



Chandrayaan-3: It marks giant leap, lander successfully separates from propulsion

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BJP making other party leaders join the party on GUN POINT - Raj Thackeray



After a long time, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray made scorching attacks on BJP. Addressing the party workers at MNS's Nirdhar rally in Panvel — wherein Raj called for an agitation against the incomplete work at Mumbai-Goa Highway for nearly two decades, he said that “it has been 16-17 years since the Mumbai-Goa Highway was being constructed, but was yet to be completed.” Taking a gibe at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he said that BJP should build its own party rather than breaking other

parties and getting MLAs and MPs from the opposition parties to join them.

“BJP is flexing its muscle and making people join the party... It should now learn to build its own party instead of breaking other parties. Amit (Thackeray's son) was going somewhere, and a toll naka was broken. BJP has said ‘first learn to build roads and then toll booths. I think BJP should learn to build its party without poaching MLAs from other parties,” said Raj referring to a ransacking incident at a toll naka in Nashik last month, allegedly by some MNS workers, when party leader

Amit Thackeray was allegedly stopped and toll booth staffers misbehaved with him.

“I am telling all my MNS sainiks (soldiers), you will keep an eye on the entire Konkan and be vigilant. Who is buying these lands? Otherwise, Konkan will be like the rest of the state where people mainly speak Hindi,” Thackeray said.

Thackeray told MNS workers, “you will all have to hit the road from Panvel to Sawantwadi telling people about all these issues”. “We don't want to bother anyone, but the agitation should be such that the government should be compelled to take

steps to resolve issues and people should get a good quality road from Mumbai to Goa soon,” he added.

The Konkan region comprises Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Raigad, Thane and Palghar, other than the two districts of Mumbai — Mumbai city and Mumbai suburban. But, while the two Mumbai districts, Thane and some parts of Raigad and Palghar are very urban, the rest of Konkan, especially Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, grapples with issues of connectivity, bad roads and lack of adequate industrial employment opportunities.

Raj Thackeray is building his terrain in Konkan?

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

Raj Thackeray making his Konkan pitch posed questions to the BJP government for the longest delay in road widening work. MNS leaders say Raj Thackeray is focusing on plotting out his party's own independent path. Since 2010, it was UPA government in Maharashtra the widening and expansion of the 471-km Mumbai-Goa national highway to four lanes had been underway and is now expected to be completed by December 2023, with the road expected to be opened for traffic in January 2024, Work on the road has been brutally delayed due to interferences in getting forest clearances, time consumed in land acquisition, and issues with the contractors. The MNS chief Wednesday claimed that Rs 15,566 crore had already been

spent on the project, and that over 2,500 people had lost their lives due to the poor state of the existing road.

In the present scenario if someone has to go to the Ratnagiri district, they need to make a U-turn and go to Pune from Mumbai then go to Satara and then from there go to Ratnagiri. The road was better when it was not under construction. Over the last one year, BJP and MNS leaders held several courtesy meetings as the two parties were warming up to exploring a formal or informal understanding for all upcoming polls. However, since the split in the NCP and the inclusion of the Ajit Pawar-led faction in the government, the MNS and the BJP have been infighting.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Editoritis

Raj Thackrey is building his terrain in Konkan?

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In today's political discourse, where ideological moorings are not necessary for an alignment, over ground operative units like these have a lot of value.

Since political outfits of all shapes, sizes & geo-political footprints have already announced a unified vision of 'Defeat Modi' for the 2024 LS polls, MNS type units can & will extract their pound of power from the wannabe challengers.

MNS has a significant following in the region; it cannot match the loyalty of Marathi voters of Both Shiv Sena and significantly commanded by the war chest of the BJP.

In that context, the Konkan districts, with their road problems and inadequate jobs, are a conducive political battlefield, located adjacent to the MNS' home ground of Mumbai, with a largely Marathi population. After BJP coming to power in 2015 with Shiv Sena alliance nothing much moved in state, but the politics has worsened. BJP is more focused on poaching other party leaders to remain in power. Though Uddhav Thackrey Shiv Sena lost its relevance and Raj Thackrey's MNS also a dead party. Raj continues efforts to revive his political existence because state politics has gone berserk.

In today's political discourse, where ideological moorings are not necessary for an alignment, over ground operative units like these have a lot of value. Since electoral politics is no more about winning on ideological strength, but more about amassing enough muscle & anger against a political opponent in pursuit of his / her defeat, the tougher an opponent is to beat, the better the price or value such parties are likely to extract. Since political outfits of all shapes, sizes & geo-political footprints have already announced a unified vision of 'Defeat Modi' for the 2024 LS polls, MNS type units can & will extract their pound of power from the wannabe challengers. Be it Congress which is fighting an existential battle along with the NCP or the Uddhav Shiv Sena, MIM & the invisible left, which will even spill blood to stay relevant.

