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THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Trinamool Congress's Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien criticizes the government's short notice for Parliament sessions and urges an annual calendar with at least 100 sittings.

Annual calendar, at least 100 sittings every year must in Parliament: O'Brien

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Criticising the government for shrinking the time between the notice announcing the Parliament session and its commencement, the Trinamool Congress's Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien on Sunday urged the government to come up with an annual calendar for Parliament and mandatorily have at least 100 sittings in a year.

"If schools and colleges can set up their calendars way in advance, why can't Parliament," Mr. O'Brien asked.

Mr. O'Brien said added that the short notice affects the preparedness of members. "Members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha are elected not just to legislate, but also to hold the government accountable, scrutinise its actions, and debate matters of national importance. These responsibilities will be fulfilled far better with a structured and predictable Parliamentary calendar," he said.

Issues Associated with Short Notice for Parliament Sessions

➡️ **Inadequate Preparation Time:**
   o Short notice leaves lawmakers with little time to prepare for crucial debates and discussions.
   o This can lead to superficial scrutiny of bills and motions, affecting the quality of legislative work.

➡️ **Reduced Accountability and Scrutiny:**
   o With insufficient time, Parliament members are unable to hold the government accountable effectively.
   o Parliamentary debates on national issues are rushed, reducing the chances for detailed examination.

➡️ **Impact on Members' Engagement:**
   o Short session notices disrupt MPs' schedules, especially those with constituency commitments.
   o Lack of preparation time affects both the members and their ability to represent the people they serve effectively.

➡️ **Public Distrust:**
   o Unpredictable parliamentary schedules erode public trust in the functioning of the government.

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o Citizens expect transparency, and sudden session announcements may raise concerns about the legislative process being manipulated.

➡️ **Legislative Disorganization:**
o When sessions are not planned in advance, there's a lack of structured business, affecting the prioritization of critical national issues.
o Lack of a predictable calendar results in chaotic and disorganized parliamentary proceedings.

Way Forward: Structured Parliamentary Calendar

➡️ **Introducing an Annual Parliamentary Calendar:**
o The government should publish an annual calendar for Parliament, enabling all stakeholders to plan ahead.
o This can include expected session dates, discussion topics, and important legislative matters.

➡️ **Mandating Minimum 100 Parliamentary Sessions:**
o To ensure proper legislative functioning, at least 100 sittings per year should be conducted.
o This ensures that there's adequate time for legislation, debates, and holding the government accountable.

➡️ **Improved Session Planning:**
o The planning should allow for a sufficient gap between sessions, giving members enough time for preparation and constituency work.
o A predictable session structure also improves the quality of debates and deliberations.

Conclusion

➡️ By establishing a predictable calendar, Parliament can become more accountable, transparent, and better equipped to serve the public's interests.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Critically analyze the issues arising from short notice announcements for Parliament sessions. Suggest a way forward to improve the functioning and accountability of Parliament through a structured annual calendar. (**150 Words /10 marks**)

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The news discusses the growing field of cryptography in India – its importance for securing data, and the challenges posed by quantum computing and emerging encryption techniques.

Indian cryptography research gears up to face the quantum challenge

Areas where Indian researchers are working extensively include communication complexity, the amount of communication required to complete a computational task; proof complexity, the computational resources required to prove or disprove statements; and algebraic coding theory

T.V. Padma

Fundamental research in cryptography that's used worldwide to facilitate internet banking, e-commerce services, and secure messaging systems is now taking root in India as well.

The principal goal of those developing or using cryptographic systems is to improve system security. Cryptography – from the English roots of "hidden writing" – is the name for techniques that secure information by converting plain text into ciphertext. It is concerned with the creation and use of encrypted messages that only the sender and the receiver can understand and which a malicious actor who interferes with the communication can't.

Sending secret messages isn't new. Archaeologists have unearthed clay tablets made by the ancient Mesopotamians in which they wrote down cryptic formulae to make ceramic glazes. In the first century BC, the Roman dictator Julius Caesar used the eponymous Caesar cipher to relay messages of strategic value to his generals.

More recently, many Polish codebreakers fled their country after Adolf Hitler invaded it in 1939 to work with reputed British mathematicians, including the father of modern computing, Alan Turing, to crack Germany's famed Enigma cryptosystem. Turing's work in particular established much of the foundational theory for modern algorithmic computing.

Scientists have devised many sophisticated methods to prevent adversaries from cracking secret codes and gaining unauthorised access to sensitive information. These methods achieve their goals by using algorithms and protocols to protect some data's confidentiality, integrity, authenticatability, and non-repudiation.

