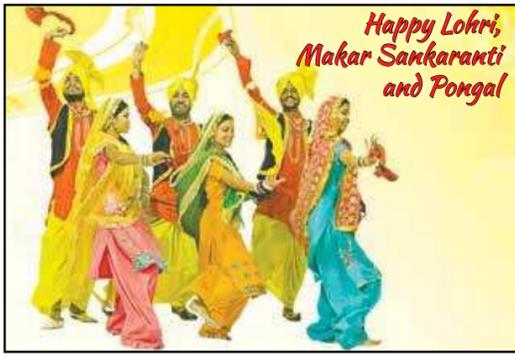




Kumbh Mela Begins In Prayagraj On Jan. 15, page 11



Happy Lokri, Makar Sankranti and Pongal



Dragon Ball Will Be A Spectacular Gala, page 13

'Push Factor' Behind Indian Rush To Canada

Report Paints Dismal Picture Of Sexual Violence, Honour Killings, Corruption & Religious Tension

CHANDIGARH: While the Indian government is seeking to project the country as a rising economic and political power, a report by a Canadian government agency has painted a dim picture of India and said that various socio-economic and even environmental factors are pushing more and more of its citizens to opt for immigration and seek refugee status in Canada.

The Refugee Claims Analysis Report (RCAR), recently compiled by the Intelligence and Analysis Section of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), which is in possession of IANS, has listed the "push factors" that are encouraging a multi-fold increase in immigration and refugee claimants from India into Canada.

Top factors listed in the report

are organised human trafficking, increasing religious tensions, violence against women and girls, honour killings, extensive poverty, widespread corruption and even dangerous levels of air pollution.

The report of the RCAR stated that 310,796 visas were issued to Indian nationals. It pointed out that in the first six months of 2018 (January to June), the number of



refugee claims (asylum seeking applications) shot to 1,805, surpassing the total figure of 1,487

claims made in the entire 2017.

The refugee claims made by *Continued on page 2*

Modi, Harper Talk Of India-Canada Ties

Former PM A Speaker At Delhi's Flagship Raisina Dialogue



Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper chats with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. - Picture: PMO's Office, New Delhi.

NEW DELHI: Former Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Tuesday during the course of which the two leaders discussed developments in India-Canada relations.

"The two leaders exchanged views on developments in India-Canada relations, main global trends and cooperation among democracies," Prime Minister Modi's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Harper is in New Delhi to attend this year's Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship annual geopolitical and geostrategic conference organised by the External Affairs Ministry in partnership with the high-powered Observer Research

Foundation (ORF) think tank.

The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.

The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics. Harper is one of the keynote speakers at the conference. The former Prime Minister has

made several such high-profile visits recently - after releasing his latest book "Right Here, Right Now". Harper presented a copy of the book to Prime Minister Modi.

It was in 2015 that Harper hosted Modi as the first sitting Indian prime minister to visit Canada in more than 40 years and receive a tumultuous welcome from thousands of India-Canadians at various events.

In a Twitter message after their Tuesday meeting, Harper called Modi "the most significant leader of India since Independence."

He also later met Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and then tweeted: From *Continued on page 5*

India Sets Up Job Quotas For Poor Upper Caste People

NEW DELHI: India's Parliament on Wednesday approved a bill providing a 10 per cent quota in government jobs for the poor members of upper castes who have been excluded from existing quotas for low-ranking castes.

The Congress party and other opposition parties supported the legislation, but criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government for getting it approved just months before the national elections, in an effort the opposition claimed was aimed at winning votes.

The Modi government surprised the opposition by unexpectedly moving the bill in the lower house of Parliament on Tuesday and getting it approved. The upper house adopted it by sitting late into night on Wednesday during the final day of the current parliamentary session. The bill now only needs the approval of India's president, a formality, to become law.

Rajya Sabha voted it late in the night after rejecting a demand for referring it to a select committee for detailed scrutiny.

The House passed the Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill, 2019 -- which was adopted by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday -- with 165 members in its favour and seven against it in a division amidst broad support from the Congress and other opposition parties despite their reservations over its constitutional validity and the timing in view of the approaching elections.

Earlier, the House rejected an amendment moved by DMK member Kanimozhi and CPI(M)'s

T.K. Rangarajan for referring the bill to a select committee for in-depth scrutiny, with 155 voting against it and 18 for in a House of 244. Several other opposition amendments were also negated. A constitutional amendment needs a special majority of more than half of the House present and two-thirds of those present voting in favour of it.

The AIADMK, which is friendly with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), staged a walkout opposing the Bill with its member A. Navaneethakrishnan saying it violated the basic structure of the Constitution.

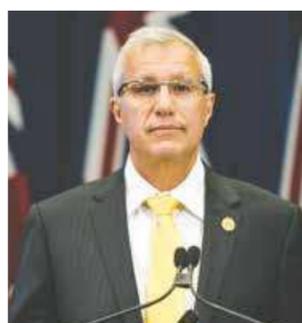
Rejecting the opposition criticism that the bill was brought late in the government's tenure with an eye on upper caste votes in the coming Lok Sabha elections, So-

Continued on page 2

Ontario Seeks Public Input On Auto Insurance

TORONTO: The Ontario Government, working for the people, is inviting drivers and consumers to share their views on how to lower the province's auto insurance rates as part of its commitment to making life more affordable.

"The previous government's failed system of stretch goals on auto insurance is clearly broken. Auto insurance rates in Ontario are among the highest in the country, and action is needed," said Vic Fedeli, (pictured here) Minister of Finance. "We want to hear directly from you on how to



improve the system."

Consumers and businesses are invited to share their views by visiting <https://www.ontario.ca/form/survey-making-auto-insurance-more-accessible-and-affordable-ontario> and by providing input no later than February 15, 2019.

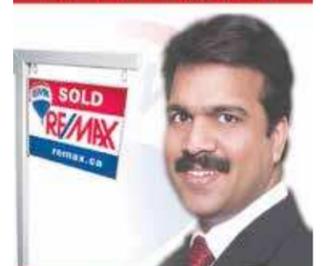
The Putting Drivers First consultation will coincide with a review of Ontario's auto insurance rate regulation system, jointly conducted by the Ministry of Finance and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario, as mentioned in the 2018 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. The review will examine practices in other jurisdictions and identify opportunities

to achieve greater efficiencies and introduce more competition in the system. The consultation represents the latest step to get auto insurance costs under control in Ontario. In addition to meeting with auto insurance stakeholders to get ideas on ways to modernize the system by cutting red tape, Ontario is:

- Working with the Member of Provincial Parliament for Milton, Parm Gill, on his proposed legislation that, if passed, would eliminate the unfair practice of discriminating against

Continued on page 3

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