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Current Affairs - 05 July 2026

AI HALLUCINATED JUDGMENTS: SUPREME COURT SETS ASIDE NCLT ORDER

Recently, the Supreme Court struck down a National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) order. The order had relied on six court judgments as precedents.

All six turned out to be problematic. Three judgments **did not exist at all**. The other three either didn't say what the tribunal claimed, or belonged to a different case entirely.

The Case Background

- In 2013, a company called Essel Infra projects promised to repay a loan if another company failed to. This kind of promise is called a "corporate guarantee."
 - The loan itself was for Rs 200 crore. It was given by Jammu and Kashmir Bank to a different company, Pan India Utilities Distribution Company Ltd.
- Later, Pan India Utilities failed to repay the loan. Since Essel had promised to pay on its behalf, the bank came after Essel under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
 - Under this law, if a company cannot pay its debts, it can be taken to a special court for resolution. This is exactly what the bank did.
- Essel did not argue that the loan existed or that it had gone unpaid. Those facts were not in dispute. Instead, Essel argued something different: it said it was no longer responsible for this guarantee at all.

The Fake Citations

- Three judgments simply didn't exist:
 - ICICI Bank Ltd v Urban Infrastructure Real Estate Ltd (2019)
 - V S Dempo & Co Ltd v Reliance Communications Ltd (2021)
 - Sarbjit Singh v Union Bank of India (2022)
- Two judgments were real, but the quoted passages were not found anywhere in them:
 - Everest Kento Cylinders Ltd v Union of India (2015)
 - Canara Bank v N G Subbaraya Setty (2018)

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- The sixth judgment cited was actually a different case altogether. The tribunal called it State Bank of India v Shree Ram Urban Infrastructure Ltd, but it was really M Subramaniam v S Janaki. The **quoted passage wasn't in either judgment**.
- Importantly, neither party's lawyers had cited these judgments. J&K Bank told the Supreme Court that its counsel never referred to them.
- The tribunal appears to have generated these citations through its **own AI-assisted research**.

What the Supreme Court Said?

- The SC bench used strong language. They compared **AI hallucination in judicial work to a toxic gas leak** — "invisible, insidious, and catastrophic by the time anyone notices."
- They warned that relying on AI could make judges dependent on it and erode independent judicial reasoning over time.
- The court held that even "an iota" of fake or hallucinated material in a decision is enough to set it aside.
- **A decision built on fabricated case law, the bench said, "is no decision at all."**

Wider Directions Issued

- The Supreme Court asked the Bar Council of India to set up a committee. This committee will study **how AI is being used in litigation across courts**.
- The court also warned that lawyers citing AI-generated case law without verification could face **professional misconduct**.

Conclusion

- This case marks a serious warning from India's top court on AI use in judicial decision-making. It shows that AI hallucination isn't just a drafting inconvenience — it can invalidate an entire legal order.
- The Supreme Court has made clear that courts and lawyers alike carry a duty to verify every citation, and that unchecked AI use in law can silently corrode the foundation of judicial reasoning itself.

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WHATSAPP USERNAMES: WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNED?

- WhatsApp is planning to let **users chat using a username** instead of their phone number. This is meant to be optional. If someone picks a username, new contacts will see only that username — not their mobile number.
- There is no search directory for usernames inside the app. This means a person cannot simply search and find someone by guessing a username. To message someone, you need to know their exact username.
- For extra safety, **users can also set a PIN**. Even if someone knows your username, they still cannot contact you without knowing this PIN too.
- The feature has not been launched yet. Meta says it will roll out slowly over the next few months, along with several safety features built in.

Why Is the Government Worried?

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said that hiding phone numbers and showing only usernames could lead to more online fraud.
- It specifically mentioned risks like **phishing, digital arrest scams, and impersonation**.
- The government's main worry is that people could create usernames that look very similar to real people, companies, or government bodies. This could trick users into thinking they are talking to someone genuine.
- Some public figures have already reported this happening. MobiKwik founder Bipin Preet Singh said on social media platform X that variations of his name had already been taken by other users.
- He called the feature a bad idea, warning it could increase fraud and impersonation.
- The government also sent similar notices to other messaging apps — Telegram, Signal, and Arattai. These apps have had similar username features for a while already.

