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strength. Mastering
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LAO TZU



Rubio hints at U.S. exit if Ukraine peace deal stalls

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After Paris talks, U.S. Secretary of State warns time is running out for an agreement; final decision expected 'within days'; he recalls that it's not America's war and it has other priorities to address

Associated Press
PARIS

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Friday that the U.S. may "move on" from trying to secure a Russia-Ukraine peace deal if there is no progress in the coming days, after months of efforts have failed to bring an end to the fighting.

He spoke in Paris after landmark talks among U.S., Ukrainian and European officials produced outlines for steps toward peace and appeared to make some long-awaited progress. A new meeting is expected next week in London, and Mr. Rubio suggested that could be decisive in determining if the



Marco Rubio (R) with Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy and French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot in Paris on Thursday. AP

Trump administration continues its involvement.

"We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not," Mr. Rubio told reporters. "Because if

it's not, then I think we're just going to move on. It's not our war. We have other priorities to focus on."

He said the U.S. administration wants to decide "in a matter of days".

Mr. Rubio's comments stepped up pressure on both sides to reach a peace deal, even as the U.S. and Ukraine made progress on a minerals agreement that Mr. Trump has sought to recoup billions of dollars in military aid that Washington sent Kyiv since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

'30-day pause expired'

Immediately after Mr. Rubio's comments, a Kremlin spokesperson said in Moscow that a 30-day pause on Ukrainian energy site strikes, which President Vladimir Putin announced after U.S.-Russia talks began, has expired.

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- **Ukraine & Russia were a part of the USSR and share hundreds of years of cultural, linguistic & familial links.**
- **Among the former USSR nations, Ukraine was the 2nd most powerful nation after Russia.**
- **The relations between the two nations were cordial from the dissolution of the USSR up until recently.**
- **Tensions between the two nations began in late 2013 over Ukraine's landmark political & trade deal with the European Union.**
- **Majority of the Ukrainians were angry with the then pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union instead of the EU. Their protests were known as the Euromaidan movement.**
- **It saw massive clashes between the protesters and security forces that reached their peak in 2014 and led to the ouster of Yanukovich.**
- **Soon after, amid fears of growing Western influence in Ukraine, Russia decided to act by invading Crimea, which was a part of Ukraine.**



POCSO court in Delhi convicts man of rape 11 days after police file chargesheet

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Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

In one of the speediest trials in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case in the country, a Delhi court on April 16 awarded life imprisonment to a 45-year-old man for raping and impregnating a 16-year-old girl within seven weeks of the registration of the FIR.

The police had lodged the FIR on February 28 based on a complaint by the victim's father after she delivered the child born out of the assault.

On March 28, the police filed the chargesheet, naming Devender Sharma as the accused. Eleven days later, on April 8, Special Judge (POCSO) Babita Punia of the Tis Hazari

Courts convicted Sharma on the basis of his DNA report, which matched with the baby's.

While sentencing Sharma to life imprisonment, the judge noted that the minor was raped "repeatedly by the convict, who was of her father's age" and whom she referred to as "her uncle".

The court awarded a compensation of ₹20 lakh to the survivor.

Stomach pain

The crime came to light on February 25 this year when the survivor complained of severe stomach pain. She was admitted to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where she delivered the child. The survivor and her family refused to accept the baby, who was later gi-

ven up for adoption.

Meanwhile, the doctors informed the police.

Raped several times

After several rounds of counselling, the minor revealed that Sharma had had raped her on multiple occasions last year and threatened her with dire consequences in case she disclosed the crime to her parents.

The survivor told the police that the last time she was raped by the accused was in January this year.

The minor's family submitted to the court that she has been suffering from a liver ailment since childhood, making her stomach appear bloated, as a result, neither the survivor nor her parents had an inkling of the pregnancy.

Sharma argued in the court that the survivor was not a minor, which was disproved based on her school certificate.

His other claim – that the minor's family was framing him as they owed Sharma ₹10,000 – was also junked by the court.