In these circumstances the MNS is likely to bargain and get a few more seats than they would ever deserve and the Congress and NCP will part with those seats so they can survive politically to fight another day. Once MNS had control over only one Municipal Corporation in the state that was Nashik. Due to desertion and factionalism the position of MNS in Nashik has weakened considerably and it lost Nashik. In Mumbai and Thane, MNS has a significant following in the region; it cannot match the loyalty of Marathi voters of Both Shiv Sena and significantly commanded by the war chest of the BJP. Other cities of the state such as Pune and Nagpur don't have a good MNS presence and it is not expected to increase in near future.

MNS banks only on the charisma and oratory skills of

Raj Thackeray. They do not have a strong organisational structure or dedicated party cadre at the grassroots level. Many of the party cadre complain about the communication gap between the grassroots level workers and party leadership. Raj Thackeray is himself accused of being unreachable to the party workers. Shiv Sena both and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena are regional parties having their presence restricted to a few pockets in Maharashtra.

With Modi waves MNS completely got wiped off from the state. Many of the party leaders have left the party and have joined BJP for obvious reasons. During the previous parliament elections, the party did not win even a single seat, moreover more than 200 candidates lost their security deposits also. In the 2019 assembly elections their strength was reduced from 13 to just 1. Now this party has a presence only for nuisance value. The reason for such a pathetic performance of the party is that the leadership is not focused and behaves like a pendulum. People have stopped taking him seriously.

When the RRPCL project was announced for Barsu, Raj was very upset. Only Konkan tourism is sufficient to support the entire economy of Maharashtra. Raj warned the people of Konkan against selling off their valuable land at cheap rates to politicians and businessmen who are aware of big projects coming up all around and then make huge profits from their land. He also expressed his ire over the long delays for the upcoming Mumbai-Goa highway which has been pending proper completion since 2007 and is a road traveller's nightmare. The 701-km Samruddhi corridor is an expressway from Mumbai to Nagpur, work on which had started in January 2019. The corridor has been partially opened till Shirdi. Raj is making his political pitch in Konkan. Let's see how much people are going to take note of it.

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Vaidehi has received several Awards like I Congo-karmavir chakra, Bedal Powell scout and guide awards 2021- best journalist, Newspaper Association of India award- best journalist. She received lot of awards for her contribution towards journalism.

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Letters to the Editor

Hawkers & roadside eateries must be targeted for throwing their leftovers at roadside corners!

BMC is prompt in collecting garbage from outside each societies as well as other areas but yet the city is facing mounting garbage issues which needs to be tackled professionally. City's population has risen dramatically & trash generated each day has increased manifold. Perhaps, garbage collection drive needs to be carried out both in the morning as well as evening hours to dispose of massive trash the city generates each day.

Also, hawkers as well as roadside eateries throw leftovers recklessly on roadside corners which needs to be controlled & monitored regularly. Steep fines must be imposed on those responsible for not maintaining cleanliness & use of plastic bags which are environmentally hazardous too needs to be banned!

S.N. Kabra

Strong Land Law

Uttarakhand government has shown its commitment regarding strong land law. This step of the state government is commendable. With this, illegal purchase and sale of land, encroachment and encroachment will be stopped in the state. It is going to be 23 years since Uttarakhand became a separate state. However, the cost of land has started touching the sky. In such a situation, it is becoming out of reach for the local residents to buy land and build a house here. The government constituted a committee for this, which has submitted its report to the government. Now the government has made it clear that according to public sentiments, the government is committed to bring land law. This step of the government will definitely protect the rights of the local citizens. However, the practicality of development will also have to be taken care of. Land is also needed for the development and industrial development of the state. In this, the government will have to ensure that the land is used only for the purpose for which it has been given.

