

Trudeau's India Visit Likely On February 19

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to visit India during February 19-23, Indian media outlets have reported.

The Indian Express and the Hindustan Times said that reports that an advance team from Trudeau's PMO logistics branch visited Amritsar this week.

The Prime Minister's Office has not confirmed the visit.

It is expected that the long-pending Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement (FIPPA) will be signed during the visit.

Several high-profile visits by Canadian ministers have taken place, with Ottawa's focus on

business and trade ties with India, which have been moving at a slow pace. Canada is hoping to sign the FIPPA that is being negotiated since 2006.

During his last visit to India in November, Canada's Minister for International Trade François-Philippe Champagne had told BusinessLine in an interview that the negotiations on the FIPPA are almost complete and it is ready to be signed.

Canada is also keen to expedite talks on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is being negotiated for almost a decade and has missed several deadlines for



conclusion. Both sides have also been sparring over whether to conclude the FIPPA together with the CEPA or individually.

Canada has also reportedly expressed concern over India's model on Bilateral Investment Treaties, especially with the pro-

vision of Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which says that foreign investors cannot go for international arbitration without exhausting domestic options.

Earlier this year, Canada's Defence Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan said Canadian defence firms are looking to expand in India. Both sides have discussed the possibility of setting up a working group on counter-terrorism and enhancing naval linkages.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visited Canada in April 2015.

Pic: Canadian Press File photo of Trudeau at the India Day parade in Montreal in August.



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Tuesday. - The Canadian Press/Adrian Wyld

Trump Warns UN On Jerusalem Vote

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has threatened to cut off American aid to any country that votes for a resolution at the UN condemning his decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. At a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Trump said he would be "watching those votes" in the General Assembly when it meets in emergency session on Thursday over the US Jerusalem decision that has come under widespread flak.

"They take hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars and even billions of dollars and then they vote against us," he said. "Well, we'll be watching those votes. Let them vote against us; we'll save a lot. We don't care."

"But this isn't like it used to be, where they could vote against you, and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars and nobody knows what they're doing."

Trump ended by asserting: "We're not going to be taken advantage of any longer."

Fewer Border Crossers Being Granted Refugee Status

OTTAWA: Fewer asylum seekers who entered Canada illegally this year are being granted refugee status.

As of the end of November, the Immigration and Refugee Board says 16,522 asylum claims were received from people who've crossed the border illegally and 2,198 of those have been completed.

Of those finalized cases, updated data show 54 per cent were accepted — down from 60 per cent when the board last reported the data. Only eight per cent of Haitians — who make up the majority of claims — have been accepted, down from 10 per cent.

Over 43,000 claims in total have been sent to the IRB so far this year, a number not seen since a high of 44,000 claims in 2001.

The board cautions it's premature to draw conclusions about border crossers based on the small number of claims finalized so far. Failed claimants do also have the right to appeal.

But just as the IRB was releasing the new statistics, Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen used social media to repeat a point the Liberals have been

increasingly making in recent weeks as the data has shown many border crossers' claims are being rejected.

"Canada's refugee system isn't for those seeking a better economic life; it provides protection to refugees who have a well-founded fear of persecution," Hussen posted.

Prior to a surge in asylum seekers arriving in Canada last summer, the approval rate for Haitians had been around 50 per cent and the approval rate for all refugee claims was about 63 per cent.

The border crosser situation is driven by an agreement between Canada and the U.S. that prohibits anyone crossing the border at official land entry points from claiming asylum. So far this year, 18,000 have been stopped entering Canada illegally — in 2016, only 2,500 people were apprehended.

Many are believed to be coming north due to changes in U.S. immigration policy, though the federal government has said some haven't spent much time in the U.S. and were just using that country as an entry point into Canada. A decision by the Trump

administration to yank protected status for thousands of Haitians doesn't appear to have prompted a new surge of asylum seekers at the Canada-U.S. border. Data published Tuesday by the federal government show the RCMP stopped 1,623 people in November, down from 1,890 in October.

The figures represent a marked drop from August, when the RCMP stopped over 5,000 people in Quebec alone as they crossed into Canada to seek asylum.

Many were believed to be propelled north by an impending change to U.S. immigration policy that would see the resumption of deportations to Haiti, following a pause instituted after the 2010 earthquake.

The U.S. formally announced in November that temporary protected status for Haitians would be lifted in 2019, but Canadian officials had expressed hope a new surge of asylum seekers wouldn't materialize.

Since the summer spike, Canadian officials embarked on a massive outreach effort in the U.S. to dispel myths about the Canadian asylum system and said those efforts were bearing fruit.

Vaughan Terminus Will Be Major York Region Hub

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• The Line 1 Extension/Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension (TYSSE) will add an estimated 36 million transit trips and eliminate 30 million car trips per year, helping to ease traffic congestion, improve air quality and fight climate change.

• More than 2,800 parking spots at three commuter lots along the new extension will make it even easier for commuters to get out of their cars and get to work and home to their families more quickly and efficiently.

• The province has provided \$974 million for this project through the Move Ontario Trust.

The City of Toronto is providing \$904 million, the federal government up to \$697 million and York Region \$604 million.

• The total cost of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension is about \$3.2 billion.

• The six new subway stations are Downsview Park, Finch West, York University, Pioneer Village, Highway 407 and Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.

• The subway's new terminus at Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is a major new transportation hub in York Region. It connects directly to the vivaNext rapidway on Highway 7 — part of an extensive rapid transit network

of dedicated bus lanes that York Region Transit is building with up to \$1.4 billion in funding from Ontario.

• Ontario and the City of Toronto are cutting costs for commuters in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Starting on January 7, 2018, adult, senior, youth and student TTC riders will pay a TTC fare of just \$1.50 when they use a PRESTO card to transfer to or from GO Transit or the Union Pearson Express.

• The Line 1 Extension/Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension is the largest subway expansion in the region in nearly 40 years.

Quotes: "The subway expansion will slash travel times for transit riders and ease road congestion for drivers." — Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

"Thousands of Vaughan residents and York University students now have a world-class rapid transit option to get them where they need to go faster and more efficiently." — Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation

"Beyond this subway extension, we have a transit plan that will make sure we get on with building SmartTrack, the Relief Line, the Scarborough Subway Extension and to expand the City's LRT network. More

transit is a good thing for our city, our province and our country." — John Tory, Mayor of Toronto

"This is a monumental occasion for 1.2 million people who call York Region home. This subway extension offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." — Wayne Emmerson, York Region Chairman and CEO.

"The subway will be the first time ever that the TTC subway system will cross a municipal border, linking Toronto and York University with York Region with fast and frequent rapid transit." — Josh Colle, Chair of the TTC.

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UTTAR-PRADESHIES
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Natural Gas Rates To Rise

TORONTO — Rates for natural gas customers in Ontario will be changing in the new year.

The Ontario Energy Board has released the new rates it has approved for Enbridge, EPCOR and Union Gas customers effective Jan. 1. Enbridge customers can expect to pay about \$58 more per year, factoring in new rates as well as the impact of a previous OEB decision and expiry of a credit on bills. Typical customers of EPCOR Natural Gas — which purchased the distribution system of Natural Resource Gas Ltd. this summer — can expect to pay about \$19.17 less per year.

Union Gas customers with average usage can all expect to pay less, though the amounts vary in different regions.

Customers in the south will pay \$28.02 less per year, in the north west customers' bills will decrease by about \$23.55 per year and customers in the north east will pay \$5.57 less per year.