

Historic day for India-UK relations: PM Modi on free trade deal

PM MEETS KEIR STARMER AHEAD OF KEY FTA DEAL SIGNING
LONDON, JULY 24

India and the UK on Thursday inked a landmark free trade pact that will increase market access, cut tariffs on British whisky and cars among other items and double bilateral trade by 2030 as the two strategic partners vowed to chart a new growth path amid growing global concerns over Washington's trade policies.

Today is a historic day in India-UK relations, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who witnessed the signing of the trade pact along with his British counterpart Keir Starmer.

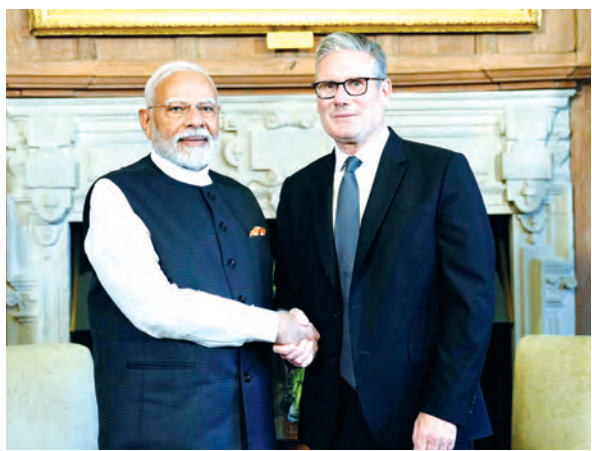
After many years of hard work, a comprehensive economic and trade agreement has been inked between India and the UK, he noted, with Starmer by his side at Chequers, the country residence of the British PM.

The two leaders held a tete-a-tete before holding serious talks.

The deal is expected to benefit 99 per cent Indian exports from tariff.

In his remarks, Starmer said it is the biggest and economically most significant trade deal that the UK has signed since leaving the European Union.

In his media statement, Modi thanked the UK for its strong condemnation



India-UK FTA not just economic partnership but blueprint for shared prosperity: PM

Terming the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the UK as "historic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that the pact is not just economic partnership but also a blueprint for shared prosperity. He stated that India and the UK have also reached a consensus on double contribution convention. Making a press statement alongside his UK counterpart Keir Starmer, PM Modi said, "Today is a historic day in our relations. I am happy that after many years of hard work, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement has been concluded between the two countries. This Agreement does not merely pave way for economic partnership but is also a blueprint for our shared prosperity."

Indian diaspora in London greet PM Modi with chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram' on historic visit to UK

The Indian community in London welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a grand reception as he arrived in UK on Wednesday evening for a historic two-day visit that cen-

of the Pahalgam terror attack and said both sides

Swing and miss at times, but we play with straight bat: Modi on India-UK ties after FTA

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday drew a cricket analogy to describe the deepening relationship between India and the UK, following the signing of a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries.

In a joint press conference with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Modi said, "For both India and the UK, cricket is not just a game but a passion—and also a great metaphor for our partnership." "There may be a swing and a miss at times, but we always play with a straight bat! We are committed to building a high-scoring, solid partnership," he added, shortly after the FTA was officially signed. PTI

welcoming PM Modi with chants of 'Modi, Modi', 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram' and danced in traditional outfits as Prime Minister Modi arrived at his hotel in London.

dards in the fight against terrorism." PTI

Kejriwal, CM Mann hold Jansabha in Dediapada against arrest of MLA Chaitar Vasava

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
New Delhi, July 24

From Dediapada, Gujarat the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) tore into the BJP over the arrest of MLA Chaitar Vasava, calling it a cover-up after massive corruption was exposed. AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal called out the BJP for looting public funds and silencing tribal voices through state repression. Emphasising AAP as the real alternative, he called for a people-led mobilisation against 30 years of BJP misrule.

With local polls ahead, the AAP vowed to field common citizens and turn Gujarat's anger into action. During this, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, AAP Gujarat Prabhari Gopal Rai, Gujarat State President Isudan Gadhvi and MLAs Gopal Italia and Hemant Khav were also present..

Addressing the Jansabha in Gujarat, AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal pointed to the pain and neglect of tribal communities, stating, "You all have left your work and come here in such a massive gathering because the BJP government has, for several years, continuously exploited and oppressed the tribal (Adivasi) community. They have snatched away your rights. The entire tribal community today is deeply angry with the BJP. Over the years, you gave your votes to BJP leaders, you also gave votes to Congress leaders — but not one of them raised your voice."



Recalling the emergence of a new Adivasi voice, he continued, "In 2022, three years ago, elections were held. From Dediapada, a young tribal leader Chaitar Vasava stood for election. He is an educated young man, your son, a brother from your own community. A well-educated, honest individual who stepped forward to serve society. You gave him a massive mandate and sent him to the Assembly as your MLA."

Meanwhile, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann stated,

The police deleted CCTV footage and filed false cases. BJP has done this before — filing fake cases and jailing AAP leaders. But their paperwork will run out before our people ever do."

Speaking on Gujarat's political landscape, Bhagwant Mann said, "The BJP has been in power in Gujarat for 30 years. The public may remain silent for 30 years, but when it wakes up, it settles 30 years of scores in just 30 minutes. The time for accountability has come. Congress and BJP are hand in glove — there was no real opposition in Gujarat. But AAP has opened a third path through the 'jhadu' button, one that will clean up this corrupt system."

Appealing to the people, he said, "Whether it's rain or sunshine, only unity can shake the BJP's walls. AAP talks about education, healthcare, electricity, water, and employment — not hatred or conflict."

Showcasing AAP's achievements, Bhagwant Mann stated, "In Punjab, 55,000 government jobs were given in three years — without bribes or recommendations. Appointment letters reach homes based on merit, with the message: come, your chair awaits you. Meanwhile, in Gujarat, recruitment exam papers — whether for collectors or other top positions — are leaked every year. Adivasi children wake up at 3 a.m. and study in the fields, but paper leaks shatter their dreams. This is the result of a broken and corrupt system."

