

Xenophobia in India

Why in news?

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Recently, senior African diplomats issued a joint statement deploring the series of recent attacks on African students and citizens in India.

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What the African diplomats say?

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- The African envoys names those accumulated attacks against Africans as xenophobic and racial in nature.

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- They said that they expected strong condemnation from the highest political level of the Government of India as well as legal actions against the perpetrators.

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- In the absence of such remedial actions, the African Heads of Missions were considering asking for an independent investigation by the Human Rights Council and to comprehensively report the matter to the African Union Commission.

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Is there xenophobia in India?

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What do the recent attacks imply?

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- The recent attacks on Africans in India run counter to this political legacy of support and solidarity.

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- e.g At a time when Western democracies were upholding up the racist regime in South Africa, the Government of India gave the African National Congress both moral and material help.
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- Indian patriots and anti-racists were a source of inspiration for freedom fighters in many other parts of Africa as well.
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- But the current incidents are tragically consistent with a deeper history of racism.
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- Xenophobia may be on the rise in recent years but the racism has deep historical roots, whereby ordinary Indians are brought up to regard those of dark or darker skin as somehow inferior.
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- Consciousness of skin colour and the marked preference for those of lighter complexion has long been endemic to Indian society.
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- It is reflected in matters such as matrimonial advertisements demanding for person with fair skin.
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- **This societal racism has been intensified by a politically induced xenophobia.**
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- It stokes a suspicion and even hatred of those whose culture, faith, ways of life, and skin colour is different from ours.
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What should be done?

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- Indian attitudes to racism and xenophobia are also marked by a notable hypocrisy.
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- Middle class Indians complain loudly when Europeans and Americans do not give them the respect and honour.
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- Yet the same Indians act in a contemptible manner towards Africans or North Easterners, making racist remarks about their food, culture, and form of dress.
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- The rebuke from the African Heads of Mission is a wake-up call to all

Indians.

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- Gandhian principles of equality and the common thread that bound all “the exploited coloured races of the earth, whether they are brown, yellow or black” should be preserved.

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Source: Indian Express

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