'Like a vulture'

While sentencing Sharma, the court stated: "People like Devender Sharma keep an eye on children like vultures to quench their lust."

"It is our duty as citizens of a civilised society to provide children with an environment that behoves a society that aspires to be democratic based on equality, freedom, and protection from exploitation," it added.

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- **The police had lodged the FIR on February 28 based on a complaint by the victim's father after she delivered the child born out of the assault.**
- **On March 28, the police filed the chargesheet.**
- **Bombay HC Judge ruled that for an offence to qualify as sexual assault under the POCSO Act, there had to be skin-to-skin contact with sexual intent!**

Content.

- **POCSO Act is the first comprehensive law in India dealing specifically with sexual abuse of children. It seeks to protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography.**
- **The Act, for the first time, defines penetrative sexual assault, sexual assault, & sexual harassment.**
- **It also includes penalties for storing pornographic material and abetment of an offence.**
- **The Act defines certain actions as “aggravated penetrative sexual assault”. These include:**
 - **The cases when the offender is a police officer, armed forces member, or public servant.**
 - **The cases where the offender is a relative of the child.**
 - **If the assault injures the sexual organs of the child or the child becomes pregnant, etc.**

Content.

- **It criminalises all sexual activities for those under the age of 18, even if consent was factually present between two minors.**
- **Each district shall designate a Sessions Court to be a Special Court. The state government shall establish it in consultation with the Chief Justice of the HC.**
- **A POSCO case must be disposed of within a year from the date the offence is reported.**
- **It empowers the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights to monitor the implementation of the provisions of this Act.**
- **If a child has committed an offence under POSCO, it shall be dealt with under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.**

POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019

- **The amendment has enhanced punishment under various sections of the Act, including the death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children.**
- **It defines child pornography and makes it punishable.**
- **The act added two more grounds to the definition of aggravated penetrative sexual assault:**
 - **Assault resulting in the death of the child.**
 - **Assault committed during a natural calamity.**
- **Under the POCSO act, the consent of a child is immaterial.**
- **Consensual sexual intercourse with or among adolescents is treated on par with rape.**
- **Demand for changing the age of consent**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- **UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that sets out children's civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights.**
- **The UN General Assembly adopted the treaty in 1989, and it came into force in 1990.**
- **India ratified the convention in 1992.**
- **The convention defines a child as any human being under 18 years unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.**
- **The parties to the Convention must take measures to prevent children from being coerced into any unlawful sexual activity.**

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- **It is a statutory body established in 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.**
- **It is responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of children, including monitoring the implementation of child-specific laws, such as:**
 - **Right to Education (RTE), 2009**
 - **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), 2012**
 - **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

Composition

- **It consists of Chairperson and six members appointed by the Central Government.**
- **Out of the six members, at least two should be women.**
- **The Chairperson is appointed on the recommendation of a 3-member selection committee chaired by the minister-in-charge of the Ministry or the Department of Women and Child Development.**
- **The Chairperson holds office for a term of three years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.**
- **The members hold the office for a term of three years or 60 years, whichever is earlier.**
- **They are not eligible for appointments for more than two terms.**

A restoration of sanity to the constitutional system

The judgment of the Supreme Court of India, on April 8, 2025, namely, *The State Of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamilnadu and Anr.*, can be called a landmark one as it has brought greater clarity to the constitutional provision dealing with the giving of assent to a Bill by a Governor. In this case, the background to the case is about the Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi, who had kept with him 10 Bills without taking any decision on them for many years. Finally, when the Assembly passed the Bills again and sent them to him, the Governor, instead of giving his assent, as per the mandate of Article 200 of the Constitution, sent them to the President of India for consideration. He sent the Bills to the President only after the Government of Tamil Nadu approached the top court.

The Bench of the Court (Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan) has now held that the action of the Governor in sending the Bills to the President at that stage to be unconstitutional and has struck it down. The Court also struck down the action taken by the President on those Bills – she had withheld assent. Invoking its special power under Article 142, the Court declared that all those Bills rejected by the President shall be deemed to have been assented to.