'Hard' problems

Cryptographic algorithms convert messages in ways that make it very difficult, very expensive, or both to decode them. A common way to achieve this has been to place some sensitive information behind the answer to a very difficult problem. An agent can access the information by solving the problem, so the harder the problem, the more inaccessible the information.

"Hence the search for harder and harder problems – for instance, even those that quantum computers may find hard to solve," R. Ramanujam of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, said.

As computational techniques evolve, particularly with advancements in quantum computing, the interplay between complexity and cryptography will continue to be a crucial area of research and development, he added.

Modern cryptographic systems are built on problems that demand far too many resources to be solved.

"As they say in the crypto community, if your cryptosystem is broken, either a spy is dead or a million dollars is missing," Ayan Mukherjee, an assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, said. "Such is the seriousness of the effect of a broken cryptosystem. Thus, oftentimes, people use the old and the trusted to secure their communications."

This is also why, he added, "The field of cryptography is very slow-moving."

"There is a close connection between complexity theory and cryptography, hence many [researchers] work on these connections, clarifying notions and building finer techniques," Ramanujam said.

Areas where Indian researchers are working extensively include communication complexity (the amount of communication required to complete a computational task), proof complexity (the computational resources required to prove or disprove statements), and algebraic coding theory (using algebra to encode and decode data).

Locks and keys

The goal is to make sure an adversary, especially one with enormous computational resources, can't crack the code. At the heart of any cryptosystem is the key: a secret value an algorithm uses to encrypt or decrypt data.

The Caesar cipher is a simple example. It works by mapping the existing alphabet to one where the starting letter is offset by some number of letters. This number is the key. For example, if the key is 14, the encrypted alphabet begins with the letter O (the 14th letter) rather than A. Thus the

words FIGHT FOR ROME become TWUVH TCF FCAS.

When the sender encrypts data with a key, only someone who knows the key can decrypt the message and read it. More sophisticated systems use two keys – one each for the sender and the receiver – and map them in a separate secret way.

A famous example is public-key cryptography, which is used to secure information over the internet. The receiver uses a single algorithm to generate two keys called the public key and the private key, and shares the public key with the sender. Any message the sender encrypts with the public key can be decrypted by the private key.

Researchers prefer the algorithms that generate keys to be one-way functions, a name in mathematics for functions that are simple to use but hard to crack. In cryptography, this means they can be used to easily encrypt messages but can't be cracked without knowing the key. As Ramanujam put it, the challenge is like protecting a house with a strong alarm system that the house's residents can still use without training.

Some one-way functions are very difficult to crack and thus very secure – but they also take a long time to decrypt messages. This is one of the principal reasons mining for bitcoins has become a very energy-intensive process. The bitcoin system uses a one-way function that has required more computational resources to decrypt messages as the size of its blockchain has increased.

This is why some cryptography researchers in India and abroad are working on simplifying the decryption side in particular. Researchers are also considering whether shorter proofs (of the hard problems) can be used to verify the integrity of data in artificial intelligence and large language models.

Cryptography isn't just a mathematical

At the heart of any cryptosystem is the key, a secret value an algorithm uses to decrypt, or unlock, data. JAYDEEP_PIKNAW

A cryostat refrigerator for cooling quantum computing chips at Google's Quantum AI lab in Santa Barbara, California, U.S. REUTERS

or academic curiosity but is of considerable practical interest. Yael Kalai, whose work on proofs won her the 2022 Turing Award, told the 11th Heidelberg Laureate Forum in September (the author was in the audience). "In today's world, the biggest problem we have to solve is trustworthiness," she said.

Since researchers have solved the problem of authentication and security in communications, she added, the current problem is computation.

"People are computing things for us. How do we know that they are computing correctly? How do we certify the huge and often crazy computations people are coming up with? That is a huge new research problem now."

Possibility of disruption

Two research areas that could disrupt current cryptographic systems with significant economic and social consequences are homomorphic encryption and quantum information technologies, per a recent paper by the Organisation of Economically Developed Countries (OECD).

Homomorphic encryption is a cryptographic method that allows certain calculations to be performed on encrypted data without the need to decrypt it first and without accessing the secret key. The result of such computations remains in encrypted form and can be revealed later, when necessary. According to the paper, this technique could surmount the problem of processing encrypted data without decrypting it first, which increases risk.

Second, a mature quantum computer could easily break some encryption methods widely used today. Some researchers are thus working on algorithms that can resist attacks powered by a quantum computer, an enterprise called quantum resistant cryptography (QRC). In fact, marrying cryptography with quantum physics paves the way for encryption technologies based on the laws of quantum physics, which can be more convoluted than mathematical concepts alone.

