



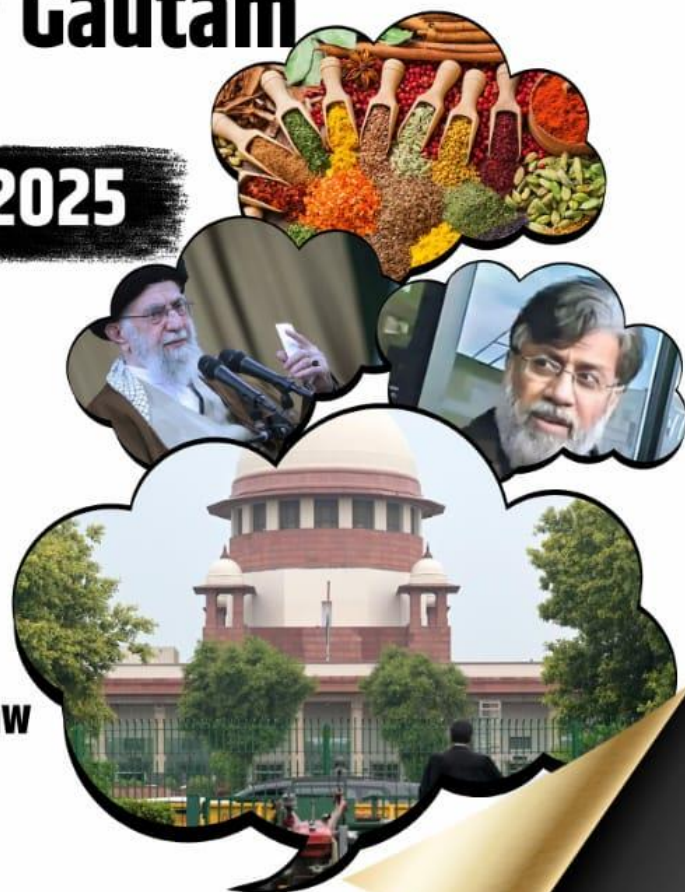
Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 Iran Declines to Resume Nuclear Deal Negotiations with the U.S.

Context: Iran has **refused to re-enter negotiations** with the United States regarding its nuclear program. This decision follows years of tension, especially after the U.S. withdrawal from the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** in 2018.



Reasons Behind Iran's Decision:

- The Trump administration imposed **harsh sanctions** on Iran, particularly targeting its **oil industry**, as part of a “**maximum pressure**” strategy.
- Former President Trump **demanding negotiations**, warning of possible **military action** if Iran refused.
- Iran's **Foreign Minister** declared that Iran would only negotiate with the **remaining JCPOA members** (Europe, Russia, and China) but **not with the U.S.**

Understanding the JCPOA (2015):

Participants:

- Iran**
- P5+1:** The five **permanent members** of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the U.S.) plus **Germany**
- European Union** (Participated in negotiations)

Iran's Commitments Under the JCPOA:

- Nuclear Restrictions:** Iran agreed **not to produce highly enriched uranium or plutonium** for nuclear weapons. Its **nuclear facilities** (Fordow, Natanz, Arak) were restricted to **civilian purposes**.
- Centrifuge Limits:** Iran limited its **centrifuges** and reduced its **enriched uranium stockpile**.
 - 5% enrichment:** For nuclear power.
 - 20% enrichment:** For research or medical use.
 - 90% enrichment:** For nuclear weapons (not allowed under JCPOA).
- Monitoring & Verification:** Iran allowed **unrestricted access** to **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors**, ensuring compliance.
- Joint Commission Oversight:** A commission was set up to **monitor implementation** and resolve disputes.

Commitments from Other Signatories:

- Sanctions Relief:** The EU, UN, and U.S. **lifted nuclear-related sanctions** but kept restrictions on Iran's **ballistic missile program, support for terrorism, and human rights abuses**.
- Oil & Financial Transactions:** The U.S. **partially lifted sanctions** on Iran's **oil exports** but kept financial restrictions.
- UN Arms & Missile Ban:** Lifted after **five years**, provided **IAEA confirmed Iran's compliance**.
- Violation & Sanctions “Snapback”:** If Iran violated the deal, the **UN Security Council** could vote to **reinstate sanctions**.