It is perhaps the first time in the history of the Court that Bills passed by the legislature of a state and withheld by the President have been declared as assented to by the Court. It is an extraordinary remedy to an extraordinary situation created by an extraordinary action of a State Governor.

In fact, Tamil Nadu is not the only State where the Governor has sat on Bills passed by the legislature. It has happened in Kerala, Telangana and Punjab. Kerala has now approached the Court on the same issue, which is yet to be heard.

The Bill does not die

Article 200 lays down the course of action to be followed by the Governor when a Bill duly passed by the legislature is presented to him. The logical course the Governor should follow is to give assent to the Bill. But if he does not follow this and decides to withhold assent to the Bill, the said Article says that he may declare that he is withholding assent. It would thus appear that once the Governor withholds assent, the Bill will die a natural death. The wording of this Article would convey such a meaning. But this part of the Article was very cogently explained by the Court in *State Of Punjab vs Principal Secretary to The Governor of Punjab and Another* (2023). The Court made it unambiguously clear that a declaration by the Governor that he is withholding assent does not bring an end to the Bill. It held that withholding of the Bill should be followed by sending the Bill to the legislature for reconsideration as soon as possible.

When the Bill is thus sent to the legislature, it would reconsider it promptly and send it back to the Governor either in the form in which it was passed originally or with amendments suggested



P.D.T. Achary

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General, Lok Sabha

by the Governor. Either way, the Governor will have to give assent to the Bill. He cannot exercise any veto against it. The Court has explained this point in the following words: “if the governor decides to withhold assent under the substantive part of Article 200 the logical course of action is to pursue the course indicated in the first proviso of remitting the Bill to the state legislature for reconsideration ... if the first proviso is not read in juxtaposition to the power to withhold assent conferred by the substantive part of Article 200 the governor as the unelected head of the state would be in a position to virtually veto the functioning of a duly elected legislature by simple declaring that assent is withheld without any further recourse”.

This judicial explanation has been carried forward by the Court in the Tamil Nadu case. The Court has reiterated this position, namely, withholding assent is not the end of the story so far as the Bill is concerned but the Governor is mandated to send the Bill back to the legislature for its reconsideration and the Governor shall give assent to the Bill which is sent to him after reconsideration.

The Court’s ‘time limit’ and legality

Three crucial points have been decided by the Court which make this judgment truly historic. The first relates to the time limit fixed within which the Governor as well as the President of India should decide the issue of assent. The minimum period is one month and the maximum, three months. If the Governor or the President does not adhere to this time limit, the aggrieved State can seek the intervention of the constitutional court. Obviously, the Court went to the extent of fixing a time limit in this case because of the fact that the Governor sat on the Bills for years without taking any decision. The Court has said that the Governor does not have the power to exercise a pocket veto or an absolute veto while exercising his power under Article 200.

Following the judgment, questions have been raised on the legality of a time limit under Article 200. The Court has clarified it in the judgment – it has stated that it is guided by the inherent expedient nature of the procedure prescribed under Article 200 and the well-settled legal principle that where no time limit for the exercise of a power is prescribed, it should be exercised within a reasonable period. The Court has viewed the deliberate inaction on the part of the Governor in assenting to the Bills or reserving them for the consideration of the President as a serious threat to the federal polity.

The second point relates to the question of discretion of the Governor in withholding assent or reserving the Bill for the consideration of the President.

The Court has taken the position that the Governor can take either action only on the advice of the Council of Ministers. The judgment says that when the Governor withholds assent, he has to send the Bill to the legislature for

reconsideration and when the Assembly sends the Bill back to the Governor with or without the amendments suggested by him, the Governor has to give assent.

But there is a problem with this proposition. For example, what is the occasion when the government has to advise the Governor to withhold assent and send the Bill to the Assembly for reconsideration? When the legislature can send back the Bill after reconsideration without accepting any of the amendments suggested by the Governor, how can it be then said that the Council of Ministers have advised the Governor to propose amendments to the legislature when the government commands a majority there? In fact, on the question of discretion, the Court has not been consistent as different Benches have given different opinions thereon.

