer international student permits this year. And next year, that number is going down by another 10%. Immigration is an advantage for our economy – but when bad actors abuse the system and take advantage of students, we crack down." This refers to international applicants who applied for the SDS as an excuse to take a simple diploma course, hardly worth going abroad for, with their ultimate goal being to apply for permanent residency.

While the official reasons cited by the government focused on "strengthening program integrity, addressing student vulnerability, and giving all students equal and fair access to the application



Shifting tides: In 2022, India accounted for over 21% of all international students in Canada, with a staggering number of 222,450 Indian students choosing to study in Canadian institutions.

process," several underlying factors likely contributed to this decision. Canada has been grappling with a significant housing shortage, particularly in major cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, and the rapid influx of international students, many of whom rely on off-campus housing, has exacerbated this issue. The increasing number of international students has also placed a strain on public services and infrastructure, including healthcare, education, and transportation.

The Canadian government may be reassessing its immigration policies to better manage the inflow of foreign students and ensure they contribute positively to the Canadian economy.

By discontinuing the SDS visa, the government aims to regulate the number of international students, alleviate pressure on housing and resources, and implement a more equitable approach to student visa processing.

How does the discontinuation affect Indian students?
The discontinuation of the SDS visa has undoubtedly had an impact on Indian students seeking to pursue higher education in Canada and has introduced a host of challenges.

One of the most immediate consequences of the SDS visa's discontinuation is the prolonged processing time for student visa applications. Before the SDS visa, the average processing time for student visas was significantly longer. With the removal of this expedited pathway, Indian students can expect to wait for a more extended period. This delay can disrupt academic plans and cause significant inconvenience.

Additionally, the discontinuation has led to increased application fees. While the exact fee structure may vary, it is generally higher for standard student visa applications than the SDS visa. This additional financial burden can be a considerable challenge, especially for students from lower-income backgrounds.

Furthermore, the application process for standard student visas is more complex and rigorous than the SDS visa. Students are required to submit a wider range of documents, including proof of

funds, language proficiency test scores, and detailed study plans. The increased complexity can be overwhelming and time-consuming, potentially leading to errors and delays.

The direct impacts of the SDS visa's discontinuation have far-reaching indirect consequences for Indian students. Potential delays in study plans can disrupt academic progress and career aspirations.

Moreover, this has created uncertainty about future immigration opportunities. The SDS visa was often seen as a stepping stone towards permanent residency in Canada. With this pathway no longer available, Indian students may face increased challenges in securing post-study work opportunities and ultimately immigrating to Canada.

Experts and stakeholders have expressed concerns about the discontinuation and its potential impact on Indian students. Immigration consultants and education advisors have highlighted the increased processing times, higher application fees, and stricter eligibility criteria associated with the regular student visa process.

Social media platforms have been abuzz with discussions, with many students expressing frustration and uncertainty about their study plans. One student, commenting on a popular education forum, lamented, "The SDS visa was a game-changer. It made the application process much smoother. Now, with its discontinuation, I'm worried about potential delays and increased costs." While the Canadian government has cited concerns about program integrity and equitable access, critics argue that the decision may deter talented Indian students from choosing Canada as their study destination.

What other options do Indian students have?
While the discontinuation of the SDS visa has presented challenges for Indian students, seeking to study in Canada, there are still viable alternative visa options available. The traditional student visa remains a primary pathway for

international students, including Indians. By meeting the eligibility criteria, such as proof of funds, language proficiency, and a Letter of Acceptance from a DLI, students can apply for a student visa.

However, it is important to note that the standard student visa application process can be more time-consuming and requires a more comprehensive documentation package compared to the SDS visa. Additionally, students may face longer processing times and increased application fees.

To enhance their chances of visa approval, Indian students should carefully plan their applications, submit all required documents on time, and consider consulting with immigration experts to navigate the complexities of the process.

The longer processing times, higher fees, and more complex application procedures have created significant hurdles. The indirect consequences, such as delayed study plans, increased financial burden, and uncertainty about future immigration opportunities further compound the challenges faced by Indian students.

For Indian students considering studying in Canada, it is crucial to plan ahead and prepare thoroughly. Early application is key, as it allows ample time for processing and addressing any potential issues. Thorough documentation is essential to meet the stringent requirements of the regular student visa process.

While the discontinuation of the SDS visa has presented challenges, it is important to remain hopeful for future changes or the introduction of alternative streamlined pathways for international students.

As the Canadian government continues to evolve its immigration policies, new opportunities may arise for Indian students. By staying informed and taking proactive steps, Indian students can navigate the complexities of the Canadian immigration system and achieve their academic and career goals.

(Ram Srinivasan is co-founder & CEO of Galvanize Global Education that provides guidance for students aspiring to do their Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D., or MBA abroad. He holds an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad)

THE GIST

The Canadian government discontinued the Student Direct Stream (SDS) visa in November 2024. This decision has far-reaching implications for Indian students.

The SDS visa offered faster processing, lower application fees, and simpler documentation, making it a popular option for students.

