

Immigrants will make India a key market for Canada, expert says

BY PETER O'NEIL

VANCOUVER SUN

OTTAWA — India's likely emergence as Canada's top source of immigrants, replacing China, is no surprise and will help Canada tap into India's booming economic growth, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada said Wednesday.

"India is one of the key emerging markets in the Asia-Pacific," said senior researcher Kenny Zhang, noting that studies have proven that countries with large immigrant populations have stronger trading relationships with the key immigrant source countries.

Zhang said the emerging trend, uncovered this week by immigration lawyer Richard Kurland through an Access to Information Act request, was in part forecast in a 2003 report by the foundation, a Vancouver-based think-tank funded by the federal government.

That study noted that China's aging population, caused by the one-child policy, will result in fewer applicants. It also noted 2002 changes in Canada's standards, putting a greater emphasis on English-language proficiency, which is an impediment even for many highly-educated Chinese.

Zhang said one problem with India's emergence is that fewer applicants from that country are skilled workers and a disproportionate number are family-class members who are being united with relatives in Canada.

"The total number of Indian immigrants may surpass China sooner or later," he said.

"That is mainly attributed to the large proportion of family-class immigrants from India as indicated in the recent CIC [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] statistics."

Zhang said the Indo-Canadian community will likely get even more political clout in Canada if the trend isn't altered by future government policy changes.

"It is already a powerful com-

China remains Canada's largest source country

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munity in Canada — look at the number of [Indo-Canadian] MPs in Parliament,” he said.

China is still the largest source country with 44,075 permanent residents coming from there in 2005, compared to 33,146 from second-place India. The Philippines was a distant third at 17,525.

But CIC documents obtained by Kurland showed that the backlog of applicants from China plunged to 52,578 by June 30 from 86,514 on Nov. 26, 2004.

“This appears to be a reversal of a longer-term trend of increasing immigration from China,” Kurland

wrote in the October issue of *Lexbase*, a publication devoted to immigration issues.

“China’s interest in Canada as a place to live is on the decline.”

The New Delhi inventory, he noted in *Lexbase*, went to 132,693 in June from 88,383 in July 2004. He also noted that London, England showed a sharp increase to 71,262 in June from 42,823 in July 2004.

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