7/11 BLASTS

SC stays Bombay HC verdict acquitting all accused, says they need not return to jail

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the Bombay High Court verdict acquitting all 12 accused in the 2006 Mumbai train bomb blasts case but said

they need not return to jail. The top court further directed the Bombay High Court judgement not to be treated as a precedent. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh issued notice to all

the accused in the case and sought their responses on the appeal filed by the state government. "We have been informed that all the respondents have been released and there is no question of

bringing them back to the prison. However, taking note of the submission made by the solicitor general on the question of law, we are inclined to hold that the impugned judgment shall not be treated as a

precedent. To that extent, there shall be a stay of the impugned judgment," the bench said. During a brief hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Maharashtra government, sought a stay on the high court judgment saying it would affect pending trials under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). PTI

50 companies, 35 locations: ED raids Anil Ambani's Reliance Group in ₹3,000 cr scam

MUMBAI, JULY 24

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted multiple raids as part of an alleged Rs 3,000 crore worth bank loan fraud linked money laundering case against the companies of Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani, official sources said.

Some more bank loans taken by these companies apart from certain alleged undisclosed foreign assets are under the scanner of the agency. More than 35 premises in Mumbai belonging to 50 companies and 25 people are being searched under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The investigation is being carried out by a Delhi-based investigation unit of the ED. ED sources said



they are primarily probing allegations of illegal loan diversion of around Rs 3,000 crore, given by the Yes Bank to the group companies of Ambani between 2017 and 2019. Two group companies, Reliance Power and Reliance Infrastructure, said in separate but identical regulatory filings that the ED action has had "absolutely no impact" on their business operations, financial performance, shareholders, employees, or any other stakeholders. "The media reports ap-

pear to pertain to allegations concerning transactions of Reliance Communications Limited (RCOM) or Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) which are over 10 years old," the companies said. The ED, the sources said, has found that just before the loan was granted, Yes Bank promoters "received" money in their concerns. The federal probe agency is investigating this nexus of "bribe" and the loan.

Sources said the ED is also probing allegations of "gross violations" in Yes Bank loan approvals to Anil Ambani Group companies, including charges like back-dated credit approval memorandums, investments proposed without any due diligence/credit analysis in violation of banks credit policy, the sources said. PTI

Russian plane crashes in Amur, kills all 49 on board

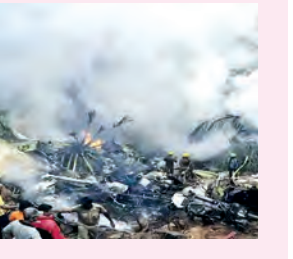
MOSCOW, JULY 24

A Russian An-24 aircraft carrying 49 people, including five children and six crew members, crashed in the mountainous Amur region on Thursday, killing all on board, according to local media reports.

The ill-fated flight, operated by the Siberia-based Angara Airlines, had departed from Blagoveshchensk and was en route to Tynda, near the Russia-China border, when it lost contact with air traffic controllers shortly before its scheduled landing.

According to Russia's state news agency TASS, the aircraft reportedly caught fire mid-air and vanished from radar.

Rescue helicopters later located the burn-



ing wreckage on a remote mountainside, approximately 16 kilometres from Tynda.

Officials from the Amur Centre for Civil Defence and Fire Safety confirmed that "no survivors were found when a Mi-8 search helicopter flew over the crash site."

"The aircraft caught fire upon crashing," said a spokesperson. "Rescue operations have been hampered by the extremely difficult terrain, as the crash site lies on a steep, inaccessible slope." PTI

Renukaswamy murder: HC bail order perverse use of discretionary powers, says SC

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

The Supreme Court on Thursday called the Karnataka High Court's decision to grant bail to Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and six others in the Renukaswamy murder case a "perverse exercise" of discretionary power.

A bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan went on to re-

serve the verdict on Karnataka government's appeal against the December 13, 2024 order of the high court granting bail to the actor and co-accused. The top court heard submissions of senior advocates Siddhath Luthra, appearing for the state government, and Siddharth Dave and others, representing the accused in the case.

It took on records the written note filed by the

state and a few others while asking the counsel for remaining accused persons to file short notes within a week.

Questioning the grant of the reprieve, Justice Pardiwala asked defence counsel by saying, "Don't you think that the high court has dictated an order of acquittal of seven accused while deciding bail petitions?" PTI

Oppn ruckus halts Lok Sabha till Friday, Goa ST representation bill left undiscussed

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

The Lok Sabha witnessed yet another stormy session on Thursday as opposition members (MPs) disrupted proceedings with slogans and placards, forcing multiple adjournments and ultimately halting legislative business for the day.

As TDP leader Krishna Prasad Tenneti took the Chair, opposition members immediately began shouting slogans, demanding a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar and other pressing issues. The uproar drowned out scheduled business, including the presentation of party committee reports by BJP

Aviation watchdog issues 4 show-cause notices to Air India for various violations

MUMBAI, JULY 24

Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued four show-cause notices to Air India for various violations related to cabin crew rest and duty norms, cabin crew training rules and operational procedures, a month after the airline made certain voluntary disclosures to the watchdog, sources said on Thursday. The show-cause notices

were issued on July 23 on the basis of voluntary disclosures made by the airline to the DGCA on June 20 and 21, sources told PTI.

"We acknowledge receipt of these notices from the regulator related to certain voluntary disclosures that were made over the last one year by Air India. We will respond to the notices within the stipulated period. We remain committed to the safety of our crew and passengers," an Air India spokesperson said in a statement. PTI

In a significant move to strengthen entrepreneurship support in Punjab, TIE Chandigarh formally inaugurated its Satellite Office in Ludhiana, marking a new chapter in fostering innovation, mentorship, and global opportunities for local entrepreneurs. The inauguration ceremony was graced by Murali Bukaputnam, Chair of the TIE Global

DC inaugurates ₹25.5 lakh academic block at Sunet Govt Primary Smart School

INDERJIT SINGH
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, July 24

Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Jain on Thursday inaugurated a new academic block at Government Primary Smart School, Sunet, marking a significant step toward enhancing educational infrastructure in the district.

The state-of-the-art block, constructed at a cost of Rs 25.5 lakh, was funded by the Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust. The inauguration ceremony was attended by prominent dignitaries, including President of Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust and Vice-Chairman of Bharti Enterprises Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Vice-President Sunil Gupta, General Secretary Bipin Gupta, and other notable members of the Trust and local administration.

