Mecca Masjid Blast Case - The Acquittals

What is the issue?

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- Recently, all the five suspects in the Mecca Masjid bomb blast case (2007) were acquitted by an NIA (National Investigation Agency) Court.
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- Regardless of the culpability of those acquitted, the institutional legitimacy of the judiciary has been eroded as justice still looks elusive.
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What is the case about?

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- **The Blast -** Mecca Masjid is a mosque in Hyderabad.
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- It saw an explosion in its premises in May 2007 that killed 9 people and injured many.
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- While initial investigations held radical Islamists as propagators of the attack, and scores of suspects were picked up, allegedly subjected to torture.
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- But it was subsequently alleged that Hindu Right Wing groups were responsible and “Swami Aseemanand and four others” were the main suspects.
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- **Justice -** All five people have been acquitted now and this is likely to reinforce public cynicism about the state of the criminal justice system in the country.
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- Significantly, after 11 years of speedy trial, the real culprits are still out.
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- With a right-wing union government in office, accusation of “inherent lack of will to render justice” and “NIA being influenced” looms large.
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- **Similarity -** The Mecca Masjid Case has a striking similarity to that of the

Malegaon Serial Blast Case (2006) in Maharashtra.
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- It was initially thought that the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) was involved and several Muslims were arrested on suspicion.
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- But after 4 years, in 2010, it emerged that some members of a Hindu group called “Abhinav Bharat” were the perpetrators.
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What has eroded the credibility of investigations?

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- Swami Aseemanand had made a significant confession in 2010 at a magistrate’s court in Delhi, but he has subsequently retracted his statement.
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- But considering the comprehensiveness of information provided in the initial confession, it is unclear why NIA couldn’t establish sufficient evidence.
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- It is hence hard to wade off questions of propriety of the prosecution and accusation of soft peddling to satiate the BJP regime isn’t completely baseless.
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- Notably, even a public prosecutor who was handling the Malegaon blast case had accused the investigation agencies of showing laxity in their work.
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- Additionally, 66 of the 226 witnesses in the Mecca Masjid case have turned hostile, which speaks volumes of the lack of legal safeguards for witnesses.

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- The investigating agencies face a credibility crisis and there is an immediate need for course correction.
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Source: The Hindu

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