Researchers worldwide have been working on QRC since 2006, including in publicly funded research projects in the European Union and Japan. In India, Mukherjee's group at IISER Pune, and those at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Raman Research Institute (RRI), both in Bengaluru; the Centre for Development of Telematics, New Delhi; and at Pondicherry University are working on it as well.

'A huge deal'

Cryptography research in India is taking off in other aspects, too, catching up with that in the European Union, the U.S., and China. The National Quantum Mission the Cabinet approved in 2023 includes a research hub for quantum communication. The mission is to enable

A mature quantum computer could easily break some encryption methods widely used today. Some researchers are thus working on algorithms that can resist attacks powered by a quantum computer, an enterprise called quantum resistant cryptography

satellite-based secure quantum communications between ground stations over 2,000 km, long-distance secure quantum communications with other countries, inter-city quantum key distribution over 2,000 km, and multi-node quantum networks, among other outcomes.

The Indian Space Research Organisation is also planning to launch a satellite with ultra-secure quantum communication capabilities.

In July, a team of Indian scientists from RRI, IISc, IISER Thiruvananthapuram, and the Bose Institute in Kolkata published a paper describing a way to generate true random numbers that are crucial to making secure private keys and nearly unhackable passwords.

"This new method offers the enhanced protection we all need in our daily lives by using truly random numbers to generate keys that will be used to encrypt the passwords," the Department of Science & Technology said in a statement.

Apart from the Ministry of Science & Technology, major government funders for cryptography research in the country include the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Department of Telecommunications.

"The present status of quantum cryptography is to build quantum-secure cryptosystems," Mukherjee said. "It's based on the idea that, in the near future, we will have quantum computers. When that happens, the current cryptosystems will fail. This is a huge deal."

The consequences will also affect India's cryptography policy. According to a recent study commissioned by the Thales Group, the volume of sensitive data in the cloud could surge from 51% of all organisational data to 68% by 2027. As more data enters and lives in the cloud, "encryption techniques for data at rest, in motion, and in use are becoming more pervasive, evolving into a standard practice for protecting cloud-resident sensitive information against emerging cyber threats," the report said.

There is widespread data loss as well: the report said almost three-fourths of all organisations have faced multiple data breaches in the past year, foremost due to inadequate encryption. Some 71% initiated formal cryptographic programmes and 81% have dedicated encryption teams.

(T.V. Padma is a science journalist in New Delhi. tvpadma_10@yahoo.co.in)

Introduction to Cryptography

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➡️ Cryptography is a technique used to secure information by converting plain text into unreadable ciphertext.

➡️ Its main goal is to ensure system security and prevent unauthorized access to sensitive data.

➡️ The practice of sending secret messages has existed since ancient times, with notable historical examples such as Julius Caesar's cipher and the Enigma system used during World War II.

The Importance of Cryptography

➡️ Cryptography is used to protect data by solving complex problems.

➡️ These problems are designed to be hard and costly to solve.

➡️ The goal is to prevent adversaries from decoding encrypted information.

➡️ Even those with large computing power should not easily break the code.

➡️ Cryptography ensures security despite advancements in computing, including quantum computers.

➡️ As computational power increases, cryptography must evolve to stay secure.

➡️ Strong cryptographic systems use tough problems that are difficult for computers to solve.

➡️ The main focus is on making sure data remains secure and private from malicious actors.

Challenges and Slow Progress

➡️ Cryptography is a slow-moving field due to its complexity and the close connection between complexity theory and cryptography.

➡️ Research in India focuses on areas like communication complexity, proof complexity, and algebraic coding theory, aiming to enhance security.

Cryptography Keys and Their Function

➡️ The core of cryptosystems is the key, which is a secret value used for encrypting or decrypting data.

➡️ Modern systems, like public-key cryptography, use two keys: a public one shared with the sender and a private one kept by the receiver.

➡️ One-way functions are used to make encryption easy but decryption very difficult without the key.

Emerging Research and Challenges

➡️ Two disruptive research areas in cryptography are homomorphic encryption, which allows computations on encrypted data, and quantum-resistant cryptography, which ensures systems can withstand quantum computing threats.

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➡️ Indian researchers are making progress in these areas, and the government is funding cryptography research, including the National Quantum Mission and quantum communication developments.

Future of Cryptography in India

➡️ India is advancing in cryptography research, particularly in quantum communication and data security, with government support and collaboration from various institutions.

➡️ The importance of encryption will grow as sensitive data continues to increase, especially in cloud storage.

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Page 09 : Prelims Fact

Fishermen in Kenya's Lake Naivasha are struggling due to invasive water hyacinth, which harms fish populations.