It was often seen as a pathway to permanent residency, and its discontinuation creates uncertainty about future immigration prospects.

Indian students can still apply for the standard student visa, though it requires more time and preparation.

The Story So Far

- ❖ **Announcement:** In November 2024, the Canadian government announced the discontinuation of the Student Direct Stream (SDS) visa.
- ❖ **Impact on Indian Students:**
 - In 2022, Indian students comprised over 21% of all international students in Canada.
 - Approximately **222,450 Indian students** studied in Canadian institutions in 2022.





- Over **189,000 Indian students** used the SDS visa, benefiting from simplified applications and high approval rates (63% compared to 19% for non-SDS applicants).

What is the Canadian SDS Visa?

❖ Introduction and Purpose:

- Launched in 2018, the SDS visa was intended to streamline the study permit process for certain international students, particularly benefiting Indian students.
- Available to students from countries like India, China, Pakistan, the Philippines, and others.

❖ Key Features:

- **Faster Processing:** Provided expedited processing for applicants meeting specific criteria.
- **Reduced Fees:** Lower application fees than the standard study permit, easing financial burdens for students.
- **Simplified Documentation:** Required fewer supporting documents, making the application process more accessible and manageable.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Applicants needed to demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency and hold a confirmed admission to a Designated Learning Institution (DLI) in Canada.

Why Was the SDS Visa Discontinued?

❖ Reasons for Discontinuation:

- **Immigration Challenges:** The Canadian government faced increasing immigration management issues.
- **Permit Reductions:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on September 19, 2024, that Canada would grant 35% fewer student permits in 2024, with a further reduction planned for the following year.
- **Broader Policy Shifts:** The move reflects Canada's adjustments to balance immigration benefits with national capacity concerns.

Other Visa Options for Indian Students

❖ Standard Study Permit:

- Requires a longer processing time than the SDS visa.
- Higher application fees and more extensive documentation compared to the SDS.
- Approval rate significantly lower (historically around 19%).

❖ Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP):

- Allows international students who have graduated from Canadian institutions to gain Canadian work experience.
- A separate application that follows the completion of a study program.

❖ Other Pathways:

- **Express Entry** (for skilled immigrants who gain work experience post-study).
- **Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)** (if students meet eligibility after completing their studies in specific provinces).





BASIC COUNTRIES ASK NATIONS AT COP 29 TO HONOUR COMMITMENTS FOR CLIMATE FINANCE

BASIC countries ask nations at COP29 to honour commitments for climate finance

Press Trust of India BAKU

BASIC countries, including India, have asked developed countries to honour their commitments to provide climate finance rather than “diluting obligations”, and rejected attempts by rich nations to shift their financial responsibilities during negotiations at the

The Paris Agreement seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit rise of global temperature

ongoing COP29 here.

As the annual climate change summit entered the fourth day on Thurs-

day, Brazil, South Africa, India and China (BASIC) also reiterated the need for full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement 2015, a legally binding international treaty.

The Paris Agreement aims at substantially reducing global greenhouse gas emissions to hold global temperature increase to

well below 2 degrees Celsius and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The developed countries have emphasised the importance of increasing global climate ambition and have called for all nations, including emerging economies, to enhance their net-zero targets and implementation efforts.

Overview of BASIC Grouping

- ❖ **Formation:** Established on November 28, 2009, through an agreement among Brazil, South Africa, India, and China.
- ❖ **Purpose:** Created to form a united front at the Copenhagen Climate Summit (2009), including the possibility of a coordinated walk-out if developed nations failed to meet BASIC’s minimum climate action demands.

Copenhagen Accord → *Signed in COP15 to UNFCCC 18 Dec 2009.*
 → *states global warming should be limited to below 2.0°C*
 → *not legally binding*

Key Objectives and Stance

Copenhagen Accord:

- The BASIC countries were part of the Copenhagen Accord negotiations alongside a US-led group.
- The Accord was not legally binding, but the BASIC nations’ involvement showcased their collective influence in climate negotiations.

Climate Position:

- Advocate for fair responsibility in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Emphasize the need for substantial funding to address climate change impacts in developing economies.
- BASIC nations resist pressure from developed countries to adopt stricter emissions reductions, arguing for recognition of their lower historical emissions responsibility.

Significance and Influence

Economic and Population Power:

- China, India, and Brazil are the second, fifth, and ninth-largest economies globally, respectively.
- Combined, the BASIC countries cover one-third of the world’s geographical area and represent nearly 40% of the global population.

Role in Climate Action:

- Significant contributors to current emissions due to large economies but maintain low per capita emissions due to high populations.
- BASIC countries assert diminished historical responsibility for carbon emissions, given that developed nations have been major emitters since 1850.





Other topics..

★ No dual eco-clearance for 39 categories of industries

↓
"white industries" → less polluting

↓
Solar cells,
wind, hydel
leather stitching.

★ Insulin → 14 Nov. World Diabetes Day.
Sir Fredrick Banting (insulin discovery).

— Keep Learning and Keep Revising! —