Tauqueer Rahmani

Political Morality

When the government becomes strong, then many things related to it become diminutive. It is not known but indirectly, political institutions, institutions and morals are being suppressed to some extent. Decisions are reversed and a kind of independent institution gradually becomes subordinate to the government or the ruling party. Recently, the government introduced a bill, which provides for the exclusion of the Chief Justice from the Election Commissioner and Chief Election Commissioner Appointment Committee. At present, the committee consists of the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. In the new proposal, there is a provision to remove the Chief Justice and add a Union Minister. The opposition leader will also be in it, but two of the three members are from the government, i.e. the prime minister and the union minister, the decision on the basis of the majority will still be as the government wants. If this bill is passed, the Election Commission will also be removed to a government-appointed body. Even before this, the government had overturned the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the rights of the Delhi government through an ordinance. When it was introduced in Parliament to become law, the government argued that Delhi was neither a full-fledged state nor a union territory, and a large amount of central government property was still located in Delhi, it should not be concerned about Delhi. It has the right to make laws. The government may be legally right in overturning the decision of the Supreme Court, because the Rajiv Gandhi government has also done this in the Shahbano case, but there must be some moral ground as well? Where has political morality gone?

Nawaz Ashraf

India's Christians who have fought for the country's Independence



The Christian community from India have played an important role in the early phase of the Indian National Congress, especially at the third session of the Congress in the year 1887, where, out of 607 participants, there were fifteen Indian Christian delegates who actively participated in the deliberation.

Some of the outstanding Indian Christian delegates were Madhu Sunder Das of Odisha who addressed the Congress on the question of expansion of legislative councils and N. Subramanian, who proposed and pleaded for a complete separation of judicial and executive functions by the government officials.

The Indian Christian delegates continued their contributions in the four subsequent sessions of the Congress. Special mention should be made of Pandita Ramabai Saraswati and Kali Chandran Banerji too.

Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858-1922) was an outstanding Indian Christian woman. In the 1889 Congress session, there were 10 Christian delegates of which Pandita Ramabai Saraswati was one. She was one of the first Indians who championed the right of women to participate in national politics, eloquently articulating the pitiable history of Indian womanhood. Ramabai also played an important role in the third session of the National Social Conference in 1889 at which she supported a resolution condemning the practice of disfiguring the Hindu widows. Kali Chandran Banerji is

considered one of the great leaders and founders of 'The Movement for Emancipation'. A writer of the third session of the Congress in 1887 had this to say: "Perhaps, the finest orator in the whole assembly was Babu Kali Chandran Banerji, who is a Bengali Christian."

In the 1889 session, Babu Kali Chandran Banerji was responsible for a resolution demanding improvement in the educational systems particularly university education. He was also instrumental in 1889 in protesting against the prohibition imposed by the government on teachers participating in the political movements. In 1896, he again presented a resolution demanding improvement in the educational system, especially the university education in the country.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (George Thomas), the Hindu Catholic sadhu and theologian was a leading player in the Swadeshi Movement, and he was prosecuted on a charge of sedition in 1907.

C. Kumarappa (original name, John Jesudason Cornelius, 1892-1960) was a veteran Congress leader. On May 9, 1929, he met Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) at the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat and that resulted in their becoming close associates. He was a strong supporter of Satyagraha and encouraged Christian participation in the national movement.

Paul Ramasamy (born in 1906) was another important Christian who took part in the Indian freedom movement. In the year 1930, he joined the freedom movement

during the Salt Satyagraha days. He picketed the Bishop Herber College, Tiruchirappalli. He was arrested and sentenced to six months of imprisonment and was kept at Tiruchirappalli and Allipuram jails in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka respectively.

In the freedom and pro-democracy movement in Travancore in the 1930s and 1940s, prominent Christian leaders like T. M. Varghese, A. J. John, Anne Mascarenhas and Akkamma Cherian were pioneering forces. Philopose Elanjikkal John (1903-1955) was another prominent member of the Travancore State Congress. Joachim Alva (1907-1979) was another outstanding personality in the history of the freedom struggle.

Then was Kaka Joseph Baptista (1864-1930) too who was a close associate of Lokmanya Tilak. He belonged to the East-Indian Catholic community of Mumbai. He was also elected as the Mayor of Bombay in the year, 1925. It was Kaka Joseph Baptista who coined the slogan 'Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it' and not Lokmanya Tilak as we have learnt in school.

- Juber D'Cruz

Columnist

Readers are requested to mail Letters to the Editor only at

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No postal letters will be entertained
(The views expressed are authors' own.)

NIA searches house of accused Shamil Nachan in Maharashtra, gets 'incriminating material' in Pune ISIS module case



The NIA on Thursday searched the house of Shamil Saquib Nachan, arrested last week in the Pune ISIS module case, near here and recovered "incriminating material" that reveals the terror organisation's "conspiracy to disrupt peace and communal harmony in the country", officials said.

A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials searched Nachan's residence at Padgha in Thane

district, the agency said in a statement.