➡️ A start-up, HyaPak, partners with them to harvest the plant, turning it into biodegradable packaging, helping both the environment and livelihoods.

Water Hyacinth:

➡️ It is an invasive aquatic plant native to the Amazon Basin in South America.
➡️ **Characteristics:** Floats on water, has large, glossy green leaves, purple flowers.
➡️ **Spread:** Grows rapidly, forming dense mats that block sunlight, affecting aquatic life.
➡️ **Environmental Impact:** Reduces oxygen levels, hampers fish populations, and affects water quality.
➡️ **Economic Impact**: Disrupts water transport, fishing, and agriculture.
➡️ **Control Methods:** Mechanical removal, biological control (using insects), chemical treatments.

Places in News: Lake Naivasha

➡️ Lake Naivasha is a popular freshwater lake in Kenya.
➡️ It has been affected by the invasive water hyacinth for over 10 years.
➡️ The hyacinth has reduced fish populations, impacting the livelihoods of fishermen.
➡️ Previously, fishermen caught up to 90 kg of fish daily, but now it's only 10-15 kg.
➡️ The lake faces economic losses due to the hyacinth invasion, affecting fishing, transport, and tourism sectors.

A boat carrying domestic tourists passing through hyacinth in Lake Naivasha last December. AP

Water hyacinth threatens the livelihoods of fishers on Kenyan lake

Associated Press

For someone who fishes for a living, nothing says a bad day like spending over 18 hours on a lake and taking home nothing.

Recently, a group of fishermen were stranded on Kenya's popular Lake Naivasha for that long and blamed the water hyacinth that has taken over large parts of it.

"They did not realise that the hyacinth would later entrap them," said fellow fisherman Simon Macharia. The men even lost their nets, he said.

The water hyacinth is native to South America and was reportedly introduced to Kenya in the 1980s "by tourists who brought it as an ornamental plant," said Gordon Ocholla, an environmental scientist at Mount Kenya University.

Water hyacinth was first sighted on Lake Naivasha about 10 years ago. Now it has become a large, glossy mat that can cover swathes of the lake. To fishers, the invasive plant is a threat to livelihoods.

Usually, the presence of water hyacinth is linked to pollution. It is known to thrive in the presence of contaminants and grows quickly and is considered the most invasive aquatic plant species in the world, Ocholla said.

It can block sunlight and impact airflow, affecting the quality of aquatic life. This has caused a drastic drop in the population of fish in Lake Naivasha and some other affected areas.

The *East African Journal of Environment and Natural Resources* estimated in a 2023 study that the invasion of water hyacinth in Kenyan

The water hyacinth is native to South America and was reportedly introduced to Kenya in the 1980s 'by tourists who brought it as an ornamental plant'

lakes — including Lake Victoria, Africa's largest — has led to annual losses of between $150 million and $350 million in Kenya's fishing, transport, and tourism sectors.

The fishermen at Lake Naivasha know that well. "Previously we would catch up to 90 kg of fish per day, but nowadays we get between 10 kg and 15 kg," Macharia said. This means daily earnings have dropped from $210 to $35.

There are several ways to deal with the plant, including physically removing it, Ocholla said. Another method is introducing organisms that feed on it. Or chemicals can be sprayed to kill the plant, "but this is not favorable as it would harm other aquatic life."

Recently the fishers, through a Kenyan start-up called HyaPak, began using a method that converts water hyacinth into biodegradable packaging.

HyaPak started in 2022 as a project at Egerton University in Kenya. HyaPak founder Joseph Nguthiru said the company is trying to use one problem, the hyacinth, "to solve the plastic waste pollution" problem.

HyaPak has entered into a partnership with the fishers, who harvest the water hyacinth and sun-dry it for a negotiable fee. Then it is transported to a HyaPak facility to be converted into biodegradable paper material.

The company works with 50 fishers at Lake Naivasha and processes up to 150 kg of water hyacinth per week, converting it to 4,500 biodegradable packages.

This article explains issues with India's insolvency system, highlighting delays, lack of expertise, and reforms needed to improve efficiency.

Recasting insolvency resolution

V.V. Sivakumar

is an advocate in the Madras High Court

Saai Sudharsan Sathiyamoorthy

is an advocate in the Madras High Court

The Jet Airways case is one example of the many structural infirmities affecting India's insolvency regime

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) is one of India's most significant economic reforms, introduced to address the challenges of insolvency resolution in a structured and time-bound manner.