In his address, Deputy Commissioner Jain expressed heartfelt gratitude to Rakesh Bharti Mittal and the Nehru Sidhant Kender



Trust for their generous contribution to the school. He emphasized that the new academic block, equipped with modern facilities, will empower students to access smart and innovative education, enabling them to compete with their peers from private institutions.

“This initiative is a crucial step in bridging the gap between government and private school education, ensuring that our students have access to quality learning environments,” Jain stated. He also highlighted the district administration’s commitment to further improving educational infrastructure.

“Our goal is to create an environment where students can thrive and develop the skills needed to succeed in a competitive world,” Jain stated.

Rakesh Bharti Mittal, addressing the gathering, reaffirmed the Trust’s dedication to educational development and announced that the Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust has adopted Government Primary Smart School, Sunet, and will provide fully equipped smart classrooms to enhance the learning experience. He also praised the collaborative efforts of the Trust, the district administration in making this project a reality.

Langar committees, social organisations must cooperate for smooth Mata Chintpurni Mela: MLA Jimpa

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Hoshiarpur, July 24

Ahead of the Mata Chintpurni Mela, which begins later this month, MLA Bram Shankar Jimpa convened a crucial coordination meeting with administrative officials, langar committees, and representatives of social organizations at the District Administrative Complex. The meeting aimed to ensure seamless arrangements for the large influx of devotees expected at the annual religious fair.

The MLA was joined by Deputy Commissioner Aashika Jain, SSP Sandeep Kumar Malik, and Mayor Surinder Kumar, among other senior officials.

Addressing the gathering, Jimpa emphasized that the successful conduct of the mela depends on close collaboration between the district administration and community-led langar committees and organizations. “Without their cooperation, managing the event smoothly would be a difficult task,” he stated.



He praised the administration’s ongoing efforts to promote a plastic-free environment, particularly by encouraging langars to stop using single-use plastics. To support this initiative, the administration in coordination with the Municipal Corporation and the Pollution Control Board will distribute ₹5 lakh worth of eco-friendly plates, glasses, and spoons to langar committees that may still be unknowingly using plastic.

Jimpa urged all langar organizers to: Avoid using single-use plastic, Maintain proper cleanliness, Refrain from serving langar on roadsides to prevent traffic disruption.

He also instructed the PWD and Municipal Corporation to immediately repair

potholes on roads leading to Mata Chintpurni to ensure smooth and safe travel for devotees.

Deputy Commissioner Aashika Jain requested langar committees to submit formal applications to the SDM office for permissions regarding langar setup and loudspeaker usage. This, she said, would allow the administration to maintain clear communication and better manage any traffic or emergency issues.

She also advised devotees to avoid using heavy goods vehicles, which can cause traffic congestion and safety concerns. SSP Sandeep Kumar Malik called for full cooperation between langar committees and the police.

July 31 last day to pay pending property tax without interest and penalty



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, July 24

With July 31, 2025 last day to submit the pending property tax without any interest and penalty, Municipal Corporation (MC) Commissioner Aaditya Dachalwal has appealed the residents to avail the benefits of the One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme and submit the pending property tax by July 31.

MC Commissioner Dachalwal held a meeting with the Zonal Commissioners, Zonal Superintendents among other officials at MC Zone D office in Sarabha Nagar on Thursday and directed them to expedite the recovery of dues from the residents. The officials have also been directed to tighten the noose around defaulters.

MC Additional Commissioner Paramdeep Singh, Assistant Commissioner (UT) Dr Pragati Rani, Zonal Commissioner (Zone A) Abhishek Sharma, Zonal Commissioner (Zone B) Neeraj Jain, Zonal Commissioner (Zone C) Gurpal Singh, Zonal Commissioner (Zone D) Jasdev Singh Sekhon among other officials were present in the meeting.

Similar directions have also been issued to the officials of operations and maintenance (O&M) cell for recovery of water/sew-

MC Commissioner Dachalwal ordered the concerned officials that camps should also be organised in the city under the OTS scheme so that the residents should get the maximum benefit of the scheme.

er bills from the residents.

The officials stated that the property tax has to be paid on a self assessment basis every year. If the property owner fails to pay the property tax, a 20 percent penalty and 18 percent annual interest on the pending amount is charged by the civic body.

Under this OTS policy, the residents can now submit the pending tax by July 31, 2025 without any penalty or interest. The pending tax can be submitted at the suvidha kendras situated in the zonal offices of the civic body.

MC Commissioner Dachalwal ordered the concerned officials that camps should also be organised in the city under the OTS scheme so that the residents should get the maximum benefit of the scheme. Further bulk messages should also be sent to the residents on their mobile phones.

Railway sets up first-ever Joint Grievance Redressal Camp



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, July 24

In a unique and commendable initiative under the effective and visionary tutelage of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Sanjay Sahu, the Firozpur Division of Northern Railway organised its first-ever Joint Grievance Redressal Camp today at the IOW Office.

The camp was aimed at addressing issues related to the maintenance of railway colonies and staff quarters, providing employees and their families a platform to voice their concerns directly. Officials and supervisors from the Engineering, Electrical, and Medical departments were present to personally hear the grievances and also record them in writing for timely redressal on a priority basis.

The main objective of the camp was to provide a one-stop solution to

Electrical, and Medical departments were present to personally hear the grievances and also record them in writing for timely redressal on a priority basis.

staff-related issues across departments, eliminating the need for employees to visit multiple offices for resolution.

Continuing this initiative, similar grievance redressal camps were organised at IOW offices in Amritsar today and next in Ludhiana on July 28, and Jalandhar City on July 29.

This step not only reflects the administration’s responsiveness and commitment but also highlights Northern Railway’s humane approach towards the well-being of its employees.

