



Rana extradited; NIA arrests him

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistani-origin Canadian-American involved in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks conspiracy, was extradited from the U.S. and brought to Delhi on Thursday evening. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) formally arrested him and presented him before Special NIA Judge Chander Jit Singh, seeking 20-day custody. His lawyer is Advocate Piyush Sachdeva from the Delhi Legal Services Authority. Due to security concerns, media and public were cleared from the court premises. Rana was brought under tight security, including SWAT vehicles. His extradition sparked a political tussle between the BJP and Congress, with the BJP calling it a win for India's anti-terrorism stance, while Congress credited earlier diplomatic efforts. Preparations have been made for his detention in Tihar Jail's high-security ward.

Terror trail

Tahawwur Rana's extradition to India was finalised in the terror case trial after years of legal hurdles

Nov. 11, 2009: NIA registers case against David Headley, Rana, and others

Dec. 24, 2011: Chargesheet filed against them and seven others

Dec. 4, 2019: India requests Rana's extradition from the U.S.



May 16, 2023: U.S. court approves extradition

Aug. 15, 2024: Appeals court upholds extradition

Feb. 11, 2025: U.S. approves extradition, a day before Narendra Modi-Donald Trump meet

Feb. 13, 2025: Rana seeks relief again; Modi and Trump issue joint extradition statement

Apr. 7, 2025: Chief Justice rejects final appeal

Apr. 10, 2025: NIA brings Rana to New Delhi for prosecution

Complex case: NIA officials with Tahawwur Rana on his arrival in Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Rana also helped him obtain an Indian visa. Rana and his wife visited India just before the attacks. The NIA registered a case against Rana and Headley in 2009, citing a conspiracy involving LeT and Harkat-ul Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI). India requested Rana's extradition in 2019, and after a lengthy legal process, the U.S. Supreme Court denied his petition in January 2025, clearing the way for extradition.

Beijing bites back at U.S. tariffs by curbing Hollywood imports

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In response to U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff hikes on Chinese imports, China announced it would immediately restrict imports of Hollywood films. The National Film Administration cited declining domestic interest in U.S. movies and stated it would reduce American film imports while respecting market demand. Analysts believe the move will have limited impact, as Hollywood films have already been losing ground to Chinese productions. At the same time, China is seeking support from other countries, particularly the EU, to counter U.S. trade actions and strengthen international cooperation in trade and investment.

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PM-JAY scheme rollout begins in Delhi with 30 beneficiaries getting their Ayushman cards

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Five days after signing an MoU with the Centre, the Delhi government issued Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) cards to the first 30 beneficiaries at Vigyan Bhawan. Registration is now open to the public. The Delhi government also signed an MoU for the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) to strengthen health systems across all levels and prepare for future health crises.

Under PM-JAY, 6.5 lakh Delhi families will get ₹5 lakh health coverage for hospitalisation, with the Delhi government adding another ₹5 lakh per family from its own funds. Beneficiaries include ASHA and anganwadi workers. So far, 46 private hospitals are being empanelled, and healthcare workers are being trained to assist with registrations.

Ayushman Arogya Mandirs

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced that under the PM-ABHIM scheme, ₹1,749 crore will be used to set up 1,139 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs), 11 integrated public health labs, and 9 critical care blocks. Existing Mohalla Clinics will be upgraded into AAMs, while new ones will be built from the ground up. Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda criticized the previous AAP government for not joining the PM-JAY scheme earlier, noting that with Delhi's inclusion, West Bengal is now the only state not implementing it.

HC grants bail to rape accused as 'victim herself invited trouble'

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Allahabad High Court granted bail to a rape accused, observing that the survivor had "invited trouble" herself. The survivor, a postgraduate student, stated she got intoxicated at a bar with friends and later agreed to go to the accused's house to rest. She alleged that he inappropriately touched her en route and instead took her to a relative's home in Gurugram, where he raped her twice. The accused claimed the incident suggested a consensual relationship rather than rape.

'Won't misuse liberty'

The accused's lawyer argued for bail, stating his client had been in jail since December 2024, had no prior criminal record, and would cooperate with the legal process. On March 11, Justice Sanjay Kumar Singh of the Allahabad High Court granted bail, noting that the woman was capable of understanding the consequences of her actions and had "invited trouble." The court referred to the victim's own statements and medical report, which showed a torn hymen but no conclusive medical opinion on sexual assault.

