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Sonam Wangchuk
Ends 26-Day Fast

Gurugram: Activist Sonam Wangchuk on Friday ended his 26-day hunger strike at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram in the presence of Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Jitendra Singh after prolonged discussions with the Centre. Wangchuk, who was fasting in support of students protesting alleged irregularities in competitive examinations, said he ended the strike following negotiations and to prevent the agitation from turning violent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished Wangchuk a speedy recovery and urged him to follow doctors' advice. Wangchuk had begun his indefinite fast on June 28 after joining the student-led protest at Jantar Mantar demanding education reforms, accountability over the alleged NEET paper leak, and the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. During the fast, Wangchuk was shifted from the protest site to hospital after his health deteriorated, reportedly losing around 11 kg. Meanwhile, the Centre announced plans to introduce a new anti-paper leak law with stricter punishments and fast-track courts, while also reshuffling senior officials in the Education Ministry. However, the broader CJP-led agitation is set to continue, with protesters maintaining their demand for the Education Minister's resignation.



PM Announces Fast-Track Courts

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the setting up of fast-track courts for paper leak cases and said the Centre will introduce a law to ensure swift trials and stringent punishment for those involved in examination fraud. The announcement came amid nationwide protests over the alleged NEET paper leak and growing demands for education reforms. Modi said protecting students' future is the government's priority and warned that those responsible for paper leaks "will not be spared." The move triggered sharp political reactions. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the Centre of failing to protect the education system and renewed the demand for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) also dismissed the announcement as insufficient, insisting that accountability must begin with the minister's resignation. Meanwhile, protests disrupted Parliament proceedings, while the Delhi High Court agreed to hear a plea seeking an NIA probe into the "Sansad Chalo" protest. Security was tightened across the national capital, with 16 Delhi Metro stations temporarily closed and fresh clashes reported at Jantar Mantar, where several police personnel were injured.

KTR Linked to Globarena,
Must Apologise: Revanth

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has intensified his attack on BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR), alleging that the company Globarena, which was at the centre of the 2019 Intermediate examination evaluation controversy, was a benami firm linked to KTR. He demanded that the former minister apologise to the families of students who allegedly lost their lives following the examination fiasco. Speaking to reporters at the State Assembly, the Chief Minister alleged that 27 students died by suicide after serious irregularities in the Intermediate answer-sheet evaluation during the previous BRS regime. He claimed Globarena was awarded the contract despite deficiencies and held KTR morally responsible for the controversy. Revanth Reddy also questioned the BRS' silence over the demand for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in connection with the NEET paper leak issue, alleging a tacit understanding between the BRS and the BJP. He claimed the BJP's electoral gains in constituencies represented by senior BRS leaders reflected political cooperation between the two parties. The Chief Minister defended his government's governance initiatives, including the SEEPC survey, HYDRAA operations, large-scale recruitment drive and the CBI probe into the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project. He praised HYDRAA for protecting government lands and restoring lakes while asserting that the government had filled 11,000 teacher posts within 55 days. On the Kaleshwaram project, Revanth Reddy reiterated that the CBI investigation was ordered based on the findings of the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission and the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA). He alleged that former Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao should take responsibility for the failures in the project.



KTR Demands Apology from
CM Revanth, Threatens Legal Action

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) has demanded an apology from Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy over allegations linking him to Globarena, a company accused of irregularities in the 2019 Intermediate examination results. KTR said he would issue a legal notice if the Chief Minister failed to withdraw the remarks. In a strongly worded post on social media platform X, the former minister categorically denied any connection between himself, his family or the BRS and Globarena. He accused the Chief Minister of spreading false information and exploiting a tragic issue such as examination irregularities for political gain. "Resorting to peddling fake news on a very unfortunate incident like paper leaks is abhorrent and defaming to your position. Let me reiterate once again—BRS, my family or I have absolutely no links with Globarena. My legal team is sending you a notice. Either apologise or face legal action," KTR stated. The controversy erupted after Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, while addressing a public meeting in Kodangal on Wednesday, alleged that Globarena had committed serious irregularities in the Intermediate examination results during the previous BRS regime, leading to the deaths of 27 students. He claimed the company was a proxy entity linked to KTR and alleged that it was awarded the project despite lacking the required qualifications because of political influence. The Chief Minister further alleged that after the Congress came to power in Telangana, Globarena rebranded itself as Coempt Education and sought contracts from the Central government. He claimed KTR had helped the company secure contracts through BJP leaders in Delhi. KTR dismissed all the allegations as baseless and politically motivated, saying the Chief Minister should "start acting like a Chief Minister" instead of making "vulgar and wild allegations".



