

# COA judgment enables progress on Southern Nexus solar project

● Judgment issued on 12 June secures legal path for Hambantota solar park

The Court of Appeal (COA) has delivered a final judgment clearing the way for the continued implementation of the 150 MW Southern Nexus solar project in Hambantota, one of the largest renewable energy ventures in Sri Lanka.

Following months of legal uncertainty and administrative delays, the ruling issued on 12 June affirms the obligations of relevant authorities and enables the long-stalled land release and project execution to move forward.

The legal proceedings stemmed from the suspension of land release for multiple solar developers forming part of the Southern Nexus consortium.

Despite having signed Standardised Power Purchase Agreements (SPPAs) with the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) in March 2024, and with construction already underway, the developers faced project disruption due to administrative obstacles and communication lapses between State agencies. This led the consortium, represented by Bandula Vithanarachchi and Charana Cumararatunga, to file writ applications before the Court of Appeal.

The court's decision includes the issuance of writs of prohibition, restraining the CEB and the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA) from taking steps to cancel the SPPAs and the respective energy permits.

The ruling establishes that the authorities are now "legally bound to act in accordance with the judgment of 12 June 2025," and warns that "any failure and/or non-compliance and/or non-adherence of the said judgment will result in contempt proceedings" under the Contempt of Court, Tribunal, or Institution Act No.8 of 2024.

The Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka, which had suspended the land allocation despite prior approvals and commitments, was also directed by the court to release the land parcels in question without delay.

According to the letter issued by the Attorney General's Department dated 13 June 2025, a writ of mandamus



Bandula Vithanarachchi



Charana Cumararatunga

has been issued, compelling the Mahaweli Authority "to complete the entire process of releasing the land parcels to all the petitioners" within a period of three months, based on the letter dated 21 August 2024.

The cases involved include CA Writ Nos. 133-150 of 2025, covering developers who were allocated land under the Southern Renewable Energy Programme. These include both 10 MW and 5 MW projects forming the total 150 MW capacity.

The legal team representing the Southern Nexus consortium comprised a group of senior counsels, including President's Counsel Ali Sabry, Kuvera de Zoysa, Saliya Pieris, and Upul Kumarapperuma, alongside Attorneys Ruwantha Cooray, Chandika Silva, Joshua Moraes, Shehani Alwis, Samuditha Kumarasinghe, Duvini Godagama, Sajana de Zoysa, Geeth Karunaratna, and Rukshan Mendis, instructed by Pubudu Kalchewatta.

The legal strategy was led in consultation with Legal Adviser to the consortium and FortuneX Managing Counsel Dulanga Cumararatunga.

Court records show that counsel argued the consortium had secured approvals from all relevant Government bodies and that the project suspension violated natural justice and legitimate expectations. The court was also informed of the project's national importance, the substantial investment involved, and the broader impact on Sri Lanka's energy transition.

The Senior State Counsel representing the Attorney General confirmed to the court that the Mahaweli Authority, CEB, and SLSEA did not oppose the relief sought by the petitioners. This enabled the court to issue the writs, thereby removing legal barriers and allowing the

project to resume.

The Southern Nexus Hambantota 150 MW project is one of Sri Lanka's most ambitious renewable energy undertakings. Originating from small-scale solar projects capped at 10 MW, it has grown into a full-scale solar park involving a consortium of developers and a projected investment of \$ 150 million.

The project is expected to deliver approximately 235,000 MWh of clean energy annually and contribute to an estimated 180,000 tonnes of carbon emissions offset each year.

A key feature of the initiative is its transmission infrastructure: a 220 kV-level transmission facility, including a new substation at Gonnoruwa and a double-circuit transmission line to the Hambantota grid substation. This is being developed through a unique cost-sharing model among the private developers, with no financial burden on the CEB or the Government.

The project, which had previously secured its SPPAs and was incorporated into the CEB's Long-Term Generation Plan, is now back on track to connect to the national grid by the end of 2026. Developers say the project will transform 500 acres of underutilised land and create economic opportunities for contractors and professionals across the renewable energy value chain.

As the country pursues its goal of 70% renewable energy generation by 2030 under its Paris Agreement commitments, the ruling is expected to set a legal precedent for similar initiatives facing administrative bottlenecks. The Attorney General's Department has confirmed that all parties are legally bound to comply with the judgment and that certified copies of the ruling will be made available to relevant institutions.