BSF plans IED detection drive along India-Pak. border areas in Punjab

INTERNAL SECURITY



The BSF will conduct an anti-IED sweep along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab after two bombs were found in Gurdaspur, injuring a jawan. This marks the first recovery of such devices in the area. About 20.3 km of the Punjab border near Pathankot has been shifted under the Jammu frontier's jurisdiction for better coordination. A large-scale sanitation drive and anti-sabotage checks are underway. Officials suspect cross-border involvement with military-level precision in assembling the IEDs. The BSF plans to raise the issue with Pakistan Rangers and deploy additional detection equipment and sniffer dogs.

NCB seizes 30 kg of meth tablets worth ₹24.32 cr. in Assam

INTERNAL SECURITY

The NCB seized 30.4 kg of methamphetamine ('Yaba') tablets worth ₹24.32 crore and arrested three people in two operations in Silchar, Assam, on April 6. In a joint effort with Assam Police and CRPF, 9.9 kg of the drug was found in a car's boot cavity, and 20.5 kg was later recovered from another vehicle's spare tyre. Union Home Minister Amit Shah praised the operation, reaffirming the government's commitment to a drug-free India and continued action against drug cartels.

The issue with delimitation's population-based process

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Delimitation, rooted in Articles 82 and 170 of the Indian Constitution, has sparked intense debate. While some concerns are grounded in constitutional implications, others are exaggerated, such as urging population growth to avoid being outnumbered. Critics who once accused the government of violating the Constitution now oppose implementing its provisions by calling for a freeze on delimitation. As per the Constitution, seat allocation must be revised after each census, but this was deferred until 2026 through amendments. This has caused concern, especially in southern states, over potential loss of representation due to slower population growth. The ongoing debate centers on balancing population-based seat distribution with federal principles, as a purely mathematical approach may favor faster-growing states.

Data from the past and trends

The Election Commission data shows the evolution of Lok Sabha seats over time. Starting with 489 seats in 1951-52, the number rose to 494 in 1957 and 520 in 1967, based on the 1961 Census. Some states like Andhra Pradesh, Madras, and Uttar Pradesh saw reductions, while others, including Assam, Maharashtra, and Kerala, gained seats. New states and union territories were also allotted seats. In 1971, the total dropped to 518 after two seats were cut in Himachal Pradesh. By 1977, 24 seats were added, raising the count to 542. More states and UTs gained representation, and Daman and Diu later received a separate seat, bringing the total to 543—the current Lok Sabha strength, based on the 1971 Census.

What needs to be considered

The ongoing debate on delimitation, focus on three issues: using population as the basis for seat allocation, the influence of public policy on this criterion, and the true representativeness of elected officials. While population has been the primary factor in determining seat distribution, no fixed formula exists for how many people each MP or MLA should represent. The average population per Lok Sabha seat has risen from 7.32 lakh in 1951 to around 27 lakh in 2024, and Vidhan Sabha representation has similarly expanded. Despite population being the simplest and most inclusive basis for universal franchise, other factors like geography and political boundaries have also been considered. The passage questions whether the population criterion should remain unalterable, suggesting that, like the Finance Commission, delimitation could also adapt to current realities to maintain federal balance and avoid regional disparities.

The true meaning of "representation" in a democracy, arguing that the size of a constituency does not impact the effectiveness or duties of an elected MP or MLA, such as law-making or committee participation. There is no evidence that smaller constituencies are better represented than larger ones. Examples from Haryana and Daman and Diu show no clear benefit from having separate representatives. In the first-past-the-post system, numerical size doesn't affect representativeness. The passage suggests that instead of focusing on increasing seats based on population, strengthening local governance and devolving power to local bodies would be a more effective way to improve democracy and governance.

A primary criterion that needs moderation

The population is used as the sole basis for seat allocation in Parliament is unfair, especially since states that successfully implemented population control—promoted by the central government—may be penalized with reduced representation. To address this, the author suggests using a deflator, like the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), to adjust population figures and moderate the advantage gained by high-population states. For instance, while the 2024 population may warrant 1,440 Lok Sabha seats based on the 1977 ratio, applying a TFR-based adjustment could bring this down to about 680. With state-wise TFR data available, such a formula could ensure fairer representation. The passage concludes that if Parliament can debate election management reforms, it can also deliberate on addressing the structural imbalances in population-based delimitation.