Response of WhatsApp

- WhatsApp says it has already "reserved" usernames belonging to well-known people and organisations. This is meant to stop imposters from grabbing those names first.

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- This protection is said to cover public figures, celebrities, government bodies, and verified Meta accounts.
- WhatsApp also explained another safety feature: if a stranger messages you without showing their phone number, the app will still show you their country of origin. It will also tell you whether that number is already saved in your phone's contact list.
- A WhatsApp spokesperson said users can simply choose not to reply to strangers if they feel unsafe.

Can the Government Really Stop an App Feature?

- This is the most disputed part of the issue. The government argues that WhatsApp counts as a **"significant social media intermediary"** under India's IT Rules, 2021.
 - This classification applies to any platform with **more than 50 lakh** registered users in India. WhatsApp has around 80 crore users in India, making it a clear case.
- The notice also referred to specific sections of the IT Act — **Section 66C** (identity theft), **Section 66D** (cheating by impersonation), and **Section 79** (which protects platforms from liability for what users post, as long as they act responsibly).
- However, digital rights groups have pushed back strongly. They claim that none of the laws cited actually give the government power to approve or block a feature before it's launched.

Conclusion

- This dispute is really about where the line sits between a government's power to regulate for public safety, and a private company's freedom to design its own product.
- The government sees the username feature as a fraud risk that needs oversight before launch. WhatsApp and digital rights groups see it as a lawful product decision that no current law actually allows the government to block.
- How this plays out could set an important precedent — not just for WhatsApp, but for how much control the Indian government can exercise over global tech platforms operating in the country.

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CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS - US SUPREME COURT REAFFIRMS BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP

- Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS), in a 6–3 majority ruling, struck down President Donald Trump's Executive Order (EO) 14160, reaffirming that birthright citizenship under the **Fourteenth Amendment** remains a constitutional guarantee.
- The verdict is a major setback to the Trump administration's immigration agenda and revives the debate over citizenship, immigration, and constitutional interpretation.

Constitutional Basis of Birthright Citizenship:

- The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) states that all persons born or naturalised in the U.S. and subject to its jurisdiction are U.S. citizens.
- The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 1952 reinforces this principle by recognising citizenship "at birth."
- Long-standing **exceptions** include - children of foreign diplomats, and children born during enemy military occupation.

Political Debate Around Birthright Citizenship:

- The issue became central to Donald Trump's anti-immigration agenda and the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement.
- **Critics argue that:**
 - It encourages illegal immigration.
 - It fuels **birth tourism**, where foreigners travel to the U.S. solely to secure citizenship for their children.
- The Supreme Court rejected these policy concerns, holding that changing political circumstances cannot alter the Constitution's clear language.
- **Changing demographic trends:**
 - Births to unauthorised immigrant mothers increased from about 1.2 lakh (~3% of total US births) in 1990 to nearly 3.8 lakh (9%) by 2006–07.

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- After the 2008 financial crisis, the numbers declined to around 2.5 lakh (6%) by 2016. According to Pew Research Center, the share rose again to around 9% of U.S. births in 2023, reviving political controversy.

Comparison Between Indian and US Citizenship Rights:

- **Dual citizenship:**
 - In the U.S., the individuals are citizens of both the United States and the specific state they reside in.
 - **India has single citizenship**, meaning every individual is solely a citizen of the Union of India, with no separate state-level citizenship.
 - Also, the U.S. allows its citizens to hold dual citizenship with other countries. In India, acquiring a foreign passport immediately nullifies Indian citizenship.
 - Instead, India offers the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) - lifelong visa-free travel and economic rights (excluding voting or agricultural land ownership) to the Indian diaspora who have acquired foreign passports.
- **Birthright citizenship (Jus Soli):**
 - The U.S. grants automatic citizenship to almost anyone born on its soil under the 14th Amendment.
 - India previously followed absolute jus soli, but (through amendments) now requires at least one parent to be an Indian citizen, and the other must not be an illegal immigrant.
- **Citizenship by descent:** Both countries allow citizenship by descent if a child is born abroad to citizen parents, though the specific residency/retention requirements for the child differ based on local statutes.

