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Rakesh Maria named new anti-terror squad chief (Lead)

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Mumbai, March 25 (IANS) The Maharashtra Government Thursday appointed Mumbai Joint Police Commissioner (Crime) Rakesh Maria, who headed the probe into the Mumbai terror attack, as the new chief of the state Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS).

Maria will take over from the ATS chief K.P. Raghuvanshi, who has been transferred as additional director general of police (law and order) at the state police headquarters.

Raghuvanshi earned the ire of the government after he was accused of disclosing certain sensitive information before the media on the arrest of two men who plotted to blow up an Oil and Natural Gas Corporation tank, a mall and a wholesale market in Mumbai last fortnight.

Top state government officers, however, described the reshuffle as "routine" in nature.

Maria, who is from 1981 batch of Indian Police Service, has rich experience in investigating many major terror incidents in Mumbai over the past many years.

When Maria was the deputy commissioner of police, he played crucial role in cracking the March 12, 1993 Mumbai serial blasts.

He then probed twin bombings at the Gateway of India and jewellery hub Zaveri Bazaar in 2003 in which the suspects were nabbed within three days.

Later, he managed to bust a large module of the dreaded Indian Mujahideen (IM) which was found involved in several bomb blasts in New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Surat, Varanasi and Gorakhpur.

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When Mumbai was attack by Pakistani terrorists Nov 26-29, Maria took charge of the police control room and directed the police force to counter the attackers.

The outgoing ATS chief Raghuvanshi, from the 1980 batch, was in his second tenure with the anti-terrorist unit of Mumbai Police.

Raghuvanshi's indiscretion before the media - when he revealed how two people planned to carry out terror strikes in the city and they were in touch with a person referred to as "uncle" - irritated the central government, which suggested to the state government to take action against him.

Coming from the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) to head the ATS in 2005, Raghuvanshi investigated the July 2006 Mumbai serial bomb blasts in suburban trains, followed by the Malegaon blast case and the Aurangabad arms seizure case.

Recently, he headed the investigations into the Feb 13 German Bakery terror blast in Pune that failed to yield any significant breakthrough even six weeks after the incident.

The government, in other decisions, appointed Himanshu Roy, presently joint commissioner (law and order) as the new joint commissioner (crime).

Roy's post will now be taken by another senior officer Rajneesh Seth.

The transfer orders were issued this afternoon, a senior home department official said.



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