Breakdown of the Deal & Rising Tensions:

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- **Trump's Withdrawal (2018):** The U.S. **exited the deal**, prompting Iran to **resume nuclear activities**.
- **Iran's Escalation (2023):** Iran enriched uranium **to near weapons-grade levels**, alarming the international community.
- **Expiration of Key Provisions (2023-2024):** Several JCPOA restrictions began **to expire**, raising concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Goals of the JCPOA:

- **Delay Nuclear Weapon Development:** The agreement aimed to **extend Iran's "breakout time"** (the time needed to build a nuclear weapon) from **a few months to at least a year**.
- **Prevent Regional Conflict:** The deal sought to avoid a **military response from Israel** or a **nuclear arms race in the Middle East**.

Challenges to Renegotiation:

- **Deep Mistrust:** Decades of **hostility** and past **diplomatic failures** have made **trust-building difficult**.
- **Conflicting Goals:** The U.S. seeks a **broad, stricter agreement**, while Iran wants a **return to the original JCPOA**.
- **Domestic Political Pressure:** **Hardliners in both Iran and the U.S. oppose compromise**, making diplomatic progress difficult.

Conclusion:

Iran's refusal to negotiate with the U.S. underscores **worsening diplomatic relations** and a **growing nuclear threat**. With key JCPOA provisions **expiring**, the risk of a **regional crisis** looms larger than ever.

2

Seagrass Conservation: A Key to Global Biodiversity

Context: A recent study in *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* warns that **seagrass ecosystems are declining at an alarming rate of 1-2% per year** due to human activities. These vital marine habitats play a **crucial role in climate action, biodiversity conservation, and coastal protection**, yet they remain highly vulnerable.



What Are Seagrasses?

Seagrasses are **underwater flowering plants** that form **dense marine meadows**. They evolved from terrestrial plants, adapting to life in saltwater. Unlike **seaweed (which is algae)**, seagrasses have **roots, stems, leaves**, and can produce **flowers and seeds**.

Why Seagrass Ecosystems Matter

1. Climate Action & Carbon Sequestration:

Seagrasses act as the **“lungs of the sea”**, absorbing **carbon up to 35 times faster** than tropical rainforests, making them **essential in combating climate change**.

2. Marine Biodiversity & Wildlife Protection:

- Provide **nursery habitats** for commercial fish species.
- Offer **shelter to endangered marine species**, including sea turtles and seahorses.

3. Coastal Protection:

- Act as **natural barriers**, reducing coastal **erosion and storm impact**.
- Help **stabilize shorelines**, protecting coastal communities.

4. Economic Significance:

Seagrass meadows contribute **\$6.4 trillion annually** to the global economy by:

- Supporting **fisheries** and **sustainable tourism**.
- Enhancing **livelihoods of coastal communities**.

Seagrass Ecosystems in India:

With a **coastline of 11,098 km (2023-24)**, India has **extensive seagrass meadows** in:

- **Gulf of Mannar**
- **Palk Bay**
- **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**
- **Lakshadweep Islands**
- **Gulf of Kutch**

Threats to Seagrass Ecosystems:

1. **Human Activities:** **Urbanization, pollution, and agricultural runoff** degrade seagrass beds.
2. **Weak Law Enforcement:** Lack of strict regulations hampers **conservation efforts**.
3. **Biodiversity Loss:** **Unregulated fishing, boating, and dredging** destroy seagrass meadows.

Global and Indian Conservation Efforts:

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Global Success Stories:

- **Seagrass Watch:** A citizen science program that trains volunteers and NGOs to **monitor and conserve** seagrass habitats.
- **Blue Carbon Initiative:** Focuses on **carbon sequestration** in coastal ecosystems, including seagrasses, mangroves, and salt marshes.

Indian Conservation Initiatives:

- **National Policy on Marine Fisheries (2017):** Recognizes **seagrass meadows** as **essential ecosystems**, along with **mangroves and coral reefs**.
- **Climate Resilience Project:** Implemented in **Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha**, with funding from the **Global Climate Fund (GCF)**.
- **Seagrass Restoration in Gulf of Mannar & Palk Bay:** Focuses on **ecosystem recovery and protection**.

Conclusion:

Seagrass conservation is **vital for biodiversity, climate stability, and economic sustainability**. Strengthening **protection policies, restoration projects, and global collaboration** is essential to **reverse seagrass decline and safeguard marine ecosystems** for future generations.