Ferozepur’s 35 rural women placed in jobs after training under DDU-GKY scheme

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, July 24

In a significant step towards empowering rural women with skills and employment, 35 female candidates trained under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) have secured jobs at the Flipkart Warehouse in

Farrukhnagar, District Gurugram, Haryana. Dr. Nidhi Kumud shared this information, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development), Ferozepur. These candidates received skill training for the role of Warehouse Associates through Swami Pragyand Educational and Welfare Society. After completing the training,

they were sent to Gurugram for placement. A farewell and felicitation ceremony was held on the occasion, during which Dr. Nidhi Kumud and Harjinder Singh, District Development and Panchayat Officer, Ferozepur, extended their best wishes for the candidates’ bright future.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Nidhi Kumud

emphasised that women’s participation in the workforce is crucial for their economic self-reliance. She appreciated the initiative, calling it a meaningful effort for the bright future of rural girls.

Harjinder Singh also encouraged the candidates to work with dedication and become role models in their villages.

BJP will contest elections alone in Punjab in 2027, says Ashwani Sharma

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, July 24

The BJP will contest the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections on its own, newly appointed BJP Working State President Ashwani Sharma announced. He stated that ever since being entrusted with this new responsibility by the party high command, he has been touring Punjab and making tireless efforts to strengthen the party across the state.

On his arrival in Ludhiana, Ashwani Sharma received a warm welcome from BJP leaders and workers at Guru Nanak Dev Bhawan,



under the leadership of District BJP President Rajneesh Dhiman.

Addressing the media at the event, Sharma noted that the BJP had contested all seats independently in both the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections and the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections. He claimed that BJP

workers are full of enthusiasm and are determined to make the lotus bloom in Punjab.

Commenting on the AAP government’s campaign against drugs, Sharma questioned how a Chief Minister who “remains intoxicated all day” could be expected to make Punjab drug-free.

SDMs visit Mand area villages to review flood control measures; situation under control

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Phagwara, July 24

Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Kapurthala, Amit Kumar Panchal, Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) from Bholath, Kapurthala, and Sultanpur Lodhi visited several Mand area villages on Wednesday to assess flood preparedness and interact with local residents.

Deputy Commissioner Panchal stated that SDMs have been instructed to make regular visits to areas vulnerable to flooding during the monsoon season and maintain close contact with the public to ensure timely response and continuous monitoring of the situation.

It is noteworthy that just days earlier, DC Panchal himself visited key flood-prone areas of Bholath, Dhilwan, and Sultanpur Lodhi, including the Dhus-

si Bandh in Kapurthala district. During his visit, he reviewed the progress of stone stud installation and other precautionary measures being implemented to counter potential flooding.

Additionally, the Drainage Department has been tasked with providing timely updates on water releases from dams. A District-Level Control Room has been set up to coordinate efforts and respond to public inquiries. Citizens can contact the control room at 01822-231990 for any flood-related information or assistance.

Officials from the Drainage Department are also conducting continuous patrols along the Dhussi Bandh, and sand-filled bags have been pre-positioned at sensitive locations to be deployed in case of an emergency.

Two women sentenced to 12 years RI for drug smuggling

K.G. SHARMA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, July 24

The Special Court of Additional Sessions Judge Harvinder Singh has sentenced two women Keron Bala alias Minna, a resident of Sant Nagar, Chuaharpur Road, Ludhiana, and Soman Bala, a resident of Durgapuri, Haibowal to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment under Section 21 of the NDPS Act for drug smuggling.

In addition to the sentence, the court also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh each.

In default of payment, both convicts will undergo an additional one year of rigorous imprisonment.

‘Ocean of Divine Wisdom: Aad Guru Granth Sahib’ released at Gurdwara Sacha Marg, Seattle

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Seattle/Ludhiana, July 23

The book “Ocean of Divine Wisdom: Aad Guru Granth Sahib” was ceremoniously released at Gurdwara Sahib Sacha Marg in Seattle (USA) by esteemed scholar Dr Harchand Singh and Gurdwara Committee President Harshinder Singh Sandhu.

The event was graced by the presence of Krishan Kumar Bawa, President of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur International Foundation; Daljit Singh Hisawal, Vice President and Trustee of Rakba Bhavan (International Founda-



tion); social worker Mata Pushpa Rani, widely recognized for her service to the underprivileged; Mahinder Mahi; noted author Balihar Singh; and Avtar Singh Grewal Dhandra, General Secretary of the Foundation. The ceremony echoed with slogans and spiritual fervor, marking the occasion with deep reverence and unity. Bawa expressed gratitude for the collective support.

While addressing the

gathering, Dr. Harchand Singh and Sandhu highlighted that the book, based on the teachings of the Gurus and other banikars whose hymns are included in the holy scripture, was developed under the patronage of the Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Charitable Trust, Rakba (Ludhiana). The book features scholarly insights by Dr. Anurag Singh and artistic illustrations by renowned photo-artist R.M. Singh.

Under Jeevanjot 2.0, DCPU inspects to prevent child begging

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, July 24

As part of the ongoing Project Jeevanjot 2.0, launched by the Punjab Government to safeguard children’s rights, the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) Ferozepur, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Deepshikha Sharma and District Program Officer Richika Nanda, conducted a joint checking operation in collaboration with the Ferozepur Cantonment Police.

The inspection covered key locations including the railway station, bus stand, Sheethla Mata Mandir, and Cantt Bazaar. During the operation, no children were found begging at these sites. The team in-

cluded Child Protection Officer Seema Rani, Ashish Sharma, Amanjot, Gurmeet Singh, Gagandeep Singh, and police personnel Ramjanpreet Singh and Harjeet Singh.

Besides, the team inspected Sher Shah Wali Chowk, where they interacted with elderly beggars who confirmed that no children were involved in begging activities in the area. This indicates a positive impact of the Punjab government’s efforts to eliminate child begging.

District Child Protection Officer Baljinder Singh stated that any information related to the safety and well-being of children can be shared with their office or reported through the Child Helpline number 1098.

Jasvir Garhi meets Indian Ambassador Dr Madan Mohan Sethi

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh/Auckland, July 24

Punjab State Scheduled Castes Commission Chairman Jasvir Singh Garhi met Indian Ambassador to New Zealand Dr Madan Mohan Sethi. During this meeting, Garhi discussed with Sethi the issues of the Punjabi community living in New Zealand.