Nachan, a member of ISIS's sleeper cell, was arrested by the NIA on August 11 from his house in Padgha. He was found involved in the fabrication and testing of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and participating in IED assembly and training workshops for commission of terrorist acts, it said. Nachan was the sixth person to be arrested in the Pune-based ISIS module case, it said.

The NIA officials searched Nachan's residence and recovered several mobile phones, hard disks and some hand-written documents that are being examined and analysed, the central probe agency added. "A host of incriminating material exposing the terrorist organisation's conspiracy to disrupt peace and communal harmony in the country was seized," it said. Nachan had been working with the other accused persons arrested in the case - Zulfikar Ali Barodawala, Mohammed Imran Khan, Mohammed Yunus Saki, Simab Nasiruddin Kazi and Abdul Kadir Pathan - along with some other suspects, as part of a bigger conspiracy to trigger violence across various parts of the country by fabricating and exploding the IEDs, it added. Khan and Saki were nabbed by the police in Kothrud area of Pune city last month while stealing a motorcycle, but another suspect Shahnawaz Alam managed to escape. PTI

MVA will win 40-45 of 48 state LS seats: Cong survey



Maha Vikas Aghadi, including Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and Sharad Pawar-led NCP, will win 40 to 45 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the state in next year's elections, claimed an internal Congress survey. The survey by Congress observers was conducted after the defection of Ajit Pawar, who, significantly, is yet to disclose the list of legislators who are with him despite holding the post of deputy CM for more than a month. "Our observers personally visited the 48 Lok Sabha constituencies and

reviewed the current political situation. They concluded the situation is anti-BJP and MVA will win 40 to 45 seats. We have begun preparations to wards that target, and we will join hands with all political parties against BJP. Our aim is to dislodge BJP at all levels," said state Congress chief Nana Patole.

Patole said once the INDIA meeting is over, prominent Congress functionaries will undertake padyatras across the state to convince the people of the need to dislodge the Modi government. "PM is misleading

the nation, even in his address on Independence Day, Modi gave incorrect information on inflation and unemployment. Our view is that the NDA government has failed on all fronts," said Patole, after the core committee meeting attended by former CMs Ashok Chavan and Sushilkumar Shinde, former minister Naseem Khan, Mumbai party chief Varsha Gaikwad, former MP Milind Deora, and Telangana Congress observer Manikrao Thakre. On the third INDIA meeting, a senior Congress leader said Shiv Sena (UBT) will be the main host, while NCP has taken the responsibility of the main guests. Prominent leaders of 26 opposition parties, including the CMs of five states, are expected to attend. Sena will host a dinner on August 31, and Congress a lunch on September 1. The main deliberations will take place on September 1.

'Ajit not big enough to make Delhi offer to Pawar'



Ajit Pawar is not such a big leader that he can make offers to Sharad Pawar, said Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut on Wednesday, referring to the TOI report that Ajit had offered the NCP supremo a cabinet berth at the Centre or the Niti Aayog's chairmanship. "When did Ajit Pawar become so much bigger

than Sharad Pawar that he started giving offers of central posts? Whatever I know of Sharad Pawar, he will not join hands with BJP in his lifetime," said Raut. Despite Ajit's defection, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) is standing strong, added the Sena MP. Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena (UBT) will remain together as MVA and INDIA alliance

Sharad Pawar is undermining his own stature: Maharashtra BJP chief

State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule says, "Sharad Pawar's rallies at Yeola in Nashik last month and Beed today is a comment on how his own dedicated party leaders have chosen to join PM Modi leadership."



"Whether it is Bhujbal or Dhananjay Munde, they have all held Pawar sir in high esteem.

But by holding rallies in their constituencies and attacking them, Sharad Pawar is undermining his own stature."

How a Mumbai police team posed as baraati to nab the uncle of the bride

This May, a seven-member police team from Mumbai's Dadar travelled more than 500 km to Yavatmal with the sole aim of catching a robbery suspect who had been evading them for 14 months. The cops had received a tip-off that their 30-year-old suspect would attend a wedding there and en route, they came up with a plan to attend the function as baraati or wedding guests and catch him unawares. The deception worked and the police had their suspect, Vinod Devkar.

Devkar was an accused in a Rs 50 lakh robbery case. On March 17, 2022, the Dadar police



registered a theft case after a man, later identified as Devkar, walked into the house of a businessman and escaped with Rs 50 lakh in cash. The businessman had travelled out of Mumbai at the time to attend a puja.