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TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

3 U.S. Withdrawal from the Loss and Damage Fund: A Setback for Climate Justice

Context: The United States has withdrawn from the board of the **Loss and Damage Fund (LDF)**, a move that raises concerns over global climate finance and accountability.

Trump Administration's Climate Disengagement:

This decision aligns with the Trump administration's **pattern of withdrawing from international climate agreements**, including:

- **Exiting the Paris Agreement**
- **Halting U.S. scientists' participation** in the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**
- **Cancelling contributions** to the **Green Climate Fund**



What is the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF)?

- **Established at COP27 (2022)** under the **UNFCCC** framework.
- Provides **financial support** to regions facing **climate-induced economic and non-economic losses**.
- Covers disasters such as **extreme weather events** (hurricanes, floods) and **slow-onset changes** (rising sea levels, desertification).
- **Governed by a Board** that allocates funds, with the **World Bank** serving as an **interim trustee**.

Objectives of the LDF:

- **Aid vulnerable developing nations** in coping with **climate-related disasters**.
- Bridge the financial gap between **climate adaptation, mitigation, and recovery efforts**.

Concerns Over the LDF's Effectiveness:

- **Slow Fund Disbursement:** Climate funds often **fail to reach affected communities immediately**, particularly at the **sub-national level**.
- **Growing Climate Crisis:** Without **aggressive emission reductions**, more countries will **suffer irreversible climate impacts**, increasing the need for **mitigation, adaptation, and financial aid**.
- **U.S. Withdrawal Undermines Climate Justice:** As one of the **world's largest historical polluters**, the U.S. **must be held accountable** for its role in climate-induced damage.

India's Climate Finance Approach:

- India faced **\$56 billion in weather-related damages (2019-2023)** but has focused more on **mitigation than adaptation**.
- India's **Union Budget 2024** introduced a **climate finance taxonomy**, raising hopes for **better access to global climate funds**.
- However, **lack of clear guidelines** on accessing LDF funds may leave **vulnerable communities exposed**.

Conclusion & The Way Forward:

- The **Loss and Damage Fund must address** inefficiencies in existing climate finance institutions like the **Green Climate Fund**.
- Tackling the **root cause of climate change—carbon emissions—is crucial** for long-term solutions.
- India needs a **comprehensive legal and policy framework** to **streamline climate finance** for **adaptation and loss & damage**, ensuring **locally led adaptation strategies** benefit the most affected communities.

4 Boosting Value Addition in Spices: Path to Achieving \$10 Billion Export Target by 2030

Context: Despite being the largest producer and exporter of spices, India holds only a 0.7% share in the global seasoning market, which is valued at \$14 billion in 2024. The World Spice Organisation (WSO) has stressed the need for enhanced value addition in the spice industry to help the Spices Board of India achieve its ambitious \$10 billion export target by 2030.



India's Spice Export Landscape:

- India exports 1.5 million tonnes of spices annually, valued at \$4.5 billion, covering 25% of the global spice market (worth \$20 billion).
- **Global Competition:**
 - China holds 12% of the global seasoning market.
 - The U.S. holds 11% of the global seasoning market.
- **Current Value Addition:**
 - Only 48% of Indian spice exports consist of value-added products, while the rest are exported as raw whole spices.
 - To reach the \$10 billion export target, the value-added share must rise to 70%.
- **New Market Opportunities:**
 - Nutraceutical and pharmaceutical applications for spices can unlock diverse, high-value export avenues beyond culinary use.

Growing Global Competition:

- Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, and China are emerging as major players in the global spice trade.
- African nations have also entered the spice production sector, intensifying market competition.
- Domestically, new spice-producing regions are emerging in North-Eastern India, Odisha, and Jharkhand, boosting overall production capacity.

Spices Board of India:

Overview:

- **Established:** 1987 under the Spices Board Act, 1986.
- **Ministry:** Operates under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- **Headquarters:** Kochi, Kerala.

Key Responsibilities:

- Promotion of spice exports.
- Quality control & certification of Indian spices.
- Research & development in spice cultivation.
- Farmer training and capacity building.
- Implementation of schemes supporting farmers and exporters.