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DRDO Successfully Tests Kusha Missile

Kolkata: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Thursday successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the indigenous Kusha Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LR-SAM) from APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. The missile successfully intercepted a high-speed, high-altitude aerial target, demonstrating its capability to destroy fighter aircraft, missiles, drones and other airborne threats. Developed under Project Kusha, the missile system is designed for the Indian Air Force and Navy and will strengthen India's air defence network by bridging the gap between the MR-SAM and the S-400 system. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed the successful test as a major milestone in India's defence research, saying it would reduce import dependence and significantly enhance the country's air defence capability. The three variants of the Kusha missile are expected to be inducted between 2028 and 2030.



88 Lakh Suspicious
Mobile Numbers Blocked

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has disconnected over 88 lakh suspicious mobile connections using an AI and big data analytics tool to curb cyber frauds, the Centre informed Parliament on Thursday. The AI-based system, ASTR, identified suspicious SIM cards, which were disconnected after failing re-verification. Through the Sanchar Saathi portal's Chakshu facility, citizens have also reported over 11.18 lakh suspected fraud communications, leading to the disconnection of 50.90 lakh mobile connections. The DoT said it shares intelligence through its Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) with agencies such as the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) to prevent misuse of telecom resources in cyber crimes and financial frauds. The government said these initiatives are part of its broader effort to strengthen cybersecurity and protect citizens from digital fraud.



EDITORIAL

India's Journey to a \$10 Trillion Economy

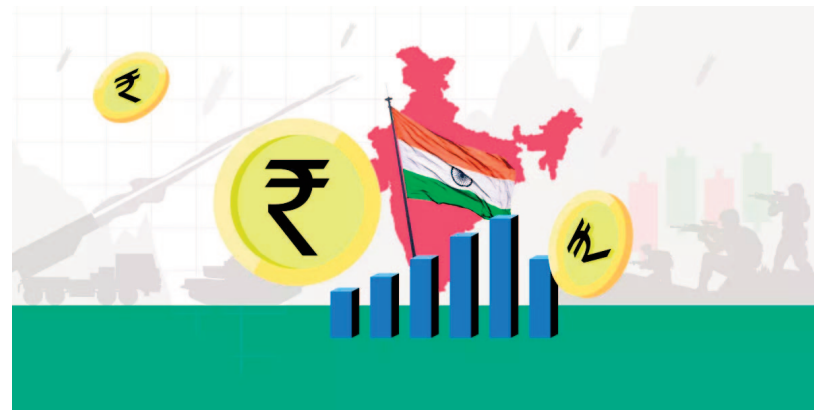
India stands at a defining moment in its economic history. Having emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, the nation has set its sights on an ambitious milestone—becoming a \$10 trillion economy within the next decade. While the target is bold, it is not beyond reach. Achieving it, however, will require sustained reforms, robust infrastructure, technological innovation, and inclusive growth that benefits every section of society. Over the past decade, India has laid a strong foundation for long-term economic expansion. Digital transformation through initiatives such as Digital India, the rapid adoption of UPI-based digital payments, the expansion of highways, airports, and railways, and policy reforms like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have strengthened the country's economic framework. Manufacturing initiatives under 'Make in India' and Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes are attracting global investments, while India's startup ecosystem has become one of the largest in the world. Yet, rapid economic growth cannot rely on a few sectors alone. Manufacturing must expand significantly to create millions of jobs for India's young workforce. Agriculture, which still supports nearly half the population, needs modernization through technology, irrigation, and better market access. At the same time, service sectors such as information technology, finance, tourism, healthcare, and education must continue to evolve to remain globally competitive.

Infrastructure remains another key pillar. Reliable power supply, world-class logistics, ports, industrial corridors, and smart cities can reduce business costs and improve productivity. Equally important is investment in human capital. A skilled workforce equipped with digital and technical expertise will determine whether India can seize opportunities in artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, renewable energy, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. However, economic expansion must also be inclusive. Rising income inequality, unemployment, regional disparities, and environmental challenges cannot be ignored. Growth that leaves behind rural communities, small businesses, or vulnerable populations will ultimately weaken the economy's long-term resilience. Sustainable development, women's workforce participation, financial inclusion, and quality education must therefore remain central to India's growth strategy. The global economic landscape also presents both opportunities and risks. As multinational companies diversify supply chains away from traditional manufacturing hubs, India has a unique chance to establish itself as a global production and export center. At the same time, geopolitical tensions, climate change, inflation, and technological disruptions demand policy stability and strategic planning. India's journey to a \$10 trillion economy is about more than achieving an impressive number. It is about creating quality jobs, reducing poverty, fostering innovation, improving the standard of living.

