**Canada, US amend decades-old pact after surge in irregular asylum seekers**

Canada and the United States on Friday changed a two-decade-old refugee agreement as part of their attempts to reduce the record influx of asylum seekers entering Canada via unofficial border crossings, reports Reuters.

The deal was the news highlight of US President Joe Biden's first visit to Canada as president and could provide some relief to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who is under pressure from political opponents to take action.

The Safe Third Country Agreement, signed in 2002 and which came into effect in 2004, originally meant asylum seekers crossing into either Canada or the United States at formal border crossings were turned back and told to apply for asylum in the first "safe" country they arrived in.

Now it applies to the length of the 6,416-km land border. Under the revised pact, anyone who crosses into either country anywhere along the land border and who applies for asylum within 14 days will be turned back.

It comes into effect at midnight on Saturday. A Canadian government source not authorised to speak on the record said there would be increased police patrols near select unofficial crossings but no major assigning of enforcement resources yet.

"Both of our countries believe in fair and safe, fair and orderly migration, refugee protection and border security. This is why we will now apply the Safe Third Country Agreement

between official points of entry," Trudeau told reporters.