Notable Initiatives:

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- **Spice Parks:** Provide processing & value-addition infrastructure.
- **e-Spice Bazaar:** A digital marketplace connecting farmers and buyers.
- **State-of-the-art Testing Laboratories:** Located in Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Tuticorin, Kandla, and Guntur for quality assurance in spice exports.

World Spice Organisation (WSO):

- **Established:** 2011.
- **Affiliation:** Technical partner of the **All-India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF)**.
- **Focus Areas:** Sustainability, food safety, and value addition in spices.

Key Objectives:

- Promoting sustainable spice farming.
- Ensuring food safety & quality standards.
- Educating farmers on pesticide management & organic cultivation.
- Collaborating with international regulatory bodies to standardize spice trade regulations.

Way Forward: Strengthening India's Spice Sector:

1. **Increasing Value Addition:** Expanding spice processing, packaging, and branding to enhance global competitiveness.
2. **Investment in R&D:** Developing spice-based nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics to diversify exports.
3. **Strengthening Supply Chain Infrastructure:** Expanding Spice Parks and boosting digital platforms like e-Spice Bazaar.
4. **Farmer Empowerment:** Providing training and incentives for organic and sustainable farming practices.
5. **Global Market Expansion:** Strengthening trade ties with new export destinations and aligning with international quality standards.

By enhancing value addition and innovation, India can solidify its leadership in the global spice trade and achieve the ambitious \$10 billion export target by 2030.

5

Empower Women by Strictly Enforcing the Law – Supreme Court

Context: The Supreme Court of India has reiterated that **women do not need sympathy but empowerment**, emphasizing the **strict implementation of laws** to ensure justice. The observation was made by **Justice Bela Trivedi** on the eve of **International Women's Day**.

Justice Trivedi is one of **only two women judges** currently serving in the **Supreme Court**, alongside **Justice B.V. Nagarathna**.



Courtroom Exchange on Women's Empowerment:

Statement on "Ladies at Home":

- A **senior advocate** remarked that "**ladies at home**" need empowerment.
- **Justice Trivedi** clarified that **empowerment is necessary for all women**, not just homemakers.

Case Details: Sexual Harassment & Strangulation Attempt:

- The case, from **Tamil Nadu**, involved **allegations of sexual harassment and molestation**.
- The accused had been **in custody for seven months**.
- The **defense argued** that the case involved only a "**simple injury**", not an **attempt to murder**.

Court's Stand on the Injury:

- **Justice Trivedi rejected** the claim of a "simple injury."
- The injury was due to **strangulation with a nylon rope**, highlighting the **seriousness of the crime**.

Final Decision:

- The **Supreme Court issued a notice** to the **State government**, considering a **re-evaluation of the sentence**.
- However, it strongly emphasized the **need for strict enforcement of laws** to protect women.

Legal and Constitutional Provisions for Women's Empowerment:

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 14** – Guarantees **equality before the law**.
- **Article 15(3)** – Allows the State to make **special provisions for women and children**.
- **Article 16** – Ensures **equal opportunities** in public employment.
- **Article 39(a)** – Promotes **equal livelihood opportunities** for men and women.
- **Article 42** – Directs the State to ensure **just and humane working conditions** and **maternity relief**.
- **Articles 243D & 243T** – Reserves **one-third of seats for women** in **Panchayati Raj institutions** and **urban local bodies**.

Key Legal Provisions for Women's Rights:

- The **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** – Shields women from **domestic abuse**.
- The **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** – Bans the practice of **dowry**.



- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013** – Protects women from harassment at workplaces.
- **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 2017)** – Provides maternity leave and financial support.
- **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** – Prevents child marriages.
- **The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005** – Grants equal property rights to daughters.

Government Schemes for Women's Empowerment:

Social Welfare & Protection:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** – Promotes girl child education and prevents female foeticide.
- **One Stop Centre Scheme** – Provides legal, medical, and psychological support to women affected by violence.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra** – Offers skill development and employment opportunities.
- **Women's Helpline (181)** – Provides immediate assistance to women in distress.

Economic & Financial Support:

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** – Grants financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women.
- **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana** – Encourages savings for a girl child's education and marriage.
- **NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)** – Supports women entrepreneurs.

Healthcare & Safety:

- **Ujjwala Scheme** – Provides free LPG connections to reduce health hazards from traditional cooking fuels.

