



Dinesh Patnaik, India's high commissioner to Canada, said 'a lot of good' Indian companies were unable to attend a major mining convention in Toronto earlier this month because they couldn't obtain Canadian visas in a timely manner. DAVE CHAN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Travel: A Canada-India program would need to be conceived differently than NEXUS

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"Business people in India have to wait for months to get Canadian visa," he said in a recent interview.

"Let's do a trusted traveller scheme where those business people who are regular or high-net-worth individuals, people of high calibre, and put them into a trusted visa scheme," the envoy said.

He said he doesn't think the downside is significant.

"They're trusted people, they're good people. And even if 1 per cent of them turn out to be bad, that's fine. You know, it's not so much."

Mr. Patnaik said "a lot of good" Indian companies were unable to attend a major mining convention hosted by the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada in Toronto earlier this month because they couldn't obtain Canadian visas in a timely manner.

NEXUS works in part because Canada and the U.S. are partners in the Five Eyes security alliance with integrated intelligence, law enforcement and border-security systems. Canada and India have no equivalent integration.

Citizens of Canada and the U.S. aren't required to have visas to enter each other's countries, whereas India and Canada each impose visa requirements on the other's citizens.

NEXUS doesn't replace or suspend visa requirements but instead accelerates entry for prevetted travellers

A Canada-India trusted traveller program would need to be conceived differently — such as expediting visa processing and border

clearance for frequent, prescreened travellers.

Fen Hampson, a senior Carleton University professor of international affairs, said he sees value in Mr. Patnaik's idea but said both countries will have to set up a rigorous and multiple-level vetting process for applicants. "The challenge will be 'trust but verify,'" he said in an e-mailed statement.

A program for business travellers or other vetted visitors would require a "very high degree of co-operation" between the Canada Border Services Agency and its Indian counterparts, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Services, Prof. Hampson said.

"This is all a very tall order for two countries whose security co-operation up to now has been quite limited."

In trade negotiations, India will be seeking easier access to Canada for Indian business people and skilled professionals and even Indian company employees, Prof. Hampson predicted.

He said this could be challenging for Mr. Carney.

"Immigration politics right now is highly charged and Carney

has to manage the domestic optics at a time when he's clamping down."

Despite warm words from leaders, the new spirit of co-operation is not felt at lower levels of government or by border and security officials. It will also require significant new resources at time of government cutbacks and the considerable demands that the U.S. is putting on Canada to manage and secure its borders.

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