He requested the Indian Ambassador to take special steps to increase trade ac-



tivities between New Zealand and Punjab so that the farmers of Punjab can become more prosperous. He said that most of the people from Punjab who have settled in New Zea-

land are excelling in the field of agriculture.

Dr Sethi asked Garhi to send a delegation from the Punjab government to increase investment between Punjab and New Zealand.

Minister Sheikh Hasina and was later reportedly reappointed to the post several times. **IANSA**

Amity Innovation Incubator's Investor Pitch Day showcases India's next generation of disruptive startups

CHANDIGARH: The Amity Innovation Incubator aimed at nurturing entrepreneurial endeavours, proudly hosted its Investor Pitch Day, bringing together a powerful constellation of emerging startups and top-tier investors for an exciting day of live pitches, strategic networking, and growth-focused dialogue. With over 1100+ startups incubated and accelerated, the Amity Innovation Incubator, which recently won AABI's 'Incubator of the Year Award', continues to drive its mission to accelerate India's entrepreneurial momentum. **BPE**

LM Thapar School of Management celebrates 19th Foundation Day

CHANDIGARH: LM Thapar School of Management (LMTSM), celebrated its 19th Foundation Day with a vibrant ceremony that began with a symbolic tree plantation ceremony led by Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema, Finance Minister, Government of Punjab, reinforcing LMTSM's enduring values of sustainability and growth. The event was further marked by the inauguration of Punjab's first LMT-NSE Cogencis Finance Lab-a state-of-the-art facility designed to foster experiential financial learning, research, and innovation. The celebration was graced by Kuljit Singh Randhawa, MLA, Derabassi, along with senior leadership from TIET, including Dr. Ajay Batish, Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Dr. Gurbinder Singh, Registrar. Their presence reflected the institute's legacy of academic excellence and forward-thinking leadership. **BPE**

PNB MetLife launches Dhan Suraksha Yojna for Rural Households

LUDHIANA: PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife) announced the launch of Dhan Suraksha Yojna, an affordable micro-insurance plan. Dhan Suraksha Yojna is a simple, low-cost life insurance solution that helps rural families secure their future. With a one-time premium starting at just Rs 5,000 and no GST charges, the plan provides affordable life and accidental death cover, especially for people who are acquiring insurance for the first time. The product will be made available across 462 branches of Punjab Gramin Bank, helping extend protection to rural and semi-urban areas in the state. **BPE**

SBI Card and PhonePe forms strategic partnership

LUDHIANA: SBI Card in partnership with PhonePe announced the launch of PhonePe SBI Card. This new co-branded credit card aims to provide a rewarding experience on everyday spends, crafted to serve the evolving financial needs of customers across India. The credit card comes in two variants, the PhonePe SBI Card PURPLE and the PhonePe SBI Card SELECT BLACK, catering to diverse customer preferences, and lifestyle spending needs. Additionally, both the variants of this contactless credit card are

India-UK trade agreement a game-changer for labour, MSMEs and startups: Piyush Goyal

LONDON, JULY 24

In a major milestone for India's global trade ambitions, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday hailed the India-UK comprehensive economic and trade agreement (CETA) as a 'historic leap' that will empower workers, farmers, MSMEs, and startups across the country.

Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and citizens of both nations, Goyal said the agreement unlocks duty-free access for 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UK -- opening up nearly \$23 billion worth of new opportunities, especially for labour-intensive industries.

Signed in the presence of both Prime Ministers, the agreement marks a new chapter in India's trade relations with developed nations.

It was inked by Goyal and UK Secretary of State for



Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds after negotiations concluded earlier this year.

"This deal will transform the lives of artisans, weavers, and daily-wage earners employed in sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, toys, and marine products," Goyal said in a post on social media platform X.

"From village looms to tech labs, this FTA empowers women through improved financial access and deeper global integration," he added.

Agriculture is another big

winner under the deal, with nearly 95 per cent of Indian farm products gaining duty-free access to the UK.

Fisherfolk too will benefit from zero duty on 99 per cent of marine exports. Goyal stressed that the agreement supports "inclusive and gender-equitable growth", helping create a more resilient economy from the grassroots up.

Beyond traditional sectors, the pact is expected to boost engineering goods, electronics, pharma, chemicals, plastics, and food processing industries -- all critical to India's manufacturing

future. It will also make high-quality UK goods more affordable for Indian consumers.

The services sector, one of India's economic powerhouses, is set to gain from better access to UK markets in IT, finance, education, and legal services.

Simplified visa rules and liberal entry norms will ease the path for Indian chefs, yoga instructors, musicians, business visitors, and professionals across sectors.

Another key highlight is the Double Contribution Convention, which exempts Indian professionals and their employers from paying social security contributions in the UK for three years.

Goyal called it a "significant breakthrough" that enhances the cost competitiveness of Indian talent abroad.

The agreement also opens doors for Indian startups, providing them access to UK investors and innovation hubs, thereby expanding their global footprint. **IAN**

Adani Energy Solutions clocks robust 71 pc PAT growth in Q1, EBITDA crosses ₹2,000 crore

AHMEDABAD, JULY 24

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) on Thursday reported solid performance for the April-June quarter (Q1 FY26), clocking a profit after tax (PAT) growth of 71 per cent (year-on-year), as EBITDA crossed the Rs 2,000 crore mark, up 14 per cent.

Net profit saw a sharp uptick to Rs 539 crore in

India's power transmission capacity surged from 75,050 MW to 1,20,340 MW in 8 years: Minister

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

India's national transmission infrastructure is adequately developed to ensure reliable power flow across regions as it has been expanded from 75,050 MW during 2016-17 to 1,20,340 MW as of June 2025, the Parliament was informed on Thursday.

The Centre plans to increase this power transmission capacity across the National Grid to 1,43,000 MW by 2027 and further to 1,68,000 MW by 2032, Minister of State for Power Shripad Naik told the Lok Sabha in a written reply to a question.

"A robust National Grid has been established to facilitate the transfer of power from power surplus regions to power deficit regions, thereby mitigating the impact of regional disparities on overall power availability," he said.

The minister said that the installed generation capacity



of the country, as on June 6, is 484.81 GW.