India Among Fastest-Growing Economies: RBI

New Delhi: RBI has said India continues to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies despite global uncertainties, supported by resilient domestic demand and strong performance of the industrial and services sectors. In its July Bulletin, the RBI noted that economic activity remained robust through June, while exports and imports registered healthy growth during the first quarter of 2026-27. It said the recent implementation of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and progress in

other bilateral trade pacts are expected to further strengthen India's external trade. The central bank observed that although the southwest monsoon has been uneven, adequate food-grain stocks are likely to cushion any impact on food inflation. It also highlighted that foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign portfolio investment (FPI) inflows have improved, reflecting renewed investor confidence in the Indian economy. The RBI said liquidity conditions remain comfortable, supporting strong credit growth, while India's external sector



continues to remain stable with well-anchored vulnerability indicators. It added that the country's economy has successfully

navigated global challenges such as supply-chain disruptions and trade uncertainties through resilient domestic fundamentals.

Semiconductor Race: Why India Must Win

Semiconductors are the invisible engines of the modern world. They power smartphones, computers, automobiles, medical devices, defence systems, satellites, and artificial intelligence. In today's digital economy, chips are as strategically important as oil was in the twentieth century. The global semiconductor race is no longer merely a commercial competition—it is a contest for technological leadership, economic resilience, and national security. For India, winning this race is not a matter of prestige but a necessity for future growth. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of global semiconductor supply chains. Factory shutdowns and logistical disruptions led to an unprecedented chip shortage, crippling industries from automobiles to consumer electronics. Geopolitical tensions further highlighted the risks of excessive dependence on a handful of countries for semiconductor manufacturing. These events underscored a crucial lesson: nations that control semiconductor production will shape the future of technology and global commerce. India has recognized this opportunity. Government initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission and financial incentives for chip fabrication, assembly, testing, and packaging are attracting global investments. Several international companies have announced projects in semiconductor manufacturing and packaging, while domestic firms are entering the sector with renewed confidence. Combined with India's strength in software, electronics design, and engineering talent, these initiatives provide a strong foundation for building a competitive semiconductor ecosystem.



However, manufacturing chips is one of the world's most complex industrial processes. It requires billions of dollars in investment, cutting-edge technology, ultra-pure materials, uninterrupted electricity, abundant water, and a highly skilled workforce. Competition from established semiconductor leaders such as Taiwan, South Korea, the United States, and China is intense. India cannot expect overnight success; it must focus on building long-term capabilities through sustained investment, policy stability, and international collaboration. Equally important is developing the entire semiconductor value chain. Beyond fabrication plants, India must strengthen chip design, research and development, advanced packaging, equipment manufacturing, and the production of critical raw materials. Universities and technical institutions should collaborate closely with industry to produce engineers and re-

searchers capable of driving innovation. Public-private partnerships and global technology alliances will also be essential in accelerating progress. The benefits of a strong semiconductor industry extend far beyond electronics. It can create high-value employment, boost exports, strengthen defence preparedness, support the electric vehicle revolution, and enable breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and space technology. A robust domestic semiconductor ecosystem will also reduce dependence on imports and enhance India's economic and strategic autonomy. The semiconductor race is ultimately about securing the future. Countries that innovate and manufacture advanced chips will lead the next wave of industrial and technological transformation. India possesses the market size, engineering talent, entrepreneurial spirit, and policy ambition to become

a major player. Success will require patience, consistent reforms, infrastructure development, and investment in research. If India acts decisively today, it can emerge not merely as a consumer of technology but as one of the world's leading creators of it. Winning the semiconductor race will strengthen India's economy, safeguard its national interests, and define its place in the global technological order for decades to come.



- Ranadheer Gundu



Bandi Sanjay Opens All India Police Judo Cluster

Hyderabad, July 23 (PIB): Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar inaugurated the 11th All India Police Judo Cluster 2026 at the GMC Balayogi Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Organised by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the championship will be held from July 23 to 30, featuring over 1,600 athletes from 36 State Police and Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) organisations. Addressing the event, Bandi Sanjay said police sports strengthen national unity, discipline and excellence, while highlighting the Centre's increased investment in sports infrastructure through initiatives such as Khelo India. He also praised the growing participation of women and lauded the CISF for supporting athletes through enhanced financial assistance, nutrition and training facilities. Competitions in Judo, Wushu, Taekwondo, Karate and Pencak Silat will be held during the week-long championship.