Nation

Delhi HC seeks relevant statutory provisions from MCD to Change of land use



The Delhi High Court has directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to produce details of relevant statutory provisions allowing its competent authority to change of land use while hearing a plea filed by lawyer and

activist Amit Sahni, challenging the upcoming commercial shops, multi-level car parking facility by demolishing a Primary school. The bench of Justice Satish Chander Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula, in an order on August 14, granted time to MCD

to file a short affidavit to that extent within a period of four weeks explaining the source of power and the process followed for allowing the change.

The court directed the MCD to produce details regarding the competent authority (along with the relevant statutory provisions), which is competent to allow the change of land use under the Master Plan for Delhi.

The earlier affidavit filed by MCD revealed that the land use at the site of the construction of the multi-level car parking has been changed from 'Part Residential and Part Public Semi-Public (Police Station)' to 'Multilevel Car Parking' by the Standing Committee of MCD. ANI

Delhi HC showed displeasure over admission procedures to law courses through courses through CLAT-UG 2023, grants time to file affidavit



The Delhi High Court on Thursday showed its displeasure over Delhi University's decision or notification for admission to Law courses solely on the basis of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT UG 2023) result. The bench of Justice Satish Chander Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula asked the Counsel representing Delhi University (DU), "When all other universities are relying on Common University Entrance Test (CUET) marks, why is DU considering Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) for admission to the five-year integrated law courses?"

The Delhi University (DU), through its counsel Mohinder Rupal, ensured the Delhi High Court that it will not release any advertisement inviting applications for admission to the five-year Law course till

the case is decided by the high court. The high court noted the submissions, granted time to DU to file its response, and listed the case for further consideration next week. Meanwhile, the bench made it clear that if no affidavit is filed by the next week, the case will be heard on the issue of granting interim relief. The direction came on Thursday during the hearing on a petition challenging a notification issued by Delhi University (DU) for admission to Law courses solely on the basis of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT UG 2023) result.

The PIL sought to quash the notification dated August 4 by the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, for admission to Five-year Integrated Law Courses for the Academic Year 2023-24 solely on the basis of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT UG 2023) result. ANI

Sambhal zila panchayat chairperson of BJP receives death threat

A case has been registered in the Chandausi Kotwali Police Station here in connection with an alleged death threat issued to Sambhal zila panchayat chairperson Dr Anamika Yadav of the BJP, police said on Thursday. The zila panchayat chairperson on Wednesday said that she had gone to Meerut to visit her family members when she got a call from an unknown number on her mobile phone by a caller, who first asked her name and said that he is a JCB driver. "I first thought that someone from the region was speaking, but later he said 'prepare



to go to sleep' and disconnected the call. After this my father-in-law Rajendra Singh gave a complaint in Chandausi Police

Station about a death threat," she said. Superintendent of Police Kuldeep Singh Gunawat said the zila panchayat chairperson has complained that she got a call from an unidentified number threatening to kill her when she was in Meerut on Wednesday. Gunawat said that a case has been registered at Chandausi Kotwali in this connection. The senior police officer further said the preliminary investigation has suggested that the number may be from somewhere around Bharatpur in Rajasthan, adding the matter is being seriously investigated. PTI

WHO chief Ghebreyesus mentioned that 'India has a rich history of traditional medicine'

Praising India for its "rich history" of traditional medicine like Ayurveda and yoga, WHO chief Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus on Thursday stressed the need to integrate this ancient medicinal knowledge into the national health system of countries. The Director-General of the World Health Organization was speaking after inaugurating WHO's first-ever Global Summit on Traditional Medicine in Gandhinagar as part of the G20 Health Minister's

Meetings commenced at the Mahatma Mandir convention centre. "India has a rich history of traditional medicine through Ayurveda, including yoga, which has been shown to be effective in alleviating pain. The Gujarat Declaration, the main outcome of this summit, will focus on integration of traditional medicines in national health systems, and help unlock the power of traditional medicine through science," he said. PTI

Chandrayaan-3: It marks giant leap, lander successfully separates from propulsion module

India's Chandrayaan-3 mission marked another giant leap in its lunar quest as the 'Vikram' lander module of the spacecraft successfully separated from the propulsion module on Thursday. The Chandrayaan-3 mission's lander is named after Vikram Sarabhai (1919-1971), who is widely regarded as the father of the Indian space programme.

On Wednesday, the spacecraft carried out the final lunar-bound orbit



reduction manoeuvre of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft, a week ahead of its scheduled landing on the south pole of the moon on August 23.

