

Transformational growth prime focus of India-UK FTA: Goyal

LONDON, June 26 (PTI)

TRANSFORMATIONAL growth should be the prime focus of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told business leaders at a plenary session in London on Friday.

The Minister is in the UK on a three-day visit to review the preparedness of both countries for the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which comes into force on July 15.

During an interactive event organised by the High Commission of India in London, Goyal heard from members of a Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry-led delegation on

the sector-wide opportunities on offer from CETA, such as advanced manufacturing, consumer goods, renewable energy, healthcare and tourism.

"Collaborations, cooperations, partnerships will be, in my humble opinion, the right way to come in quickly for both British businesses and Indian businesses," Goyal told the gathering. It will wedge your way faster; not compulsory, of course, your choice. If you are confident, you can do it on your own, that's great. But that could also be one pathway which will make your journey faster.



"International trade normally grows at 4 to 6 or 5 per cent. If that is the level of ambition that we will keep as a nation, it will be completely a betrayal of the

trust that the world has on us today... The world's trust that India can deliver, that India must deliver," he said.

On the topic of the Double Contribution Convention (DCC), which also takes effect alongside the CETA next month, the Minister informed businesses that it will apply to temporary workers in either country for a period of five years. "Indians who

come to work here on temporary work permits up to five years can save 25 per cent straight into their savings. (Currently) 12.5 per cent that the employee used to pay, 12.5 per cent that the company used to pay was otherwise just going lost. It can now be paid into your Provident Fund account in India, and of course it earns 8.25 per cent interest tax free; not a bad return on sales and also provides for your family's social security," he said.

He also reiterated that the CETA is not just about tariffs and rules of origin but a far more comprehensive opportunity within the bilateral trading partnership, which is estimated to be around 48-billion-pounds annually.

India launches 'Op Amistad' to aid quake-hit Venezuela

NEW DELHI, June 26 (PTI)

UNDER the 'Operation Amistad', launched by India to offer humanitarian assistance to quake-hit Venezuela, two IAF C-17 Globemaster aircraft carrying relief supplies and a 41-member rescue team departed on Friday to assist the ongoing relief and rescue efforts in that country.

"India stands shoulder to shoulder with the Government and the people of Venezuela during this difficult period," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

In a gesture of solidarity with the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, India has launched Operation Amistad, a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) mission, in response to the devastating earthquake that has caused extensive loss of life, injuries and widespread destruction.

"Operation Amistad underway! Two @IAF_MCC C17s took-off today for Venezuela with urgent assistance to support their post-earthquake relief efforts. The assis-



Relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment and Field Hospital Unit among other items are being dispatched on Friday as assistance to Venezuela from India in the aftermath of the catastrophic earthquakes.

(PTI)

tance contains an Indian Army @adgpi Field Hospital Unit and over 35 tonnes of relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment, including two BHISHM cubes. India is committed to supporting the Government and people of Venezuela in this difficult time," External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar said in a post on X.

The MEA said in its statement on Friday that as part of the operation, two C-17 aircraft of the Indian Air Force departed for Venezuela on June 26 morning, carrying humanitarian relief supplies and a 41-member rescue team to assist the ongoing relief

and rescue efforts.

"The relief consignment included a self-reliant Indian medical task force, an Indian Army Field Hospital unit with HADR pallets and medicines, 30 tonnes of relief supplies, six tonnes of medicines and medical equipment and two BHISHM cube portable hospitals," it said.

The 41-member team, comprising experienced rescue personnel and medical professionals, will work closely with the Venezuelan authorities in search and rescue operations, emergency medical care and humanitarian relief efforts in the affected areas. "India stands shoulder to shoulder with the Government and the people of Venezuela during this difficult period. The Government of India extends its heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured. India will remain in close coordination with the Government of Venezuela and stands ready to provide further assistance as may be required," it said.

China backs Desh's new Government: Xi tells PM Rahman

BEIJING, June 26 (PTI)

CHINESE President Xi Jinping on Friday met the visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and offered Beijing's support for the new Government in Dhaka.

On the final day of his five-day visit, Rahman met Xi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Xi told Rahman that China supports Bangladesh's new government in its smooth administration and stands ready to carry out high-quality Belt and Road cooperation with Dhaka.

Xi said China is willing to map out key cooperation with Bangladesh and tap into the potential for collaboration in green and low-carbon development, digital economy, information technology, artificial intelligence and other fields, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.

Before meeting Xi, Rahman met Zhao Leji, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China and discussed issues related to bilateral ties.

On Thursday, Rahman held talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, after which they signed 13 agreements.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen cooperation on the management of the Teesta and other rivers, after a separate meeting, earlier on Thursday, between Rahman and Chinese Water Resources Minister Li Guoying.

Army chief calls on Ladakh LG to discuss military ties

LEH/JAMMU, June 26 (PTI)

CHIEF of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi on Friday called on Ladakh LG Vinai Kumar Saxena and discussed strengthening civil-military cooperation, enhancing coordination between the administration and the armed forces, and advancing collective efforts for peace, stability and development in the Union Territory.