At the time of its introduction, the IBC was seen as an important tool that would help India's standing in the business world and bring bad borrowers and big defaulters to book. Yet, as the law matured, certain issues have cropped up that demand attention, particularly regarding institutional capacity and procedural efficiency. The recent Supreme Court of India judgment in Jet Airways (*State Bank of India & Ors. vs The Consortium of Mr. Murari Lal Jalan and Mr. Florian Fritsch & Anr.*) has laid bare the many structural infirmities that are plaguing India's insolvency regime.

A double burden

The effective implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) hinges on the performance of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and its appellate body, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). These tribunals face the dual burden of handling corporate insolvencies under the IBC and cases under the Companies Act. This institutional architecture, however, suffers from what might be termed "temporal disjunction".

Conceived in 1999 based on the Eradi Committee's recommendations and operationalised in 2016, the NCLT's structure reflects the economic realities of a bygone era, leaving it ill-equipped to meet contemporary demands. With a sanctioned strength of 63 members – many of whom divide their time across multiple benches – the NCLT has become a bottleneck for insolvency resolutions and corporate transactions such as mergers and amalgamations.

Compounding the issue, several NCLT benches do not operate for the full working day, even when not tasked with handling cases from other benches.

As a result, delays have worsened. According to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the average time for insolvency resolutions increased to 716 days in FY2023-24, up from 654 days in FY2022-23. This is despite the Supreme Court's repeated calls for adherence to the specific timelines provided in IBC, including in the Jet Airways case, where the Court has stated that the "NCLTs/NCLATs need to be sensitised of not exercising their judicial discretion in extending the timelines...in such a way that it may make the Code lose its effectiveness thereby rendering it obsolete".

The need for domain expertise

The current framework's deficiencies are manifest across other dimensions. What stands out the most is the qualitative dimension of institutional capacity. The current method of appointment ignores the need for domain experience. As the Court noted in the Jet Airways case, "Members often lack the domain knowledge required to appreciate the nuanced complexities involved in high-stakes insolvency matters...". This creates a paradox where an institution tasked with resolving complex cases is hindered by a lack of specialised knowledge.

However, the problems run deeper than capacity limitations. There is also the bureaucratic labyrinth. There is no effective system in place before the NCLTs for urgent listings. And as noted by the Supreme Court, the staff of the Registry is given wide powers to list or not to list a particular matter. Perhaps most troubling is what the Court has termed a "growing tendency" among NCLT and NCLAT members to ignore or defy its orders, which threatens the very foundation of India's judicial hierarchy.

This is not merely about institutional efficiency. It is about institutional integrity.

Sparse use of alternatives

The procedural framework further exacerbates these constraints. The requirement for a mandatory hearing for all applications including for progress reports, which is not in any way necessary from the standpoint of natural justice, results in considerable delays. The limited use of alternative dispute settlement methods adds to the problems of an already overworked system.

Various jurisdictions across the globe contend with similar challenges pertaining to institutional capacity and procedural efficiency. Nevertheless, the magnitude of India's scale, its endemic corruption and its economic ambitions necessitate solutions that transcend mere incremental enhancements. The recent reform proposals, including the initiative for mandatory mediation prior to the submission of insolvency applications, present a degree of optimism.

Further, there needs to be a hybrid model that values judicial experience and domain expertise. Also, the time is ripe for procedural innovations that go beyond piecemeal changes. The creation of specialised benches for different categories of cases could enhance both efficiency and expertise and ensure that mergers and amalgamations are cleared in time.

Pertinently, infrastructure must not remain an afterthought. Adequate courtrooms and a qualified, permanent support staff are critical to sustaining these institutions within the broader economic framework. Above all, India's insolvency regime must evolve beyond mere debt resolution to serve as a proactive driver of economic rejuvenation, especially as the country aims to attract greater foreign investment. At this very important point in time, the choice is clear. The time for a bold reimagining is now.

Introduction to the IBC and Its Significance

➡️ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, is a major reform aimed at resolving insolvencies in a structured, time-bound manner.

➡️ Initially, it enhanced India's global business reputation by addressing the issues of bad loans and defaulters.

➡️ However, as the law matured, challenges related to institutional capacity and procedural inefficiencies surfaced, particularly highlighted by the Supreme Court in the Jet Airways case.

Challenges in Institutional Framework

➡️ **Burden on Tribunals:**
  o The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and its appellate body, NCLAT, handle both insolvency cases under IBC and matters under the Companies Act.
  o This dual role creates a significant backlog, slowing down resolutions.

➡️ **Outdated Structure of NCLT:**
  o The NCLT's structure, designed in 1999 and operationalised in 2016, is not suited for current economic demands.
  o With only 63 sanctioned members, many working across multiple benches, the tribunal is ill-equipped to handle modern caseloads.