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Sooryavanshi's 18-Ball Fifty Powers India

Harare: Teen batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi smashed a record-breaking 18-ball half-century as India defeated Zimbabwe by seven wickets in the first T20I at the Harare Sports Club on Thursday to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. The explosive knock made the youngster the youngest player to score an international fifty. His whirlwind innings of 50, featuring four fours and four sixes, helped India chase down 126 in just 13.2 overs, with 40 balls to spare. Chasing

a modest target, Sooryavanshi launched a fierce assault from the outset, hammering Zimbabwe's bowlers with fearless stroke play. Although Abhishek Sharma fell cheaply for 1, Sooryavanshi continued attacking before reaching his maiden international fifty in only 18 deliveries. He was dismissed immediately after the milestone, but by then India had virtually sealed the contest. Ishan Kishan contributed a fluent 35, while captain Shreyas Iyer remained unbeaten on 27 to com-

plete the chase alongside Tilak Varma (5 not out). The victory also marked Shreyas Iyer's first win as India's T20I captain after seven previous attempts. Earlier, India's bowlers restricted Zimbabwe to 125/7 in 20 overs. Wessly Madhevere top-scored with 39, while Tadiwanashe Marumani remained unbeaten on 27. Mayank Yadav (2/18) and Prince Yadav (2/19) were the pick of the Indian bowlers. India now lead the series 1-0 ahead of the second T20I.

No Decision to Raise Ethanol Blend Beyond 20%



New Delhi: The Centre has clarified that no decision has been taken to increase ethanol blending in petrol beyond 20 per cent, stating that any future move will be based on detailed scientific studies and consultations with stakeholders. Replying in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Suresh Gopi said E85 fuel has been introduced only for Flex Fuel Vehicles (FFVs) and does not mean an increase in the nationwide ethanol blending level. The Minister said the E20 fuel programme has been implemented after extensive research and consultations involving NITI Aayog, ARAI, SIAM, Indian Institute of Petroleum and oil marketing companies. According to the government, more than 20 crore two-wheelers and 3 crore petrol cars have been using E20 fuel without any verified evidence of widespread engine damage or abnormal wear. He said studies indicate that any reduction in mileage in older vehicles is generally limited to 3-5 per cent, while E20 offers better combustion, improved acceleration, cleaner emissions and higher octane performance. Highlighting the benefits of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, the government said it has saved over ₹1.97 lakh crore in foreign exchange, reduced crude oil imports by 316 lakh metric tonnes, cut 952 lakh metric tonnes of carbon emissions, and generated ₹1.66 lakh crore in income for farmers.

Lovlina Assures India's First CWG Medal

Glasgow: Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain has assured India of its first medal at the Commonwealth Games 2026 after receiving a direct entry into the semifinals of the women's 75kg boxing event. With only five boxers in the category, Lovlina received a first-round bye, automatically advancing to the last four and guaranteeing herself at least a bronze medal. The 28-year-old Assam boxer will face Tuvalu's TKBP Taafaki in the semifinal on July 31, with the winner progressing to the gold medal match. This marks Lovlina's first-ever Commonwealth Games medal, completing an impressive collection of honours that already includes



medals at the Olympic Games, World Championships, Asian Games and Asian Championships. Having already se-

cured a podium finish, the Indian star will now aim to convert the guaranteed bronze into a gold medal in Glasgow.

Oval to Host WTC Final 2027

London: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has confirmed The Oval as the venue for the 2027 World Test Championship (WTC) Final, which will be played from June 9 to 13. The Oval will host the WTC final for the second time, having previously staged the 2023 final, where Australia defeated India. The 2027 clash will conclude the fourth WTC cycle and coincide with celebrations marking 150 years of Test cricket. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) was awarded the hosting rights for the next three WTC finals during the ICC Annual Conference 2025. Earlier editions were held in Southampton (2021), The Oval (2023) and Lord's (2025). ECB Managing Director Neil Snowball said England was proud to continue hosting Test cricket's biggest global event, while ICC General Manager Gaurav Saxena described The Oval as one of cricket's most historic venues and said the 2027 final would be a fitting celebration of Test cricket's rich legacy. In the current WTC standings, Australia lead the table, followed by South Africa, with New Zealand, Bangladesh and India occupying the next three positions.