A GSLV Mark 3 (LVM 3) heavy-lift launch vehicle

was used for the launch of the spacecraft that was placed in the lunar orbit on August 5 and since then it has been through a series of orbital manoeuvres been lowered closer to the moon's surface. ANI

World

Tension in China-Taiwan has become big concern for Philippines



The escalating tension between China and Taiwan has become a "major concern" for the Philippine government, according to Philstar citing Manila's National Security Policy. In the National Security Policy 2023 to 2028, the Philippine government said the Taiwan-China relations have the "potential to be the flashpoint in the region."

It further stated that the Philippines is concerned about

its economic stability, a potential influx of refugees, and the welfare of overseas populations, reported Philstar. Philstar is the name used for "The Philippine Star", which is an English-language newspaper in the Philippines and the flagship brand of the Philstar Media Group.

"Any military conflict in the Taiwan Strait would inevitably affect the Philippines given the geographic proximity of Taiwan to the Philippine archipelago and

the presence of over 150,000 Filipinos in Taiwan," it added. China claimed that Taiwan is part of their country while the latter called itself a sovereign and independent country and not part of the former.

A few days back China vowed to take 'strong measures' after Taiwan's Vice President William Lai stopover at the US. In a statement issued by the country's Foreign Ministry after Lai stopover at the US, China said, "China firmly opposes any form of official interaction between the US and the Taiwan region. We firmly oppose any visit by 'Taiwan independence' separatists to the US in any name or under whatever pretext, and we firmly oppose the US government having any form of official contact with the Taiwan region. China deplors and strongly condemns the US decision to arrange the so-called "stopover" for Lai Ching-te." ANI

UK forum says, "China's current nuclear expansion underlines quest for status"



A quest for status, changing views of deterrence and the desire to get Taiwan back are among the drivers of China's current nuclear expansion, according to experts at The Democracy Forum's (TDF) August panel discussion, which focused on what has led to this momentous build-up, as well as aiming to uncover its extent and strategic imperatives. The Democracy Forum (TDF) is a not-for-profit NGO that promotes ideals of democracy, pluralism and tolerance through public debate.

Recalling the Pentagon's admission, in 2021, that the

PLA was on track to quadruple its stock of nuclear warheads to 1,000 by 2030, TDF president Lord Bruce on Wednesday noted that China's nuclear expansion appears to be shifting towards a much less restrained and more offensive posture.

Analysts such as Austin Long suggested that, by 2030, China's 'force structure and posture will be similar to America's and Russia's in many ways in light of the Pentagon's reassessment of Chinese nuclear capability to 1500 warheads by 2035. Lord Bruce also highlighted a warning by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who recently visited China, that humanity's future is endangered by a fundamental lack of trust between China and the US, leaving the world 'on the path to great power confrontation', with both sides having 'convinced themselves that the other represents a strategic danger. ANI

Taliban imposes ban on all political parties in Afghanistan



The Afghan Taliban has imposed one more ban, this time on political parties in Afghanistan. Interim Minister for Justice, Shaikh Maulavi Abdul Hakeem Sharae said there was a complete ban on activities of political parties in Afghanistan, the Dawn reported. "Political parties' activities have been completely stopped in the country because neither do these parties have any standing in Sharia, any place in Sharia nor are any national interests attached to these parties or the

nation liked them," Interim Minister for Justice, Shaikh Maulavi Abdul Hakeem Sharae said on Wednesday while presenting annual report of his ministry in Kabul, according to a statement issued by the Afghan Taliban's media outlet, according to the Dawn.

The statement demonstrates that the Afghan Taliban may continue to monopolise power as a movement and have no intention of allowing political plurality in the country, the Dawn opined. ANI

Pakistan's Vandalism in churches : 'High-level' inquiry ordered

After a mob allegedly set fire to multiple churches and vandalised Christians' homes, the interim Punjab government has ordered a "high-level" inquiry, Geo News reported on Thursday. On Wednesday, the mob made its way through a predominantly

Christian area on the outskirts of the industrial city of Faisalabad after allegations that the Holy Quran had been desecrated.

"This was a well thought out plan to disrupt peace and a high-level investigation is underway regarding the desecration of the Holy Quran and incidents that take

place afterwards," a spokesperson for the provincial government said in a statement, according to Geo News. The spokesperson said police "foiled" the bid to attack the homes of the minorities, adding that the "peace committee" was mobilised to ensure similar attempts are thwarted. ANI

Trilateral Summit: US expected is to expand South Korea and Japan security limit

At their first trilateral summit, the United States, South Korea, and Japan are expected to form an ongoing tripartite security system to defend the Indo-Pacific area – a move China rejects as adversarial, according to experts, Voice of America (VOA) reported. The US will use the gathering of the three nations on Friday, August 18, at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, to strengthen its two



treaty relationships and expand their roles in the area, according to experts.