Constitutional heads and judicial review

The third, and most crucial, point is about judicial review of the decision of the Governor and the President. The basic proposition laid down by the Court after reviewing a catena of cases is that “no exercise of power under the constitution is beyond the pale of judicial review”. So, it has held that there is no reason to exclude the discharge of functions by the Governor or the President under Articles 200 and 201, respectively, from judicial review.

The judgment has been assailed by the Kerala Governor who has said that this is a case of judicial overreach and that it is the job of Parliament, and not the Court, to amend the Constitution. While it is true that Parliament alone has the right to amend the Constitution, it is the job of the judiciary to explain and interpret the constitutional provisions. Another issue that has been raised by a section of lawyers is that the issues decided by Justice Pardiwala’s Bench can be decided only by a Constitution Bench under Article 145(3). In fact, the Constitution Bench under Article 145(3) decides substantial questions of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution.

Closer scrutiny would reveal that none of these points comes under the category of substantial question of law within the meaning of that Article. As a matter of fact, the Court has only brought out the inherent meaning and amplified the dimensions of it in Articles 200 and 201 with the objective of preventing the subversion of the constitutional order. By doing so, the Court has restored sanity to the constitutional system which had come under severe strain due to plain arbitrariness and deliberate inaction on the part of constitutional authorities.

Decades ago, India had seen the unedifying spectacle of a President sitting on the postal Bill for years, with a helpless Union government unable to do anything. This underscores the need to make suitable changes in the relevant provisions of the Constitution relating to the issue of assent to Bills, whether they are passed by Parliament or a State legislature. The cue must be from this judgment. Therein lies the importance of this judgment.

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Steering the decarbonisation of India's logistics sector

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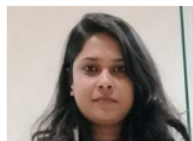
Viksit Bharat is not just a vision. It is a commitment to having a stronger, self-reliant India by 2047. At its core lies inclusive development, ensuring that growth reaches every citizen, every business, and every region. But can we truly achieve this goal without a logistics sector that is large, efficient and future-ready? From seamless supply chains to last-mile connectivity, an efficient, scalable logistics network is the strength of equitable and sustained progress.

In this growth journey, while infrastructure, efficiency and accessibility are crucial for an inclusive logistics sector, there is one factor that cannot be overlooked – the environment and its prioritisation are absolutely necessary to build a future-ready, resilient logistics network. India's logistics sector, now one of the most carbon-intensive in the world, must undergo a green transformation. As the nation moves towards a net zero carbon emission by 2070, it is imperative to reduce emissions of transportation, warehousing, and supply chain emissions.

Carbon cost of mobility

This sector bears the brunt of intense carbon emissions, mainly from oil combustion. It contributes about 13.5% of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions, with road transport alone making up over 88% (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2020). Nearly 90% of passenger travel and 70% of freight movement are dependent on roads, with trucks responsible for 38% of CO₂ emissions (IEA, 2023).

Domestic aviation accounts for around 4%, while coastal and inland shipping adds to the emissions load but is significantly less than the road freight movement. Government policies envisage a rapid expansion by 2030 – cargo and passenger movement on inland waterways is set to triple, and coastal shipping cargo movement will increase by 1.2 times. This growth not only



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India's logistics sector, which is one of the most carbon-intensive in the world, needs to undergo a green transformation

fuels economic momentum but also maintains its scalability and sustainability goals.

However, this issue is not just restricted to road freight movement. The warehousing sector, which supports freight movement, is another major emitter. Together, these factors create a pressing issue. How we strike the right balance between growth and sustainability is the question. The time to act is now.