Sindhu Crashes Out of China Open

Beijing: India's P.V. Sindhu bowed out of the China Open 2026 after suffering a hard-fought three-game defeat to world No. 4 Chen Yufei in the women's singles pre-quarterfinals. Sindhu went down 16-21, 22-20, 21-18 in a thrilling contest that lasted one hour and 29 minutes. The Indian ace recovered well after a slow start and fought back strongly in the second game to level the match. She also held an early advantage in the decider, but Chen capitalised on home support and regained control in the closing stages to seal a place in the quarterfinals. India's campaign also ended in the men's singles after Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty suffered defeats in their respective matches, bringing the country's challenge at the BWF Super 1000 tournament to a close. The Indian shuttlers will now shift their focus to the upcoming BWF Super 300 Taipei Open.



Style of the Day



Sanchi Rai



'Toxic' Will Wow Audiences: Producer

Bengaluru: The makers of Yash-starrer Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups have expressed confidence that the film will offer audiences a unique theatrical experience when it releases worldwide on August 26, 2026. Producer Venkat K. Narayana described the film as an ambitious project with a grand scale and a fresh storytelling style. He said audiences would "100 percent" enjoy the film once they watched it on the big screen. Calling it "a fairytale meant only for grown-ups", Narayana said the film's scale, visual grandeur and narrative approach are unlike anything the production house has attempted before. Directed and co-written by Geetu Mohandas, the action thriller revolves around a father-son conflict and stars Yash in the lead role. The film also features Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Huma Qureshi, Rukmini Vasanth, Akshay Oberoi, Sudev Nair and Amit Tiwari in key roles. The film's release has been postponed twice—from March 19 to June 4, before finally being scheduled for August 26, 2026, to secure a wider global release window. The songs released so far have generated strong interest, while also sparking discussions about the film's genre and overall tone ahead of its theatrical release.

Salman Urges NEET Protesters to Return Home



Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has appealed to students protesting over the alleged NEET paper leak to return home, expressing confidence that the government will take strict action against those responsible. In a post on social media platform X, Salman said students should not worry about their future, adding that their education and safety remain the government's top priority. Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on setting up fast-track courts for paper leak cases, the actor said he was confident that those responsible would be punished. "The students are the top priority, educationally and security-wise. I am sure the Prime Minister will take strict action against all those responsible for the leak. Students, please go back to your parents and homes," Salman wrote. The actor also urged education reform activist Sonam Wangchuk to end his indefinite hunger strike, saying he hoped there would be no need to continue the fast. Salman had earlier described the alleged paper leak as a serious issue, praised students for maintaining a peaceful protest, and appealed against politicising the movement.

marketing. Don't earn money from it. Many actors and content creators are being approached by different groups to attend rallies and gain visibility. I don't want to be a part of that," she said. The actress added that while she supports the concerns raised by students, she believes the issue should not be exploited for publicity. Expressing concern over the visuals of the protests, Akansha said the students represent India's future and deserved to be heard. The protests intensified after activist Sonam Wangchuk was shifted from Delhi's Jantar Mantar to a hospital following an indefinite hunger strike demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged irregularities in competitive examinations.

Akansha Puri Alleges Actors Offered Money to Join Protests



Mumbai: Television actress Akansha Puri has alleged that actors and content creators are being offered money to participate in the ongoing protest rallies, urging members of the entertainment industry to support genuine causes instead of turning them into publicity campaigns. Akansha said people should stand for the right cause and not treat public movements as a marketing opportunity. "Support the right thing. Don't make this a part of