US President Joe Biden, his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

are anticipated to make announcements at the summit's conclusion about holding follow-up meetings and taking steps to strengthen security cooperation beyond thwarting North Korean threats, according to VOA. ANI

Expression

UPI Cloning Fraud on the Rise in India



Rajesh Sharma
Columnist

India's flagship payments system, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), is grappling with a severe crisis - the alarming rise of UPI cloning frauds. UPI cloning frauds are a specific kind of UPI scam where the con artist duplicates the victim's SIM card. It enables them to gain unauthorized access to the victim's UPI account and carry out transactions without their consent.

The scam starts with the fraudster manages to gather crucial information about the victim's bank account and identification details. This information is obtained through deceptive methods like phishing emails, malicious software, or other dishonest tactics.

Once armed with the victim's information, the fraudster gets in touch with the mobile service provider the victim uses. They fabricate a story about losing or damaging their SIM card and request a replacement. They provide the victim's personal data and identification documents to add legitimacy to their request. With the provider convinced, the fraudster is issued a new SIM card bearing the same phone number as the victim's. The old SIM card is simultaneously deactivated, cutting off the victim's access to their own network and SMS services.

Now equipped with the new SIM card, the fraudster is positioned to intercept any One-Time Passwords (OTPs) that the victim might receive. They can manipulate these OTPs to change the UPI Personal Identification Number (PIN) and infiltrate the victim's UPI and banking apps. At this point, the victim finds themselves disconnected from

their services. At the same time, the fraudster takes control of their UPI account. The fraudster exploits this control to execute transactions from the victim's account, siphoning funds either into their account or directing the money to intermediaries known as "money mules."

In essence, UPI cloning frauds involve sophisticated steps that allow scammers to exploit the victim's SIM card, gain unauthorized access to their UPI account, and conduct transactions under pretenses. It's a scheme highlighting the importance of safeguarding personal information and staying vigilant against such deceptive practices.

According to the latest RBI statistics, over 2 lakh cases of UPI cloning fraud amounting to Rs 500 crore were recorded in 2022-23 alone, marking a 200% spike from the previous year.

Cyber researchers say the exponential increase in UPI usage is expected to cross 1.5 billion transactions per month soon. However, this growth has also lured cyber criminals looking to exploit vulnerabilities and rob citizens.

The modus operandi involves fraudsters gaining access to critical banking credentials of victims, such as UPI PINs, MPINs, and OTPs, through phishing attacks, compromised QR codes, remote access apps, and SIM swap scams. They then clone the UPI ID on another device and initiate fraudulent transactions, siphoning hard-earned money from accounts without raising red flags.

Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Telangana have reported the highest UPI cloning cases due to greater digital payment adoption. Rural areas with lower tech literacy have become easy prey.

While banks are taking on partial liability, the onus of security also lies equally with customers. Experts strongly advise against sharing



confidential banking credentials like UPI PINs and OTPs via phone, SMS, email, or social media. Downloading remote apps from shady sources and scanning QR codes randomly is downright precarious.

For now, cloners have an edge in this game of deception. Cyber security researchers recommend mass security awareness drives, sophisticated biometrics, AI-based fraud analytics, and robust redressal mechanisms to stem this epidemic.

Ensuring citizens' trust in digital payments is vital for India's growth ambitions. Else this crisis can snowball into a catastrophe, warn stakeholders. As cybercrooks get more intelligent, so must solutions. All stakeholders must come together to win this war against digital fraud.

If you become a victim of UPI fraud, there are some steps you can take to report it and seek redressal. First, immediately contact your bank or UPI app provider and request them to block your account and stop any further fraudulent transactions. You can easily find customer care numbers of popular UPI apps to report fraud

quickly.

Second, file a complaint with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and provide transaction details like date, time, amount, UPI ID, reference number, etc. NPCI is the umbrella organization that operates retail payments in India and will investigate the matter.

Third, register an FIR at your local police station or cybercrime cell. Submit your complaint copies, bank statement, and other evidence to help the police take legal action.

Fourth, approach the Digital Payments Ombudsman by RBI to file an online complaint regarding UPI fraud. Provide necessary personal and transaction details so the ombudsperson can examine your case and facilitate an amicable resolution.

With prompt contacting these organizations and providing the required information, you can report UPI frauds and seek recourse under consumer protection laws. The sooner you act, the higher the chances of blocking further loss and nabbing the fraudsters.