The capacity of National Grid is being expanded on a continuous basis, commensurate with the growth in electricity generation and electricity demand.

As a result, imbalances in power supply and demand due to locational constraints are effectively managed without significant transmission bottlenecks. He further stated that the development of generation capacity is guided by a range of factors, including the availability of fuel sources, logistics, resource potential, demand growth and the readiness of associated infrastructure.

The minister's reply was tabled in response to a question

raised by Congress member Shashi Tharoor on whether regional disparities in power generation impact the overall surplus and the effectiveness of the current transmission infrastructure.

The Kerala MP also asked whether any specific short-term and long-term remedial measures are planned to strengthen transmission networks in deficit-prone states.

The minister also furnished a detailed break-up of the power generation capacity across states along with the fuel sources in each state, such as coal, hydro, natural gas and nuclear. Besides, he tabled figures pertaining to the power supply in various states of the country. **IAN**

India needs a generation of builders who think beyond code: Nasscom's Rajesh Nambiar

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

The tech industry in India has over five million technologists, but what we need now is a generation of builders who think beyond code and create for scale, Rajesh Nambiar, President of Nasscom, said on Thursday.

Nasscom has announced its first-ever 'Tech Developer Confluence' on August 8 in Bengaluru.

Aimed at empowering India's developer community, the event will spotlight emerging technologies like GenAI, quantum, and cybersecurity through hands-on sessions, masterclasses, and hackathons.

"The confluence is an attempt to rewire how we train, inspire, and spotlight developer talent in India," said Nambiar.

The upcoming conference will be a national platform where students, developers, and technology leaders come together to convert potential into product, capability into innovation, and talent into global impact, according to the leading



"The confluence is an attempt to rewire how we train, inspire, and spotlight developer talent in India," said Nambiar.

industry association.

IT employees and aspirants can come together to play a key role in shaping the future of AI, cloud, quantum, cybersecurity, and product engineering, it added.

The conference aims to future-proof India's skilling ecosystem and enable grassroots participation in the deep tech economy.

Coders, architects, researchers, and student innovators get a chance

for a full day of hands-on exploration at the event. From GenAI-driven DevOps to multi-agent systems, space-tech applications, and synthetic data modeling, the confluence is tailored to move beyond theory and unlock real-world impact, said Nasscom.

Masterclasses are scheduled at the conference on subjects including building multi-agent AI systems, synthetic data generation for AI and GenAI, and rapid application development using code assistants.

Further, discussions covering cybersecurity applications of agentic AI, best practices for end-to-end Responsible AI implementation, and compliance strategies under the DPDP Act are part of the event.

Nasscom also announced two dedicated hackathons, offering developers the opportunity to build real-world solutions around critical industry challenges. The industry association represents India's \$284 billion technology industry. **IAN**

India's banking sector slated for key turnaround in Q3: Report

MUMBAI, JULY 24

The third quarter (Q3) of FY26 is likely to mark a turning point for India's banking sector, as net interest margins (NIMs) are expected to stabilise and earnings begin to recover, a new report said on Thursday.

This positive outlook is supported by easing funding costs, the upcoming reduction in the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), and normalisation of credit costs, according to data compiled by Motilal Oswal

Financial Services.

As part of this recovery, private sector banks are showing impressive resilience in maintaining lending yields despite multiple repo rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The report highlights that private banks have been able to raise their spreads on fresh loans -- helping them protect profitability in a low-rate environment. In May 2025, the weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh loans for private

banks rose by 7 basis points month-on-month, the report stated.

This increase reflects strong pricing strategies and credit demand. The spread on fresh rupee loans over the repo rate for private banks has reached its highest level since August 2022 -- now at 415 basis points.

This indicates that the lenders are not only navigating the policy changes effectively but also maintaining healthy margins through strategic loan repricing. **IAN**

Executive Centre India Limited files DRHP with SEBI, plans to raise ₹2,600 crore through a fresh issue of equity shares

CHANDIGARH: Executive Centre India Limited, one of the early international brands to lead the offering of premium flexible workspace solutions amongst the flexible workspace operators currently operating in India has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). The IPO comprises of a fresh issue of equity shares bearing face value of Rs 2 each aggregating up to Rs 2,600 crores. The company proposes to utilise the Net Proceeds towards an investment in TEC Abu Dhabi, a direct subsidiary, to finance part-payment of the consideration for the acquisition of TEC SGP and TEC Dubai, two step-down subsidiaries currently held by one of the company's Corporate Promoters, TEC Singapore. This transaction is being carried out in accordance with the terms of the Internal Restructuring Agreement. The remaining proceeds will be allocated towards general corporate purposes. **BPE**

cordance with the terms of the Internal Restructuring Agreement. The remaining proceeds will be allocated towards general corporate purposes. **BPE**

India-UK FTA during PM Modi's visit marks new era for 'Make in India': TVS Motor

CHANDIGARH: TVS Motor Company on Thursday welcomed the signing of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day official visit to Britain. The landmark agreement is expected to double bilateral trade from USD 60 billion to USD 120 billion by 2030, and is a significant step forward in realising the Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat. Welcoming this FTA, Sudarshan Venu, Managing Director, TVS Motor Company said, "We are deeply inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat and his unwavering commitment to making India a global manufacturing and design powerhouse. **BPE**

Indian stock market ends lower amid selling in IT, realty stocks

MUMBAI, JULY 24

The Indian stock market settled in negative territory on Thursday following heavy selling in IT, realty, consumer goods and energy sector amid Q1 earnings.

Breaking the last session's gaining momentum, Sensex closed at 82,184.17, down 542.47 points or 0.66 per cent. The 30-share index started the session with a slight gain at 82,779.95 against the previous day's closing of 82,726.64. However, the index was not able to maintain the momentum due to selling in heavyweights from the IT, realty and consumer goods sectors. It touched an intra-day low of 82,047.22. Nifty closed at 25,062.10, down 0.63 per cent or 157.80 points. Sectoral performance was mixed, as PSU banks, healthcare, and pharma stocks outperformed, while the IT, construction, consumer goods, energy, and oil and gas sectors lagged, said Ashika Institutional Equities in its note. **IAN**

SBI Life clocks 14 pc jump in Q1 net profit

MUMBAI, JULY 24

SBI Life Insurance Company on Thursday reported a 14 per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise in its net profit for the June quarter (Q1 FY26), with profit increasing to Rs 594 crore compared to Rs 520 crore in the same quarter previous year.