➡️ **Inefficient Operations:**
  o Some NCLT benches do not function full working days or are engaged in handling cases from other benches.
  o As a result, the average time for insolvency resolution rose to 716 days in FY2023-24, compared to 654 days in FY2022-23.

Deficiencies in Domain Expertise and Integrity

➡️ **Lack of Domain Knowledge:**
  o Tribunal members often lack the expertise required for handling complex insolvency cases.
  o The Supreme Court emphasized this in the Jet Airways case, highlighting the need for specialized knowledge.

➡️ **Bureaucratic Challenges:**
  o There is no effective system for urgent listings, and registry staff have excessive discretion in managing cases.
  o The Supreme Court noted instances of NCLT/NCLAT members defying its orders, threatening judicial integrity.

Procedural Inefficiencies

➡️ **Mandatory Hearings:**
- o Requiring hearings for all applications, including progress reports, causes unnecessary delays.
- o Limited Use of Alternative Dispute Resolution:
- o The system underutilizes alternative methods, adding strain to an already overburdened framework.

Proposed Solutions for Reform

➡️ **Mandatory Mediation:**
- o Introducing mandatory mediation before insolvency applications could ease the burden on tribunals.

➡️ **Specialized Benches:**
- o Creating specialized benches for different types of cases can improve efficiency and expertise.

➡️ **Infrastructure and Staffing:**
- o Adequate courtrooms and qualified, permanent staff are essential for sustaining tribunal operations.

➡️ **Hybrid Model:**
- o A hybrid approach combining judicial experience with domain expertise is needed for complex insolvency matters.

Conclusion

➡️ India's insolvency regime must move beyond debt resolution and serve as a driver of economic growth.

➡️ Bold reforms in institutional capacity, procedural efficiency, and infrastructure are necessary to attract foreign investment and boost economic performance.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the challenges faced by India's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in ensuring timely resolutions. Suggest measures for improving its institutional capacity and procedural efficiency.(250 Words /15 marks)

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In News : India's Roadmap to a Healthy Nation by 2047

India's aspiration to become an economically developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047 hinges on the health and productivity of its population.

➡️ To achieve this, robust health systems must emerge by 2025, prioritizing prevention, equitable treatment, and the integration of digital solutions.

Key Pillars for a Healthy India:

➡️ **Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through primary healthcare:**
  o **Financial and service goals:** UHC aims to ensure financial protection and extensive service coverage.
  o **Resource allocation:** Higher public financing is essential, with a focus on central and state budgets.
  o **Health workforce:** Immediate efforts must address the shortage of highly skilled doctors by training technology-enabled frontline workers and allied health professionals.

➡️ **Ayushman Bharat as a template for transformation: Key components -**
  o Upgraded primary care architecture.
  o Financial protection for vulnerable groups.
  o Enhanced health infrastructure.
  o Integration through digital health technology.
    o **Digital Health Mission:** Vital for epidemiological intelligence, programme monitoring, and system integration.

Data-Driven Decision-Making for a Healthy India:

➡️ **Disaggregated and integrated data systems:**
  o **Local-level insights:** Data must be available at district and block levels for informed, resource-efficient, and equity-driven actions.
  o **Epidemiological transition:**
    ▪ Rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health disorders requires accurate tracking of trends and risk factors.
    ▪ While the integrated disease surveillance programme (IDSP) provides data on some infectious diseases through sentinel sites, the rapid rise in zoonotic diseases calls for extensive and real-time surveillance data.

➡️ **Advanced surveillance systems:**

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- o **Infectious diseases:** Real-time surveillance for infectious diseases, including zoonotic threats. Big data analytics will need to be at the heart of infectious disease surveillance.
- o Techniques: Wastewater surveillance and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) monitoring must become routine.
- o One Health Approach: Integration of data across human, animal, and environmental health systems to tackle climate-related health threats.

Digitally Integrated Healthcare for a Healthy India:

➡️ **Patient-centered data systems:**
  - o **Interoperability:** Diagnostic and treatment data must be accessible across healthcare facilities.
  - o **Challenges:** Lack of private sector integration disrupts continuity of care.
➡️ **Public-private collaboration:**
  - o **Bridging gaps:** Digital systems must connect primary care and publicly funded health insurance programmes that support secondary and tertiary hospital care (like PMJAY and state health insurance programmes).
  - o This will integrate public and private health data repositories.
➡️ **AI-driven insights:** Application of artificial intelligence to Indian health data can enhance diagnostics and clinical management.
➡️ **Community participation:** Digital tools can enable crowdsourcing for outbreak surveillance and address programme implementation issues.