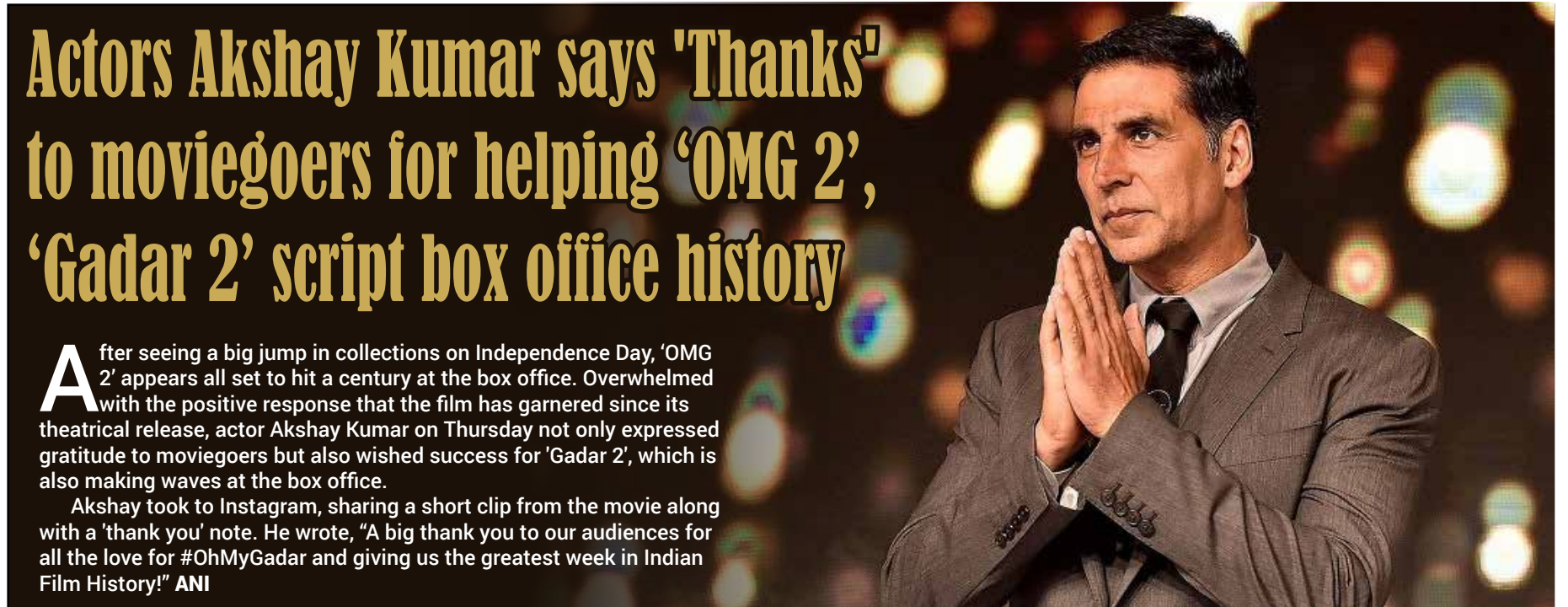
Entertainment

Actor Sunny Deol's video goes viral on social media, He was seen fan scolding at airport



Actor-politician Sunny Deol on Thursday made headlines after a video of the Bollywood star surfaced online, showing him purportedly getting angry with a fan who was trying to click a picture with him. In the video, doing the rounds of X, formerly Twitter, Deol is seen making his way out of an airport when a fan comes close to the actor and attempts to click a selfie. When the fan took time to capture the photo, a visibly annoyed "Gadar 2" star tells him in Punjabi: "Lai na photo (take the photo)". **PTI**

Actors Akshay Kumar says 'Thanks' to moviegoers for helping 'OMG 2', 'Gadar 2' script box office history



After seeing a big jump in collections on Independence Day, 'OMG 2' appears all set to hit a century at the box office. Overwhelmed with the positive response that the film has garnered since its theatrical release, actor Akshay Kumar on Thursday not only expressed gratitude to moviegoers but also wished success for 'Gadar 2', which is also making waves at the box office.

Akshay took to Instagram, sharing a short clip from the movie along with a 'thank you' note. He wrote, "A big thank you to our audiences for all the love for #OhMyGadar and giving us the greatest week in Indian Film History!" **ANI**

Priyanka Chopra Jonas disassociates herself from her New York-based restaurant



Actor-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas is no longer associated with Sona, her Indian cuisine restaurant which was opened in 2021 in New York City. A spokesperson for the "Citadel" star confirmed the news to People magazine. "Priyanka has stepped away from her partnership at Sona. Bringing Sona to life will invariably be a proud and significant moment in her career. **PTI**

