CASE LAW UPDATES

Landmark Supreme Court Judgments of May 2025

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Each month the Supreme Court of India deals with a great variety of disputes, some of the cases ending the disagreements between the parties and others establishing important legal rules which have an effect on courts, governments, businesses and ordinary people.

The month of May 2025 was significant since the Court looked at questions concerning environmental protection, free speech and digital news, criminal conspiracy, competition law, pension rights, and the structure of the legal profession and the judiciary.

The article examines eight important Supreme Court decisions that were handed down in May 2025.

State of Uttar Pradesh v. Gaurav Kumar (2025 INSC 650)

Facts

The issue was about mining rights in Uttar Pradesh, and the **National Green Tribunal** opposed the auction on the basis that the authorities had used a draft **District Survey Report (DSR)** rather than the final report. A DSR serves to identify mining areas and aids in assessing their environmental impact.

Issue

Whether an environmental clearance for mining be given on the basis of only the draft DSR?

Judgment

The Supreme Court has held that environmental clearance for mining activities can only be granted after a final DSR has been carried out, as such mining decisions have an impact on rivers, land, forests and local communities. It agreed that an auction which took place without a final

DSR was unlawful. The judgment makes it clear that environmental procedure is not merely a formality since it serves to prevent damage.

Wikimedia Foundation Inc. v. ANI Media Private Limited (2025 INSC 656)

Facts

The case arose out of online material that is related to the current court proceedings and concerned whether or not a court could direct media organisations to remove or take down reports about a case which was still pending. Such orders lead to concerns concerning both the right to a fair trial and the freedom of speech mentioned in **Article 19(1)(a)**.

Issue

When can a court order the deletion of online content concerning a case which is currently ongoing?

Judgment

The Supreme Court held that a removal order should be issued only in cases where the content involves a real and substantial risk of interfering with the fairness of the proceedings. It is not possible for a court to order removal merely because the material is inconvenient or critical. The ruling aimed at achieving a balance between open justice, freedom of expression, and the requirement that a fair hearing be given.

Harpreet Singh Talwar @ Kabir Talwar, v. State of Gujarat (2025 INSC 662)

Facts

The person accused was connected with an alleged operation aimed at smuggling narcotics. The defence argued that no contraband had been found directly on the accused and that the evidence available was not sufficient to prove their involvement in the offence.

Issue

Is it necessary to actually recover the drugs from the accused in order to prove conspiracy or facilitation under laws such as the NDPS Act and the UAPA?

Judgment

The Supreme Court made it clear that direct recovery is not always required; since a conspiracy is usually proved through a series of circumstances, communications, acts, and the different roles carried out by the various individuals, the failure to recover physically from one of the accused does not mean that they are automatically entitled to bail. For that reason, the Court upheld its decision to refuse bail.

The Competition Commission of India v. Schott Glass India

(2025 INSC 668)

Facts

The case depended on the argument that the leading company in the market had given different or volume-dependent discounts in a way that was harmful to competition, since offering larger discounts to customers who purchased in large volumes amounted to discriminatory pricing.

Issue

Does the fact that a dominant enterprise offers discounts on a volume basis constitute a breach of competition law?

Judgment

The Supreme Court made it clear that volume-based discounts are not automatically illegal, stressing that evidence of actual or probable harm to competition is necessary. The Court reaffirmed an important principle, namely that having a dominant position is not in itself prohibited; it is only the abuse of such a position that is forbidden. This ruling makes the difference between market power and unlawful conduct clearer.

Vijay Kumar Joshi v. Akash Tripathi

Facts

The case was about employees who had been taken into State Government service and claimed that they should be given pension rights similar to those which are enjoyed by regular employees after their absorption.

Issue

Can employees who have been absorbed be denied the pension benefits which are available to regular employees in a similar position?

Judgment

The Supreme Court decided that employees who were taken into government service were entitled to pension benefits from the date on which they were absorbed, and that to treat them unfairly after absorption would constitute discrimination. The judgment highlights the importance of fairness in public employment and the principle that employees in similar circumstances should not be treated differently unless there is a valid reason.

Jitender @ Kalla v. State (NCT of Delhi)

Facts

The Supreme Court has decided to examine the system which had previously been employed for designating lawyers as Senior Advocates. This system included a points-based assessment and a Permanent Committee. There were still concerns as to whether the process was fair, transparent, and suitable for assessing professional ability.

Issue

Which procedure should be adopted for designating Senior Advocates?

Judgment

The Court modified the points-based system and abolished the Permanent Committee; it directed that the Permanent Secretariat should continue with the collection of applications and relevant information, but that the Full Court was to make the final decision. It also ordered that no new designations should start until new rules and guidelines had been prepared. The judgment is significant for the independence and transparency of the legal profession.

Vijaya Bank v. Prashant B. Narnaware (2025 INSC 691)

Facts

The bank employee took up the promotion on the understanding that he had to remain for a certain minimum time and as a result signed a bond which called for a payment of ₹2 lakh if he resigned before the end of that period. He then resigned before the agreed period had expired and brought the bond into question on the grounds that it was an unlawful restraint of trade and of employment.

Issue

Is the inclusion of a minimum service bond together with reasonable damages in line with the Contract Act?

Judgment

The Supreme Court upheld the bond, pointing out that a clause obliging an employee to serve for a certain period during their employment or to make compensation to the employer if they leave before the end of their contract is not, on its own, a restraint of trade as provided for in Section 27 of the Contract Act. The clause being connected with recruitment, training, and the employer's legitimate expenses.

The Court observed that a service bond of this type should be treated differently from a post-employment non-compete clause, as the latter might involve different issues.

The case of the All India Judges Association v. the Union of India (2025 INSC 735)

Facts

The case concerned whether fresh law graduates should be eligible for recruitment as Civil Judges (Junior Division). The Supreme Court had earlier abolished the requirement of prior legal experience for such graduates, after which various High Courts stated that practical experience in court was important for a proper understanding of the rules of procedure, evidence, and a judge's duties.

Issue

Should those who are applying for entry-level positions with the judicial service complete a minimum period of legal practice before taking the examination?

Judgment

- The Supreme Court has restored the requirement that candidates should have three years' experience in practice before they are permitted to sit the Civil Judge (Junior Division) examination.
- This three-year period generally begins at the time of provisional enrolment with the State Bar Council, and experience as a law-clerk may also be considered.
- The rule will apply to all future cases involving recruitment.
- The Court noted that practical experience can lead to a deeper understanding of court proceedings, greater maturity, and a more appropriate judicial temperament.

Conclusion

The judgments of the Supreme Court in May 2025 show the links between different fields of law. Environmental clearance has to be given on the basis of a sound scientific method. The rules regarding services and pensions must be fair, and employment bonds have to be reasonable and based on legitimate costs. Furthermore, the Court also reconsidered the system for appointing a Senior Advocate and that for entering the judicial service.

Together, these judgments demonstrate the Supreme Court’s continued role in striking a balance between individual rights, institutional fairness, the public interest, and legal accountability.