Conclusion:

➡️ India's journey toward a healthy and productive population by 2047 requires immediate and sustained efforts.
➡️ By 2025, a digitally integrated, data-driven, and universally accessible healthcare system must take root, propelling the nation toward its health goals.

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A surge in radical governments, the hope of democracy

One thing seems fairly certain now. If an Islamic radical group were to seize power by force, then the world will be willing to legitimise it and forgive its past deeds. But till the time such a group does not capture power, it will either be fought tooth and nail and/or treated like an enemy.

We had Afghanistan in 2021. We now have Syria in 2024.

When the Taliban captured power on August 15, 2021, 13 members of the United States troops were killed in an Islamic State (IS) suicide attack, and $7.1 billion worth of U.S. weaponry was left behind in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. and the West as well as China and Russia bent backwards to work with the Taliban. The West justified this by saying that this would wean the Taliban away from supporting terrorism and help in the protection of women's and minorities' rights. They talked about "inclusive government" but democracy was not uppermost in their minds. The then UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, even told the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that the Taliban was 'misunderstood'.

Treated with kid gloves

The ultimate irony was how "*karma*" had come full circle. In the days preceding the Taliban's capture of Afghanistan, the "Troika Plus", of the U.S., China and Russia with Pakistan, had tried to coordinate their efforts in Afghanistan to keep India completely out and ignore our vital interests. In the UNSC, even an innocuous reference to the Heart of Asia Conference on Afghanistan was deleted from the draft statement because India was one of the countries attending it.

But when the events of August 2021 unfolded, India was the president of UNSC that month. Any text or resolution required India's concurrence. When UNSC Resolution 2593, after the Taliban takeover, was passed on August 30, India left its imprint particularly in the paragraph relating to Afghan soil not being used for terrorist activities. The express reference to terrorists and terrorist organisations in the UNSC Resolution 1267 sanctions list was inserted at India's behest, where it coordinated closely with the U.S. side. This was necessary to remove any ambiguity about Pakistani terrorist organisations associated with the ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed – listed in 1267 – from using Afghan soil to launch terrorist attacks on India.

In December 2021, the UNSC allowed the Taliban to get donor money directly into its coffers. With no political will among the P-5 or the West to demand accountability for implementing UNSCR 2593, the Taliban soon

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The last thing India needs is the revival of Islamic radicalism in Bangladesh

denied girls school education, imposed restrictions on women, and stopped all moves for an inclusive government. Now, the world looks the other way.

Now, Syria and Bangladesh

And now Syria in 2024. We have just witnessed a radical Islamic leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani or Ahmed al-Shaara of the Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) seize power, culminating in the toppling of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Al-Jolani was earlier leader of the al Qaeda in the region, with links to international terror groups. His radical outfit, the HTS, which was earlier an al Qaeda wing in Syria called the Jabhat al-Nusra, still features in the U.S. State Department list of terror groups. Mirroring what they did with the Taliban, the U.S. and the West have lined up behind the HTS and its leader. The first move of the U.S. was to remove the bounty of $10 million on al-Jolani's head for his capture. Capturing power can help evade capture also.

This is wonderful news for Islamic terrorists and extremist groups gaining ground, especially in Africa such as in Mali, and adopting IS and al Qaeda techniques to topple governments. But the world is preoccupied with Ukraine and West Asia. Now, India has a situation brewing closer to home, in Bangladesh.

Even if the collapse of the elected government in Bangladesh has been largely due to an autocratic government stifling democratic forces and losing the plot, under the guise of supporting regime change, the U.S. clearly downplayed the interests of its "strategic" partner India. It is propping up the interim military-led government of Muhammad Yunus, which is seen as tolerating, even encouraging, Islamic radical groups in Bangladesh and is a threat to its minorities. The last thing India needs is the revival of Islamic radicalism in Bangladesh, where the last 16 years have seen the two countries and its peoples come closer in a variety of ways for mutual benefit.

When Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League came to power in 2008, it was seen as free and fair elections with a cleaned-up electoral list and the Bangladesh Army staying on the sidelines. The people overwhelmingly rejected the violent past of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Khaleda Zia and their Islamic radical partners such as the Jamaat-e-Islami. Just when one thought that the Jamaat-e-Islami stood discredited for siding with Pakistan in the 1971 war and rejected by the people of Bangladesh for causing mayhem and disrupting lives, the popular student protests of 2024 and the ensuing military coup have given them a fresh lease of life.