Conclusion:

- The U.S. birthright citizenship judgment offers an **important lesson** for constitutional governance and citizenship debates in India.
- It highlights the importance of constitutional supremacy, judicial review, and balancing citizenship policies with fundamental constitutional values and the rule of law.

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MATCHA TEA



Recently, an Assam tea estate sold India's first commercially-produced matcha tea, marking a significant shift from conventional teas.

- Matcha is a finely **ground green tea powder** made from specially processed, shade-grown tea **leaves of Camellia sinensis**.
- **Origin:** It originated through **cultural exchanges between China and Japan** during the premodern period.
- It developed from earlier powdered tea practices in China that were later introduced to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks.

Production process

- It is made after **shading tea leaves for three to four weeks before harvest**.
- Blocking **90% of sunlight from the leaves** boosts their chlorophyll and amino acid levels, and gives them a **distinct colour and flavour**.
- The young **leaves are harvested and steamed**, then dried and de-stemmed into a flaky leaf called tencha.
- The **tencha is slowly stone-ground** into the fine powder we know as matcha.
- The shade-growing process gives matcha its **characteristic bright green colour** and rich umami flavour.
- Unlike regular green tea, where the leaves are steeped and discarded, **matcha is whisked into water and consumed entirely**, providing higher levels of antioxidants, amino acids, and natural caffeine.

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MEDICAL INNOVATIONS PATENT MITRA PLATFORM



Recently, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has asked all medical colleges and institutions to use the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) 'Medical Innovations Patent Mitra' platform.

- It provides **fully government-funded support for patent filing** and technology transfer.
- It aims to **support strategic and quality patent filings for innovative biomedical research** with a vision to advance patent protection and facilitate seamless technology transfer for societal impact.
- It **enables researchers and innovators** to protect their intellectual property and translate research into healthcare products and technologies.

Initiated by: Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

It was launched under the guidance of **NITI Aayog**, in partnership with the **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP)** and with support from the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.

The platform focuses on several areas, including:

- **Supporting patent protection** for healthcare innovations
- **Helping researchers transfer technologies** to industry partners
- **Speeding up commercialisation** of indigenous medical products
- **Encouraging collaboration** between scientists, startups, and companies
- Improving access to affordable healthcare technologies

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SEABUCKTHORN



Recently, Spiti's seabuckthorn has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) status.

- It is popularly known as the 'Wonder Plant', 'Ladakh Gold', 'Golden Bush', or 'Gold Mine' of cold deserts. It is an important plant of **trans-Himalayan region** that belongs to the **family Elaeagnaceae**.
- **Distribution:** Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) is a plant found throughout **Europe and Asia**.
 - **In India**, it is found above the **tree line in the Himalayan region**, generally in dry areas such as the **cold deserts of Ladakh and Spiti**.
- It produces small **orange or yellow-coloured berries** that are sour in taste but rich in vitamins, especially vitamin C.
- Sea Buckthorn berries have a unique characteristic of remaining intact on the shrub throughout the winter **months despite the subzero temperature**.
- **Climatic and soil requirements** Sea buckthorn:
 - It is a **temperate shrub**.
 - It can withstand a wide range of temperatures from -43 to 40°C. This unique feature enables the species to **adapt very well in harsh climatic conditions**.
 - The dense and thorny bushes of **sea buckthorn are salt tolerant** and demand full sunlight for growth.
- **Ecological Importance:**
 - The shrub develops an extensive root system **having ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen**.
 - It is an ideal plant for **soil erosion control**, land reclamation, wildlife habitat enhancement and farm stand protection in temperate regions.