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Drop the piecemeal ways to social security for workers

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

India is advancing social security measures for app-based gig workers, with a central scheme awaiting Cabinet approval. Proposed benefits include Ayushman Bharat health coverage, registration on the eShram portal, and a transaction-based pension scheme that tracks earnings across platforms using a universal account number. This scheme recognizes the unique nature of gig work, allowing multiple employers to contribute to a worker's welfare. While this marks progress in extending protections beyond formal employment, it also reveals the reactive nature of India's current social security system, emphasizing the need for a proactive and adaptable framework to address emerging labor trends.

The flaws in the existing system

India, despite being a founding member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), has not ratified the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). Its own Code on Social Security, enacted decades later, aims to offer comprehensive social protection but faces criticism for vague definitions, weak safeguards, and poor implementation. A key flaw lies in its dependence on welfare boards, which have repeatedly failed to deliver benefits effectively. For example, RTI data revealed that various State Welfare Boards had not utilized over ₹70,000 crore collected for construction workers' welfare, and a CAG report highlighted delayed remittances in Tamil Nadu worth ₹221.8 crore. Even Kerala, known for its welfare focus, showed poor functioning in many of its boards. These shortcomings have prompted repeated demands for reform in welfare board operations.

The problem with incremental approaches

India's fragmented, welfare board-driven social welfare system is often defended for providing targeted relief to specific worker groups, like Karnataka's beedi workers. However, relying solely on such a piecemeal approach risks excluding emerging or equally vulnerable informal worker segments, such as gig and domestic workers. This can create artificial distinctions and arbitrary eligibility criteria. A more effective strategy would combine universal social protection with targeted support, recognizing the shared precariousness of all informal work. Moreover, placing excessive hope on gig work as a path to formalising informal labour is unrealistic and potentially misleading.

Towards universal social protection systems

As India prepares its workforce for the future, it must establish resilient social protection systems. Given the likelihood that the Social Security Code will remain in place despite implementation challenges, the most practical approach is to treat the Code's provisions as a baseline. States can then build upon it to create more inclusive, accessible, and universal social security frameworks that ensure no worker is left out.

Now, justice

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Seventeen years after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, India is set to try Tahawwur Hussain Rana, recently extradited from the U.S. His extradition marks a major achievement in India's counter-terror diplomacy and investigation efforts. A former Pakistani military doctor and childhood friend of David Headley, Rana aided in planning the attacks and facilitating Headley's movements. Though not convicted for the Mumbai attacks in the U.S., he served time for his links to Lashkar-e-Taiba and a Copenhagen terror plot. His trial in India is expected to uncover more about his Pakistan connections and bring justice for the 2008 attacks that killed 166 people.

With Tahawwur Rana's extradition, Indian prosecutors must now conduct a fair and time-bound trial, while the government investigates unresolved questions—such as Rana's ties to the Pakistani military, the extent of Pakistan's official involvement, and the U.S. decision to offer David Headley a plea bargain that prevented his extradition despite his central role. It also raises concerns about why the U.S. failed to alert India of Headley's movements post-attack. Rana's trial is expected to refocus international attention on Pakistan and increase pressure to prosecute Lashkar-e-Taiba leaders like Hafiz Saeed, marking a crucial step toward justice and closure for the 26/11 victims.



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A cut in time

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee unanimously cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6%, offering relief to businesses amid global trade tensions. Exporters have been urging the government to accelerate U.S. trade talks as they face new tariffs. The RBI's shift from a "neutral" to an "accommodative" stance signals potential future rate cuts. The move aims to boost liquidity and support business investment during economic uncertainty, with banks already beginning to reduce loan rates for borrowers. This policy shift is intended to help businesses stay resilient and diversify exports amid global volatility.

The RBI has lowered its GDP growth forecast from 6.7% to 6.5%, signaling concern despite supportive measures like rate cuts and low inflation. The central bank attributes the expected slowdown to global economic uncertainty, especially trade tensions. The escalating U.S.-China trade war, with retaliatory tariffs reminiscent of the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Act, threatens global trade and growth. The passage underscores that economic protectionism must be balanced and suggests that sustainable national growth, particularly for the U.S., lies in strengthening research, education, and innovation rather than harming global trade.

Surrender policy is not a complete solution: Maoists

INTERNAL SECURITY



The CPI (Maoist) has rejected the Indian government's surrender policy as a complete solution to the insurgency issue, stating that peace talks require a conducive environment, which the government has failed to create. This response follows Union Home Minister Amit Shah's appeal for Maoists to lay down arms and integrate into the mainstream. Despite the Chhattisgarh government's new 2025 surrender and rehabilitation policy offering financial aid and incentives for Maoist-free villages, the Maoists argue that genuine dialogue cannot occur under current government approaches, which they believe must be opposed.