The company's net premium income for the April-June quarter stood at Rs 17,178 crore, up 14 per cent from Rs 15,105 crore in the corresponding quarter previous year, according to its stock exchange filing.

Renewal premiums stood at Rs 10,546 crore in Q1 FY26. This marked a strong 23 per cent increase over the previous year.

Meanwhile, the first-year premium was approximately Rs 35,390 crore, higher than Rs 31,460 crore in Q1 FY25.

The company said that renewal premiums continue to play a key role in its business and are expected to remain an important growth driver in the coming quarters.

SBI Life's new business premium (NBP) also saw a slight year-on-year increase of 3 per cent to Rs 7,270 crore, up from Rs 7,030 crore in a year-ago period.

Gross written premium (GWP) rose 14 per cent YoY to Rs 17,810 crore, as per its exchange filing. In terms of assets, the company's assets under management (AUM) reached Rs 4.8 lakh crore -- showing a strong 15 per cent growth compared to the same period previous year.

The value of new business (VoNB) was reported at Rs 1,090 crore, a 12 per cent YoY increase. SBI Life's MD and CEO Amit Jhingran said the company saw a healthy shift in its product mix in Q1, with more focus on protection and guaranteed non-par savings products. **IAN**

Stokes picks 5-72 to restrict India for 358 despite Pant's courageous 54

'Gill doesn't look confused as a captain'

MANCHESTER, JULY 24

Skipper Ben Stokes grabbed 5-72 as he took the lead for England to bowl India out for 358 in 114.1 overs on day two of fourth Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy Test against England at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Countering England's better show with the ball was Rishabh Pant astonishing everyone by coming out to bat despite a fractured fifth metatarsal in the right foot and hitting a brave 54 off 75 balls – a knock which will be talked for ages to come.

Pant, who retired hurt on 37 after the painful blow to the foot on day one, added 17 more runs to India's total and that meant they managed to cross 350-run mark on a pitch which could prove to be a handful for the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur and debutant Anshul Kamboj.

The second session began with Washington Sundar getting a healthy edge off Stokes for four, before he hooked a short ball straight to Chris Woakes to deep fine leg and fall for 27 off 90 balls. Stokes completed his first five-wicket haul in eight years when his outswinger took an edge of Kamboj's bat and was caught safely by Jamie Smith.

Pant finally got the timing right when he nailed a pull off Archer for six and reached his 18th Test fifty in 69 balls by reaching out to Stokes' wide ball and sent it cracking through cover for four. But for the second consecutive

BRIEF SCORES: India 358 in 114.1 overs (B Sai Sudharsan 61, Yashasvi Jaiswal 58; Ben Stokes 5-72, Jofra Archer 3-73) against England.

time, Archer sent Pant's off-stump on a cartwheel ride, as hit gutsy knock came to an end at 54 off 75 balls and received rousing reception from the spectators.

Siraj and Bumrah hanged around to hit a boundary each, before the latter swung a leg-side delivery off Archer and the ball was caught by Smith.

After Root persuaded to go for a review, that proved to be a shrewd move as a nick was detected and resulted in India's innings coming to an end, with Archer taking 3-73.

IAN S

MUMBAI, JULY 24

Shubman Gill's aggressive approach has sparked a debate but former India wicketkeeper-batter Parthiv Patel says it's not new and lauded the young captain for his assertiveness and clarity in executing plans during the ongoing England series.

Gill had fired a verbal salvo at Zak Crawley during the Lord's Test after he and his opening partner Ben Duckett arrived 90 seconds late to the crease late on Day 3.

India had managed to equal England's first innings total of 387, and wanted to squeeze in two overs in the remaining six minutes of play. However, that wasn't possible as the English openers took their time to get ready, and Gill exchanged words with England openers.

The India skipper later called the delay "not in the spirit of the game."

Asked if Gill's aggressive stance was surprising, Patel, who served as assistant coach of Gill-led Gujarat Titans in the IPL, said, "No, it's not. We've seen him do this in the IPL too. This sport is about expressing emotions as long as you don't cross the line, and I don't think Shubman crossed the line at all."

PTI

"It was clear how slowly the English batsmen were walking in. Teams like England, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa often use the term 'spirit of the game' conveniently.

"So, there was nothing wrong with Gill asking the English media if it's okay to come to bat 90 seconds late. That was a deliberate attempt. I don't think Shubman did anything wrong," Patel told reporters during a JioHotstar virtual interaction. On Gill's India captaincy, he said, "This is new to him and he's improving. With Gujarat Titans, whatever I've observed about him, he's been very assertive. He knows what he wants. He's very clear with his plans and ideas. I'm sure with the time, you will see very much improvement in his captaincy also."

Under Gill's captaincy, India won the second Test at Birmingham and were in a strong position in the third before losing the game by 22 runs. "I thought he was very good compared to the first Test. He lacks experience leading Test or four-day games, but no one is born a captain.

"It's good to see that Shubman's been very good. He doesn't look confused on the field as a captain, opposed to what he was in first Test match. But it's good to see that he is on the right path," said Patel.

Sai Sudharsan, dropped after the opening Test, scored his maiden Test half-century a patient 61 as India posted 264/4 on day one of the fourth Test.

PTI

Pant comes out to bat with fractured toe, Jagadeesan set to be added as cover

MANCHESTER, JULY 24

Rishabh Pant was on Thursday ruled out of wicket-keeping duties in the ongoing fourth Test against England after fracturing his toe but he came out to bat, even as Tamil Nadu stumper N Jagadeesan got ready to join the Indian team as cover for the injured star.

The BCCI stated that Pant is "available" in the role of a batter as per team requirements during the crunch game at Old Trafford.

The 27-year-old Pant retired hurt at 37 on the opening day and went for scans after copping a blow on his right foot while attempting a reverse sweep off England pacer Chris Woakes on Wednesday.