While there is no doubt that the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) – affiliated to the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the

Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, the Islami Chhatra Shibir, the Hefazat-e-Islam, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) have taken advantage of the situation, it is not as if the people of Bangladesh have embraced them wholeheartedly. Consequently, these radical groups have tried to shore up support for their extremist ideologies by attacking the minority communities, forcing the interim government to release Islamic extremists from prison (such as like Jashimuddin Rahmani, head of the ABT), and adopting shrill anti-India rhetoric, conflating the dismantling of Sheikh Hasina's legacy with attacks on India. India should be careful not to fall into this trap.

Religious hate has been on the rise around the world. It was when this writer was India's Permanent Representative to the UN that India brought up, for the first time, in 2021-2022, the rise of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions, including against Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. India condemned all forms of religious hate, whether in the U.S. and the West or in Bangladesh and the neighbourhood. While India may have taken its eye off the ball when it came to the Sheikh Hasina government, it cannot ignore Islamic extremism again rearing its head in Bangladesh and posing renewed danger to India's national security – something which New Delhi successfully prevented over the last 16 years.

The larger picture

However, for both sides to view the unfolding events purely through a religious lens – be it an Islamic lens or Hindu lens – would be a mistake. This has been counterproductive before and will be so now. In fact, Islamic radicals are baiting India, and, unfortunately, so are the officials who have been appointed as advisers to Mr. Yunus, precisely to polarise forces within their own country. On the other hand, India has the larger perspective in mind to protect its bilateral relations from damage. It has reiterated its readiness to do business with the interim government. India has removed most irritants in its bilateral relations in the last two decades, except maybe for the sharing of Teesta river waters. What is forgotten is that when Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) revolted in February 2009, just after the first clean elections of Bangladesh in December 2008, it was India which gave its rock solid support to the newly-elected government and helped save democracy.

It is in Bangladesh's own interest that this military coup does not translate into an Islamic coup and goes the way of Syria or Afghanistan. The silver lining is that, having tasted the power of democracy in 2008, and now in 2024, it will be difficult to put the clock back.

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GS Paper 02 : International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Examine the challenges posed by the legitimization of radical groups in global politics, with a focus on its implications for India's security and foreign policy. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

Context :

➡️ The article discusses global patterns of legitimizing radical Islamic groups after they seize power – highlighting implications for Afghanistan, Syria, and Bangladesh.

Afghanistan in 2021: The Taliban's Takeover

➡️ The Taliban captured power in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021. A suicide attack by the Islamic State killed 13 U.S. troops, and $7.1 billion worth of U.S. weaponry was left behind.

➡️ Despite the Taliban's controversial history, countries like the U.S., China, and Russia engaged with them, justifying it as a way to promote women's rights and discourage terrorism.

➡️ India, as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) president in August 2021, influenced UNSC Resolution 2593 to ensure Afghan soil was not used for terrorism, particularly against India.

➡️ The resolution also highlighted terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Evolving World Engagement with the Taliban

➡️ In December 2021, the UNSC allowed direct donor funding to the Taliban without demanding accountability.

➡️ The Taliban later restricted women's rights and denied inclusive governance, but global powers largely overlooked these developments.

Syria in 2024: A New Crisis

➡️ In 2024, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, leader of the Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), seized power in Syria, toppling President Bashar al-Assad.

➡️ Despite his past as an al Qaeda leader and HTS being listed as a terrorist organization, the U.S. and the West began supporting him.

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- The U.S. removed a $10 million bounty on al-Jolani, showcasing a pattern of legitimizing groups after they seize power.

Growing Extremism in Bangladesh

- In Bangladesh, an interim military-led government under Muhammad Yunus has taken charge, reportedly tolerating Islamic radical groups.
- Groups like Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), Jamaat-e-Islami, and Hefazat-e-Islam are gaining influence, threatening minorities and fostering anti-India rhetoric.
- The military coup has provided a platform for extremist ideologies, reversing progress made under Sheikh Hasina's government since 2008.

India's Role and Concerns

- India supported Bangladesh during key moments, including the 2009 Bangladesh Rifles revolt, and has worked to strengthen bilateral ties over two decades.
- The rise of extremism in Bangladesh is a significant security concern for India, which must avoid falling into the trap of viewing the issue solely through a religious lens.
- India's focus remains on protecting its bilateral relationship and ensuring stability in the region.

The Need for Caution

- Global trends indicate that capturing power legitimizes radical groups, as seen in Afghanistan, Syria, and potentially Bangladesh.
- For Bangladesh, reverting to an Islamic extremist regime would undo its democratic progress since 2008.
- The global community, especially India, must monitor and address the resurgence of extremism to safeguard regional security.

Conclusion

- The global trend of legitimizing radical groups post-power capture undermines democracy and stability.
- India must proactively address emerging threats, especially in neighboring Bangladesh, to safeguard regional security and its strategic interests.

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