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Makkah (Mecca) Joint Agreement: Geopolitically Fragile – Militarily Reinforcing

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Why PM Modi's Upcoming Visit to Central Asia is Significant?

Context To know the real capability and signalling impact of the Mecca pact before working out what India should actually worry about.

Facts

■ Trilateral defence agreement on 7 August 2026 : based on trilateral Saudi - Turkey - Pakistan defence industrial forum in 2022-23.

■ The pact does not extend Pakistan's nuclear umbrella: Contribution is signalling, not deterrence.

■ A US - Saudi Arabia civil nuclear cooperation agreement, July 2026 : made contingent on Saudi Arabia acceding to the Abraham accords and normalising relations with Israel.

Analytical Crux

The Mecca agreement politically is fragile as text is unpublished, commitment is vague, there is no NATO-style planning or command structure. Three partners want three different things i.e. Saudi security, Turkish influence, Pakistani money. Militarily it is real, because Pakistani troops have been in Saudi Arabia for decades, Turkey sells Pakistan a sixth of its defence exports, and all get to look at both Western and Chinese systems, doctrine and training. For India the danger is therefore not Saudi or Turkish soldiers turning up on the western border but the slow, quiet upgrading of the Pakistan Army's technological and industrial base through exposure & co-production.

Verbatim Quotes

"The agreement remains an un-operationalised symbolic alignment. It gives strategic signalling and psychological weight rather than an extended nuclear umbrella."

— Lt Gen Anil Ahuja

Vanashakti verdict is balanced and pragmatic

The Vanashakti verdict is balanced and pragmatic

The Supreme Court of India's landmark judgment delivered on July 29, 2026 in *Vanashakti vs Union of India* has brought much-needed clarity to one of the most debated issues in environmental regulation: the fate of projects that commenced without obtaining prior Environmental Clearance (EC).

Wider policy impact

While the judgment firmly reiterates that obtaining prior EC is a mandatory legal requirement under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification (EIA) Notification, 2006, it also provides an important policy direction that could have far-reaching implications for thousands of industries, infrastructure projects and real estate developments across India.

The Court has categorically held that project proponents who commenced construction or operations without obtaining prior EC and that did not apply under the earlier violation mechanisms, cannot now seek regularisation under the 2017 Notification or the 2021 Standard Operating Procedure (Office Memorandum). Those mechanisms are no longer available for fresh cases.

At first glance, this may appear to shut the door completely on pending violation projects. However, a closer reading of the judgment reveals a far more balanced and pragmatic approach. One of the most significant aspects is the Court's recognition that the central government continues to possess the statutory power under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to frame a fresh statutory mechanism for dealing with violation cases, if considered necessary in the larger public interest.

The Court has made an important distinction between an administrative office memorandum, which cannot override the requirement of prior EC, and a statutory notification issued under the powers conferred by the Environment (Protection) Act. While the former has been held to be legally unsustainable, the latter remains a permissible legislative option, provided it is



Kalaiselvan Periyasamy
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The top court's verdict closes existing environmental clearance regularisation routes while leaving scope for a new framework

carefully designed within the framework of environmental law.

This observation is likely to have significant policy implications. Across India, numerous industrial units, commercial developments, infrastructure projects and public utility projects remain in violation of the EC requirements for various reasons. Some projects proceeded due to regulatory uncertainty, others due to an incorrect interpretation of the law, while some simply failed to obtain the necessary approvals before commencement. Many such projects never applied under the earlier violation windows and have therefore been left without a legal pathway following the closure of the 2017 scheme and the striking down of the 2021 Office Memorandum.

The present judgment acknowledges this practical reality without compromising the fundamental principle that prior EC remains mandatory.

Where there is a balancing act

Importantly, the Court has not directed the central government to introduce a new regularisation scheme. Instead, it has clarified that the government may, if it considers it necessary, in the larger public interest, issue a fresh statutory notification providing a one-time opportunity for specified categories of violation projects.

The Court has also indicated the safeguards that such a notification must incorporate. Any future scheme cannot become a permanent "violate first, regularise later" mechanism. Instead, it should be strictly one-time, supported by statutory authority, and should include comprehensive environmental safeguards such as environmental damage assessment, remediation measures, environmental compensation and strict compliance conditions.