"Rishabh Pant, who sustained an injury to his right foot on Day 1 of the Manchester Test, will not be performing wicket-keeping duties for the remainder of the match. Dhruv Jurel will assume the role of wicket-keeper," the BCCI posted on X.

"Despite his injury, Rishabh Pant has joined the team on Day 2 and will be available to bat as per team requirements," it added.

This was after early inputs from the Board indicated that Pant has been ruled out of the series and Ishan Kishan would be called in as cover for him. However, it later emerged that Jagadeesan is travelling to the UK to join the squad as a replacement for the injured Pant ahead of the fifth Test.

Jagadeesan is expected to fill in as wicketkeeper-batter in the absence of Pant, who received a standing ovation from the crowd at Old Trafford after he walked out to bat with a fractured foot.

Pant came out to bat after the fall of Shardul Thakur's wicket with India at 314/6 on the overcast day.

With his ability to change the momentum with audacious stroke-play, Pant is a game-changer for India. After undergoing additional scans, Pant arrived at the stadium wearing a moon boot (a protective orthopaedic boot) to support his injured foot.

"His metatarsal bones (a group of five long bones located between the ankle and toe) seem to be shattered. It doesn't look good at all," a

BCCI source told PTI.

The severity of the injury was apparent given the blood that was seen seeping off Pant's right foot on Wednesday. The affected area had considerable swelling as well.

On day one, Pant was the only one to take the attack to Jofra Archer and Co. while the other batters struck at three runs per over.

Before getting hit on his right foot, Pant had perfected an outrageous sweep off Archer before smashing Brydon Carse down the ground as if he was a spinner.

India have already lost all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy to a knee problem, while pacers Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh are missing the ongoing game because of a groin niggle and a finger injury respectively.

Pant's injury adds to the problems for the team which is trailing 1-2 right now.

The think tank also had KL Rahul as option to keep wickets, but he has not performed that role since the tour of South Africa in the 2023-24 season.

PTI

CAPE TOWN, JULY 24

Batters Dewald Brevis and Lhuan-dre Pretorius have been included in South Africa's Twenty20 and One-Day International squads for their white-ball tour of Australia next month, as off-spinner Prenelan Subrayen earns a maiden limited overs call-up.

Having rested several regulars for the tri-series tournament in Zimbabwe this month that also includes New Zealand, South Africa have recalled Aiden Markram, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton and Tristan Stubbs.

South Africa play their hosts in three T20 matches between August 10-16 before a three-game ODI series from August 19-24.

Subrayen, 31, recently made his Test debut in Zimbabwe, as did Brevis, 22, and Pretorius, 19. All three players have been included in both limited overs squads.

Key all-rounder Marco Kansen misses out on the tour through injury.

Markram will captain the T20 side, and Temba

Bavuma will lead the ODI team.

AGENCIES

BCCI set to host Asia Cup in UAE, India-Pakistan match likely

NEW DELHI/DHAKA, JULY 24

The Indian cricket board is all set to host the upcoming Asia Cup T20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates with the formal announcement expected in a few days' time, sources in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC)said on Thursday. This was after an ACC meeting that all 25 member nations attended to discuss the venue for the event. BCCI was represented by its vice-president Rajeev Shukla virtually. "The BCCI will host the Asia Cup in the UAE. India is likely to play all its matches in Dubai. There are still deliberations on scheduling," an ACC source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The tournament will be held for a little over fortnight in September. It has to end before the final week of the month as India's Test series against West Indies is scheduled from that point.

"Our vice-president Rajeev Shukla ji attended the ACC meeting. He will brief the members. I don't believe in speculations so you will get to know officially in a few days time," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI.

In Dhaka, ACC chairman and Pakistan Cricket Board head Mohsin Naqvi also kept cards close to his chest when asked about a possible Indo-Pak match at the continental event. "We will announce it shortly. We have had discussions with the BCCI and there are a few issues that we will resolve shortly. All 25 members attended the meet either physically or virtually. We are all on same page," Naqvi told reporters.

PTI

Relentless Stokes leading the way for England

MANCHESTER, JULY 24

England captain Ben Stokes continued his incredible with the ball in the ongoing five-Test series against India, breaking his own record for the most overs bowled by himself during a Test series.

Stokes led the way with the ball for England on a hard-fought opening day, taking 2/47 in 14 overs, picking up the key wickets of captain Shubman Gill (12) and a well-set Sai Sudharsan for 61.

Stokes toiled relentlessly with the ball throughout the opening day. He delivered a five-over spell in the morning session, followed by a four-over spell and had an impactful five overs in the first

IOA ends feud over CEO, sets up anti-doping panel after IOC flags high cases

NEW DELHI, JULY 24

Ending a lengthy feud, the Indian Olympic Association's Executive Council on Thursday ratified the appointment of CEO Raghuram Iyer and set up a panel to tackle doping after India's poor record was flagged by the IOC during a national delegation's visit to push for the 2036 Olympic bid.

The EC members had refused to ratify Iyer's appointment made by President P T Usha in January 2024, the bone of contention being his Rs 20 lakh per month salary along with other perks.

However, the differences on this matter were resolved following Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's intervention, paving the way for Iyer's formal appointment.

"Everything is sorted out, that is why the CEO (Iyer) is sitting with me. Otherwise he would not have been sitting with me here," Usha said at a press conference at the IOA headquarters with Iyer at her side.

"It will now be very smooth functioning going ahead. Otherwise also, there was no break in IOA functioning. We did very well in the Paris Olympics and the Asian Games. We also

been letters exchanged. But in democracy, when there are two people, two opinions, there are always differences of opinions out there. No house, no organization can completely be flawless.

"Rather, we are very happy that IOA is a house having difference of opinions. But right now, we want to look forward, look forward in the interest of nation." Iyer said "the fact that all of us are here and I am also here means that everything is sorted out."

However, it is learnt that the salary package of Iyer is likely to be negotiated.

"He should not get too less but also not this high. His salary is a bit high by

conducted two National Games," said Usha, who had a bitter and frosty relationship with 12 ECY members in the last more than two years. IOA joint secretary Kalyan Chaubey informed that executive council meeting on Thursday ratified Iyer's appointment.

"There were some differences. We won't say there were nothing. There had

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