Institutional Mechanisms for Women's Welfare:

- **National Commission for Women (NCW)** – Handles grievances and advocates for women's rights.
- **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** – Implements policies for women's welfare and protection.

Way Forward: Ensuring Real Empowerment for Women

- **Strict Law Enforcement:** Implementing existing laws effectively to ensure swift justice for crimes against women.
- **Judicial Sensitization:** Courts must prioritize gender-sensitive interpretations of legal provisions.
- **Economic Independence:** Enhancing women's participation in entrepreneurship, workforce, and leadership roles.
- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Introducing stricter penalties for crimes like sexual harassment, domestic violence, and dowry-related offenses.
- **Raising Awareness:** Promoting legal literacy and awareness among women about their rights and available protections.

Women's empowerment goes beyond policy discussions—it requires real action, legal enforcement, and societal change. The Supreme Court's stance reinforces the urgent need for strict legal implementation to ensure true gender equality in India.

6

Tahawwur Hussain Rana Extradition Case

Context: The **United States Supreme Court** has rejected **Tahawwur Hussain Rana's** plea against **his extradition to India**. Rana had filed an **"Emergency Application for Stay"** after former US President **Donald Trump approved his extradition**. With this ruling, India is now set to **bring him to trial** for his alleged role in the **2008 Mumbai terror attacks**.



Background: Rana's Involvement in 26/11 & Other Terror Cases

- **Rana, a Pakistani-origin Canadian national**, is accused of **providing logistical support** for the **2008 Mumbai terror attacks**, which killed **166 people**.
- He allegedly helped his associate **David Coleman Headley** in **conducting reconnaissance** for the attack.
- **2009 Arrest (Chicago):**
 - Arrested for involvement in the **Mumbai attacks** and a **foiled attack on the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten**.
 - Convicted in 2013 for **supporting Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** and sentenced to **168 months (14 years) in prison**.
 - Released on **compassionate grounds** in **2020**, but **immediately faced an extradition request from India**.

Legal Battle Over Extradition:

- **December 2019:** India formally **requested Rana's extradition** under the **India-US Extradition Treaty (1997)**.
- **Rana's Defense Argument:**
 - Claimed **"double jeopardy"**, arguing that he had **already been acquitted** of charges related to India.
- **US Magistrate's Ruling (May 2023):**
 - **Rejected his plea**, stating that the **Indian charges were legally distinct** from those in the US.
- **Subsequent Legal Challenges:**
 - Rana **appealed unsuccessfully** to the **US District Court**, the **Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals**, and finally the **US Supreme Court**, all of which **dismissed his petitions**.

India-US Extradition Treaty (1997):

The treaty allows extradition for **offenses punishable by more than one year of imprisonment** in both countries.

Extraditable Offenses:

- **Terrorism, hijacking, and crimes against protected persons** are extraditable.
- The **dual-criminality clause** ensures that an act must be a **crime in both countries** for extradition.

Non-Extraditable Offenses:

Political offenses are not extraditable, except for:



- **Murder or violent crimes against a Head of State/Government.**
- **Aircraft hijacking & sabotage.**
- **Crimes against internationally protected persons.**
- **Hostage-taking.**

The US government found "probable cause" that Rana committed **extraditable offenses under this treaty.**

US Position on Indian Extradition Requests:

Only two alleged terrorists have been extradited from the US to India:

- **Charanjeet Singh Cheema (2005)**
- **Kulbeer Singh Kulbeera (2006)**

Extradition History (2002-2018):

- **11 extraditions, mostly for financial fraud cases.**
- **65 Indian extradition requests remain pending with the US.**

Key Extradition Denials:

- **David Coleman Headley** (Mumbai attacks planner) – **Not extradited due to a plea bargain.**
- **Warren Anderson** (Union Carbide CEO, Bhopal Gas Tragedy) – **Rejected citing "insufficient evidence".**

Conclusion: What's Next for Rana?

With the **US Supreme Court rejecting his plea**, Rana's **extradition to India is imminent**. Once in India, he will **stand trial** for his alleged role in **26/11**.

This case underscores the **complexities of international extradition**, the **diplomatic challenges between India and the US**, and the **long legal battle** involved in bringing accused terrorists to justice.