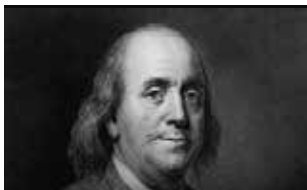
The CPI (Maoist) reiterated its demand for a halt to security operations, particularly in Bastar, as a precondition for peace talks, arguing that dialogue cannot occur amid ongoing anti-Maoist campaigns like the Kagar operation. The group emphasized the need to consult both central and local leadership before proceeding. In response, Chhattisgarh Deputy CM Vijay Sharma reaffirmed the government's willingness to hold talks, urging Maoists to begin discussions without waiting for leadership approval, and called on them to release villagers from their control to enable a violence-free environment for meaningful dialogue.

RTI Act amendment won't cut transparency: Minister

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw stated that the upcoming amendment to the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005—triggered by the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act—will preserve transparency and not restrict access to personal information. However, civil society groups and Opposition leaders argue that the amendment weakens the RTI Act by allowing the government to withhold public-interest information involving personal data. Critics highlight that the DPDP Act removes key RTI safeguards, such as the clause mandating disclosure of information that cannot be denied to Parliament. Opposition MPs and activists have strongly condemned the change, calling it an attack on citizens' right to hold the government accountable.

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"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."

—Benjamin Franklin

Kuki bodies tell Meiteis not to climb hill for annual event

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Tensions have resurfaced in Manipur as Kuki tribal groups opposed the Meitei community's traditional Cheiraoba hill trek to Thangjing Hill, located in a Kuki-dominated area. Six Kuki organisations warned Meiteis not to cross the 'buffer zone' separating the two communities, citing the need for a political settlement for the Kuki-Zo-Hmar people under the Constitution. They threatened strong resistance against any attempt to enter their territory. Meanwhile, curfew in Churachandpur district was partially relaxed following recent ethnic clashes, but remained in place in high-tension areas due to ongoing disputes over community flags.

India's decision to cancel transshipment facility won't affect Bangladesh: official

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bangladesh's Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin stated that the country would manage independently after India withdrew the trans-shipment facility for Bangladeshi exports to regions like West Asia and Europe (except Nepal and Bhutan). He expressed confidence in overcoming the challenges through domestic efforts, including enhancing commercial capacity and connectivity. While infrastructure and cost-related issues are being addressed, he said there are no current plans to send a formal protest to India. He also noted that the temporary suspension of additional U.S. tariffs offers some immediate relief.

Global order is disrupted by trade weaponisation: Rajnath

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, speaking at the Defence Services Staff College convocation, warned that the weaponisation of trade, monopolies in disruptive technologies, and opaque data flows are pushing the world towards unilateralism and weakening global institutions. He highlighted global challenges such as de-globalisation, nationalism, resource scarcity, and pandemics. Singh emphasized that technologies like AI, drones, and space-based systems are revolutionising warfare, noting that in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, drones have caused more losses than traditional weapons. He stressed that warfare is expanding into new domains like space and cyberspace, redefining modern combat.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized the need for India's armed forces to operate jointly in a multi-domain environment, where cyber, space, and information warfare are as crucial as traditional combat. He highlighted persistent security threats from India's borders and terrorism from neighboring regions. He urged officers to be critical thinkers aware of emerging technologies and security challenges. Singh announced 2025 as the "Year of Reforms" to modernize the military for integrated operations, with reforms underway in nine key areas, including defence acquisition and procedural changes.



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Centre to pay more for PM-POSHAN scheme in schools

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Education Ministry announced a 9.5% increase in material costs for cooking hot meals under the PM-POSHAN scheme, due to inflation. This will add ₹954 crore to the 2025–26 budget. From May 1, the daily cost per student will rise from ₹6.19 to ₹6.78 in Bal Vatikas and primary schools, and from ₹9.29 to ₹10.17 in upper primary schools.

The Education Ministry stated that while revised material costs under the PM-POSHAN scheme are minimum mandatory rates, States/UTs may contribute more to enhance nutrition. Under the scheme, Bal Vatika and primary students receive 20g pulses, 50g vegetables, and 5g oil; upper primary students get 30g, 75g, and 7.5g respectively. The scheme provides hot meals to 11.2 crore students in over 10.36 lakh government and aided schools daily, aiming to improve nutrition and boost school attendance.