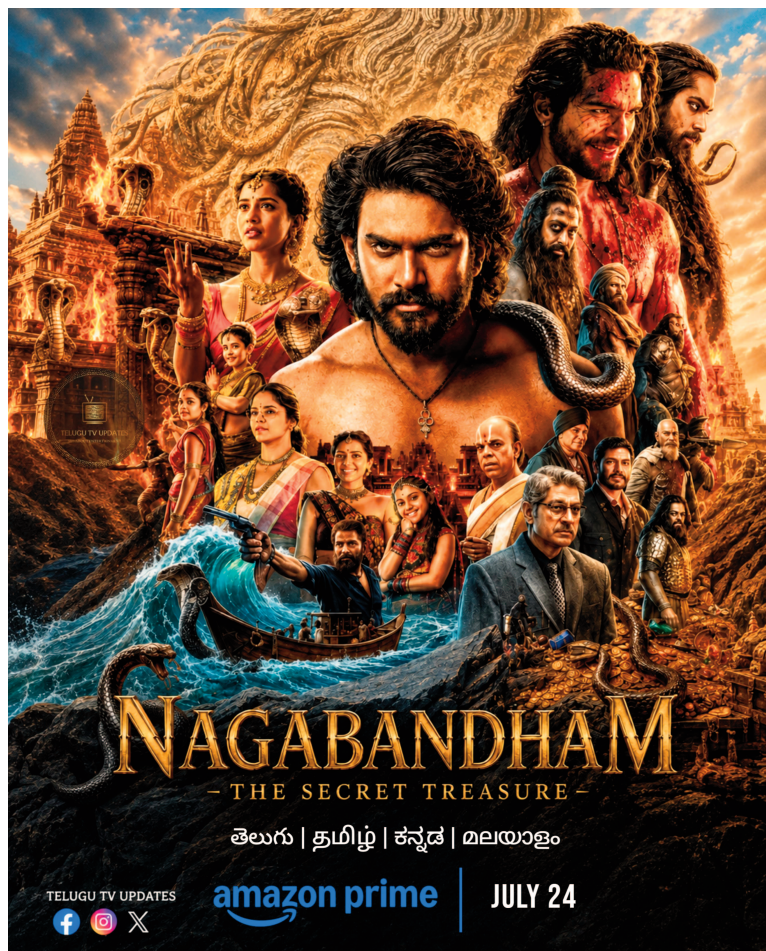
support for students and said their concerns deserve to be heard. However, she cautioned against political parties using the student movement for their own interests. "Listen to the students. They are the future of this country. But no political party should hijack their struggle for its own agenda. A child's future is not a political weapon," she said. The actress had earlier urged authorities to address students' genuine grievances while maintaining that the movement should remain focused on educational reforms rather than political confrontation. The protests at Jantar Mantar have centred on the alleged NEET paper leak, with demonstrators demanding examination reforms and the resignation of UEM Dharmendra Pradhan.

Meera Chopra Condemns Abusive Remarks Against PM



Mumbai: Actress Meera Chopra has criticised a CJP protester for allegedly using abusive language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ongoing student protests over the alleged NEET paper leak. Sharing a video on social media platform X, Meera questioned the protester's conduct and wrote, "Is this the youth of today? Or a NEET student? Please tell me, what kind of youth is this?" While condemning the abusive language, Meera reiterated her

support for students and said their concerns deserve to be heard. However, she cautioned against political parties using the student movement for their own interests. "Listen to the students. They are the future of this country. But no political party should hijack their struggle for its own agenda. A child's future is not a political weapon," she said. The actress had earlier urged authorities to address students' genuine grievances while maintaining that the movement should remain focused on educational reforms rather than political confrontation. The protests at Jantar Mantar have centred on the alleged NEET paper leak, with demonstrators demanding examination reforms and the resignation of UEM Dharmendra Pradhan.



'Nagabandham' Premieres on Prime Video Today

Mythological fantasy adventure Nagabandham is set for its global OTT premiere on Prime Video from July 24, making the film available to viewers in more than 240 countries and territories, including India. Directed by Abhishek Nama, the film is produced by Kishore Annapureddy and Nishita Nagireddy under the NIK Studios banner. The movie stars Virat Karna, Nabha Natesh, Aishwarya Menon, Jagapathi Babu, Murali Sharma, Mahesh Manjrekar and Rishabh Sawhney in key roles. The story follows Rudra, a village youth whose life changes dramatically after a treasure hunter disrupts his sister's wedding while searching for the mysterious "Nagabandham" ritual and hidden treasures believed to lie beneath ancient Vishnu temples across India. Guided by the enigmatic Naga Sadhu Shiva, Rudra embarks on a journey of faith, sacrifice and adventure.

AA Takes Family Vacation in Austria

Hyderabad: Actor Allu Arjun has taken a short break from the busy shooting schedule of his upcoming film Raaka and is currently vacationing in Austria with his family. The actor is accompanied by his wife Sneha Reddy and their children Ayaan and Arha. Sneha shared a series of photographs and videos from the family holiday on Instagram, with the posts attracting lakhs of views from fans. On the professional front, Raaka is being directed by Atlee Kumar and produced by Sun Pictures. The sci-fi action entertainer stars Deepika Padukone in a key role, while Anirudh Ravichander is composing the music. The film is scheduled for a late 2027 theatrical release.