The meeting was held at Lok Niwas in Leh, where the two also deliberated on the re-employment of Agniveers in the Union Territory administration, besides reviewing issues related to closer coordination between the civil administration and the armed forces, officials said. Sharing details of the meeting on X, the LG said, "Chief of Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, called on today at Lok Niwas, Leh."

'Op Sindoor': Identities of 6 soldiers who made SUPREME SACRIFICE made public

NEW DELHI, June 26 (IANS)

THE identities of the six fallen soldiers who made their supreme sacrifice for the nation during 'Operation Sindoor' have been made public for the first time.

The six bravehearts of the Indian Armed Forces, who laid down their lives during 'Operation Sindoor' – India's military response to the Pahalgam massacre, against Pakistan in May last year, were immortalised at the National War Memorial. The names of these martyred soldiers have been inscribed at the National War Memorial in the national Capital.

Their names were engraved on the granite bricks at the memorial. They include five soldiers from the Indian Army and one sergeant from the Indian Air Force. Two of the martyrs have also been honoured by the



6 soldiers martyred during 'Op Sindoor' immortalised at National War Memorial. The six brave soldiers are Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar, Agniveer Murali Naik, Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh, and IAF Sergeant Surendra Kumar.

Government for their bravery. They are Rifleman Sunil Kumar, who was awarded Vir Chakra posthumously while Sergeant Surendra Kumar was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal posthumously.

The six brave soldiers martyred in 'Operation Sindoor' include Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar, Agniveer Murali Naik, Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh, and Indian Air Force Sergeant Surendra Kumar. Five of these personnel belonged to the Indian Army, while one belonged to the Indian Air Force. Their names were inscribed at the National War Memorial to ensure that their supreme sacrifice remains alive in the nation's memory forever.

The names of these heroes of 'Operation Sindoor' were
(Contd on page 5)

India expected to grow 6.6-6.8 pc in FY27, says EY

NEW DELHI, June 26 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy is expected to grow at 6.6-6.8 per cent in the current fiscal, and a gradual normalisation of global energy markets is expected to ease supply-side pressures, improve cost conditions, and support growth and inflation outcomes during FY27, EY Economy Watch said on Friday.

Considering the recent geopolitical developments, if global crude prices settle at relatively lower levels and shipments through the Strait of Hormuz normalise, the positive momentum of India's growth prospects is likely to be restored, the report said.

"We expect, in FY27, real GDP growth at 6.6-6.8 per cent, CPI inflation at 4.5 per cent,
(Contd on page 5)

Japan PM Sanae Takaichi to visit India next week

NEW DELHI, June 26 (PTI)

JAPANESE Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will undertake a three-day visit to



India next week to explore ways to expand bilateral ties in a range of areas including trade,

investment and defence.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Takaichi will be on an official visit to New Delhi from July 1 to 3 for the 16th India-Japan annual summit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

“The Summit will provide an opportunity for both sides to review and strengthen the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation as well as exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest,” it said.

It would be the first official visit of Takaichi to India. This visit follows Modi’s visit to Tokyo in August 2025 for the 15th India-Japan annual summit and reflects the shared commitment of the two countries to further enhance India-Japan Special Strategic and Global partnership, the MEA said in a statement.

'Hormuz vessel traffic rebounds to 57 pc of pre-war levels'

NEW DELHI, June 26 (IANS)

A NEW daily record of 78 vessel transits after the US-Iran war has been recorded through the Strait of Hormuz, representing a recovery to about 57 per cent of pre-war daily volumes, a report said on Friday.

The recovery in transits comes after Oman and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) announced a new safe corridor for transits close to the Omani coast, the report from S&P Global said. Over 40 per cent of the day's transits—33 vessels—used this route, and 25 of them outbound,

while other ships continued to transit nearer Iran's territorial waters and eight vessels were detected operating dark during passage.

"While most outbound vessels had been trapped inside the Gulf since the onset of hostilities, a subset of these movements involved ships that entered more recently and are now exiting — pointing to early signs of normalisation and a gradual re-establishment of freedom of navigation patterns," the report added. Total ship movements included 22 oil and chemical tankers, 21 bulk carriers, 12 car-

go ships, seven container ships, four LNG tankers and two LNG tankers. Inbound movements comprised 37 per cent of traffic, with 41 per cent of these ships linked to Iran.

UN AGENCY PAUSES EVACUATION OF SHIPS THROUGH STRAIT OF HORMUZ AFTER ATTACK ON VESSEL: A UNITED Nations agency paused the evacuation of ships through the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday after the British military said a vessel was hit by a projectile off the coast of Oman following the passage of several tankers that used a route backed by the UN.

The head of the International Maritime Organisation said the plan to move stranded ships out of the Persian Gulf through the strait will be on hold until the agency can confirm safety guarantees for the ships on the evacuation list and in the region.

The report of a strike came hours after Iran threatened vessels to stop using the route through the strait without Tehran's permission. The vessel that was attacked was not part of the evacuation effort, said Arsenio Dominguez, the UN agency's secretary-general.