This balanced approach attempts to reconcile two equally important objectives. On one hand, environmental laws cannot encourage deliberate violations by allowing routine post-facto approvals, while on the other, indiscriminate

closure or demolition of every violation project may not always serve either environmental protection or the larger public interest, particularly where projects are otherwise environmentally acceptable and substantial investments have already been made.

The judgment therefore reinforces the principle that environmental governance should combine strict enforcement with practical and scientifically sound regulatory solutions.

For project developers, industries and infrastructure agencies, the immediate message is straightforward. No fresh applications can now be made under the earlier violation mechanisms. However, the judgment also leaves open the possibility that the central government may formulate a fresh statutory framework to address pending violation cases in an environmentally responsible manner.

The regulatory road ahead

Whether such a policy initiative will be undertaken now rests entirely with the central government. Given the large number of pending projects across various sectors, industry associations, infrastructure developers, environmental professionals and other stakeholders are expected to closely watch the government's next steps. The judgment has effectively closed the old regulatory route but has simultaneously acknowledged that Parliament's environmental legislation still provides sufficient statutory authority for a carefully structured one-time solution, should the government consider such intervention necessary.

The July 2026 judgment is therefore significant not merely because it settles the legal validity of earlier violation mechanisms, but also because it charts the contours of any future policy on environmental regularisation. It preserves the integrity of the prior EC regime while leaving sufficient legislative space for the government to address genuine legacy violations through a lawful, transparent, and environmentally robust statutory framework.

Context

The Supreme court settled a question that what happens to a factory, highway or housing project that was built without first taking environmental clearance.

Facts

■ Vanashakti vs. Union of India : Prior Environmental clearance (EC) is mandatory legal requirement under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006.

■ Project commenced without prior EC : cannot seek regularisation under 2017 notification or the 2021 Standard Operating Procedure.

■ Supreme court clarified : government may issue fresh statutory notification giving one-time opportunity for categories of violation projects.

Analytical Crux

The court is shutting a door and describing a window. The door it shuts is the executive shortcut i.e. office memorandum, being an administrative order, cannot displace a statutory requirement, so the 2021 SOP falls and no fresh application lies under it. The window it describes is Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, under which the government may, if it chooses, issue a proper statutory notification giving legacy violators one bounded chance, hedged by damage assessment, remediation and compensation. The court mapped what a lawful one would have to look like and staying inside its lane while still shaping policy. Therefore, the case is not about whether India protects its environment strictly, but about which organ of the state, using which instrument, is entitled to relax a rule it once made.

Verbatim Quotes

“The judgement preserves the integrity of the prior EC regime. Its strict enforcement with practical & scientifically sound regulatory solutions.”

— Kalaiselvan Periyasamy

China's global governance paradox



Context China issued a white paper to stand for sovereign equality, the international rule of law & multilateralism but gap in its conduct towards India, Taiwan, Pakistan and the Indo-Pacific.

Facts

■ White Paper: Building a more Just & Equitable Global governance system rests on 4 claimed principles as sovereign equality, international rule of law, multilateralism, people-centred approach.

■ Inaugural Global governance forum: planned in Xiong'an, about 100 Km from Beijing.

■ BRI and CPEC: runs through territory illegally occupied by Pakistan.

Analytical Crux

Sovereign equality meets the 2020 LAC mobilisation and the renaming of places in Arunachal; consultation-based BRI meets CPEC running through occupied Kashmir; counterterrorism leadership meets a Chinese engineer, on Chinese state TV, confirming on-site support to the Pakistan Air Force during Operation Sindoor. China complains that minilateral groupings are encircling it, when its own conduct in the East and South China Seas is exactly what pushed those groupings together. China demands parity from US while declining to extend the same standing to its neighbours. Therefore, "sovereign equality" in Chinese usage is a claim about great-power rank and not a rule that binds China towards smaller states.

Verbatim Quotes

"China pays little more than lip service to the principle of sovereign equality. Its own belligerence has driven these very partnerships together."

- Kalpit A Mankikar

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