Futuristic approaches

Global examples provide a strong foundation for this transition, with countries such as China and the United States successfully shifting freight transport from road to rail. Rail freight significantly reduces emissions compared to road transport. China has invested heavily in expanding its rail network, and the share of the railways is almost 50%. The United States has also embraced this shift, making rail one of the early decarbonised freight options. India should enhance the share of the railways in freight transport to reduce emissions and improve efficiency – rail has been an early adopter of electrification and is a more sustainable, almost zero-carbon emission mode of transport.

Road freight transport cannot be overlooked, and needs a focused structural change to make it cleaner. India has already taken a bold step in this direction with a recent initiative by the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways – the introduction of overhead electric wires along highways to power electric trucks. The first pilot project on the Delhi-Jaipur corridor could be a breakthrough in reducing emissions from freight movement while ensuring high efficiency and economic viability.

Coastal shipping and inland waterways have immense potential for decarbonisation. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) aims to slash global shipping emissions by 50% by 2050 (compared to 2008 levels), pushing

industry to adopt cleaner fuels such as ammonia, hydrogen, LNG, biofuels, methanol, and electricity. India can fast-track its green transition by introducing LNG-powered vessels, solar-assisted electric boats, and even electric or biofuel-run barges. These emission-cutting steps can keep freight movement efficient and sustainable.

Air transport remains one of the hardest sectors to decarbonise due to its heavy reliance on refined fuels, making the transition a costly challenge. However, advancements in sustainable aviation fuels and efficiency improvements in other transport modes could help offset emissions.

Warehousing, often outweaving in the carbon equation, is another significant contributor to emissions due to high energy consumption. Transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal power can drastically cut the carbon footprint of warehouses.

Moving ahead

Decarbonising India's logistics sector is not just about cutting emissions. It is about building a more competitive, resilient and future-ready industry. India's logistics sector is on the brink of a transformation, and decarbonisation is the key to ensuring sustainable growth. By scaling up rail freight, electrifying road transport, adopting cleaner maritime fuels, and making warehouses more energy-efficient, India can build a high-performing logistics network with a reduced environmental impact. The time to act is now, and with the right policies and investments, India can lead the way in creating a cleaner, greener, and more efficient logistics ecosystem.

The road to a greener future has been paved. It is now time to accelerate.

The views expressed are personal

Content.

- **From seamless supply chains to last-mile connectivity, an efficient, scalable logistics network is the strength of equitable and sustained progress.**
- **In this growth journey, while infrastructure, efficiency and accessibility are crucial for an inclusive logistics sector, there is one factor that cannot be overlooked — the environment and its prioritisation are absolutely necessary to build a future-ready, resilient logistics network.**
- **India's logistics sector, now one of the most carbon-intensive in the world, must undergo a green transformation.**
- **As the nation moves towards a net zero carbon emission by 2070, it is imperative to reduce emissions of transportation, warehousing, and supply chain emissions.**

Fact

- **This sector bears the brunt of intense carbon emissions, mainly from oil combustion. It contributes about 13.5% of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions, with road transport alone making up over 88% (International Energy Agency (IEA, 2020).**
- **Nearly 90% of passenger travel and 70% of freight movement are dependent on roads, with trucks responsible for 38% of CO2 emissions (IEA, 2023).**
- **Domestic aviation accounts for around 4%, while coastal and inland shipping adds to the emissions load but is significantly less than the road freight movement.**
- **Government policies envisage a rapid expansion by 2030 —cargo and passenger movement on inland waterways is set to triple, and coastal shipping cargo movement will increase by 1.2 times.**

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- **However, this issue is not just restricted to road freight movement. The warehousing sector, which supports freight movement, is another major emitter.**
- **Global examples provide a strong foundation for this transition, with countries such as China and the United States successfully shifting freight transport from road to rail. Rail freight significantly reduces emissions compared to road transport.**
- **Road freight transport cannot be overlooked, and needs a focused structural change to make it cleaner.**
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Link

1. The Hindu Playlist -

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2. NCERT Playlist:-

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[list=PLpuxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad)

3. PIB Weekly:- [https://youtube.com/playlist?](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu)

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