The Centre also provides about 26 lakh tonnes of foodgrains through the Food Corporation of India. It bears 100% cost of foodgrains, including subsidy of approximately ₹9,000 crore a year, and 100% transportation cost from the FCI depot to schools. The per-meal cost, after adding all components including food grains cost, comes to approximately ₹12.13 for Bal Vatika and primary classes and ₹17.62 for upper primary.

SC judgment on T.N. Governor addresses a Constitutional silence

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court has set a three-month deadline for Governors to act on Bills sent for assent, aiming to address a "Constitutional silence" as the Constitution sets no time limit. This move follows concerns that Governors, particularly in non-BJP-ruled States like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Kerala, were delaying assent. The Court reaffirmed that real power lies with elected representatives, and warned that non-compliance with the new deadline could lead to judicial action.

The April 8 Supreme Court judgment strengthened earlier rulings by setting a firm three-month deadline for Governors to act on Bills, moving beyond prior advice to act within a "reasonable time." Similarly, on April 3, the Court addressed another "Constitutional silence"—the lack of deadlines for Speakers to decide disqualification cases under the anti-defection law. Criticizing delays like those by the Telangana Speaker, the Court warned that without fixed timelines, the Tenth Schedule would become ineffective. It cited a 2020 ruling suggesting a three-month deadline, which has often been ignored.

‘Geopolitical risk to hit emerging economies harder in second month’

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

According to an RBI study in the Monetary Policy Report 2025, geopolitical risks have a stronger impact on emerging economies' stock markets, currencies, and credit spreads in the second month after the risk event. Using a Geo-Political Risk (GPR) index, the study found that a 1 percentage point rise in GPR leads to a 0.25 pp drop in stock markets, 0.16 pp currency depreciation, and a 1 pp increase in credit spreads. Credit spreads represent the gap between government bond yields (6.55% for India's 10-year bond as of April 9) and corporate bond yields.

Stocks impacted

The RBI study found that a 1 percentage point rise in geopolitical risk causes stock markets to drop 0.64 pp, currencies to depreciate 0.32 pp, and credit spreads to widen by 1.2 pp in the second month. While these effects diminish over time, repeated geopolitical shocks create prolonged economic uncertainty and sustained elevated risks.

U.S. tariff pause a temporary respite for Indian exporters

The U.S. decision to pause reciprocal tariffs, retaining only a 10% baseline tariff, offers temporary relief to Indian exporters, especially in textiles and jewellery. While this may cause a short-term dip in U.S. demand due to higher prices, exporters can use the pause to stabilize and plan. Industry bodies urged the Indian government to push for a long-term resolution with the U.S. and consider interim support for textile exports. With high tariffs on China, India sees reduced competition in global trade.

Export council leaders highlighted that the global shift under the "China plus one" strategy is reshaping trade dynamics, creating equal opportunities for countries like India, Vietnam, and South Korea. As nations pursue bilateral trade agree-

ments with the U.S., India must actively negotiate not just on tariffs but broader trade issues. They urged the Indian government to foster an investment-friendly environment to boost exports and GDP. Additionally, they warned India to enforce stricter rules of origin for imports, as China, with its massive low-cost production and raw material reserves, may reroute exports via trade pacts like the RCEP.

EU pauses counter-tariffs for 90 days after U.S. reprieve

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The European Commission has decided to pause its planned retaliatory tariffs on \$23 billion worth of U.S. goods for 90 days, aligning with U.S. President Trump's temporary suspension of his new tariffs to allow room for negotiations. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized that the EU is open to dialogue but warned that countermeasures will proceed if talks fail. Trump's initial tariffs included a 20% levy on EU goods, now reduced to a 10% baseline during the pause. The EU aims to avoid wider trade escalation, targeting limited goods to apply political pressure while protecting the broader €1.6 trillion transatlantic trade relationship.

China slams 'irresponsible remarks' made by Zelenskyy

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



China has warned against making "irresponsible remarks" after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed that Chinese citizens are being recruited by Russia to fight in the Ukraine war. Zelenskyy stated that Kyiv had identified 155 Chinese nationals involved and claimed two had been captured in Donetsk. In response, China's Foreign Ministry urged all parties to view China's role "correctly," maintaining that it remains neutral in the conflict. Zelenskyy accused Russia of trying to involve other countries, including China, in the war, calling it a deliberate move to escalate the conflict.


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