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NO-CONFIDENCE AGAINST THE SPEAKER: PROCESS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Opposition has moved a no-confidence motion against Om Birla, the Lok Sabha Speaker. Parliamentary sources said the motion will now be examined and processed as per established rules.

Removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker: What the Constitution Allows

- The Lok Sabha Speaker (or Deputy Speaker) can be removed from office, but only through a strict constitutional process.
- Under **Article 94(c)** of the Constitution, removal is possible by a resolution passed by a **majority of all the then members of the Lok Sabha**.
- The provision applies only to the Lok Sabha, not the Rajya Sabha, and the procedural requirements are stringent, reflecting the high threshold set for removing the presiding officer of the House.

Procedure to Remove the Lok Sabha Speaker or Deputy Speaker

- A member seeking removal must submit a written notice to the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha.
- The notice may be jointly **signed by two or more members**, but the resolution cannot be moved unless at least **14 days' notice is given**.
- After receipt, a motion for leave to move the resolution is listed in the List of Business in the members' names.
- The date fixed must be any day after the 14-day notice period, following which the House may consider the motion as per rules.

Guidelines Governing a No-Confidence Motion Against the Speaker

- Under Rule **200A** of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, a no-confidence motion against the Speaker must meet strict content and conduct requirements.
- The resolution must be specific in its charges, clearly and precisely worded, and free of arguments, inferences, ironic expressions, imputations, or defamatory statements.

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- Additionally, once the motion is admitted for discussion, the Member(s) who submitted it are not permitted to make a speech, underscoring the procedural rigor governing such motions.

Speaker's Role During Consideration of Removal Motion

- While a removal motion is under discussion, the Speaker continues in office and, as a Member of the Lok Sabha, retains the right to participate and speak in the proceedings.
 - The Speaker is entitled to vote in the first instance on the resolution or related matters, but cannot exercise a casting vote in the event of a tie.
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INDIA'S HERITAGE RECLAIMED: SMITHSONIAN RETURNS THREE BRONZES

Earlier this month, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA) announced it will return three historic bronze sculptures to the Government of India, acknowledging they were illegally removed from temple settings.

The artefacts include: **Shiva Nataraja** (Chola period, ca. 990); **Somaskanda** (Chola period, 12th century); **Saint Sundarar** with **Paravai** (Vijayanagar period, 16th century).

The Three Bronzes: Sacred Origins and Iconography

- **Shiva Nataraja: Lord of the Dance**
 - The Shiva Nataraja bronze originated from the Sri Bhava Aushadesvara Temple in Tamil Nadu's undivided Thanjavur district.
 - It portrays Shiva as "**Lord of the Dance**", performing the **ananda tandava** (dance of bliss), symbolising cosmic creation, preservation, and destruction.
- **Somaskanda: The Divine Family**
 - The Somaskanda bronze traces its provenance to the Visvanatha Temple in Mannargudi, Tamil Nadu.
 - It depicts:
 - Shiva seated with Parvati (Uma)
 - Their son Skanda, who may sit between or dance around them

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- **Saint Sundarar with Paravai: Devotion in Bronze**
 - The third sculpture depicts **Saint Sundarar** and his **wife Paravai**, originally from a Shiva temple in Veerasolapuram village, Tamil Nadu.
 - The couple were influential Shaivite saints, credited with spreading Shiva worship in eighth-century southern India, and are deeply revered in Tamil religious tradition.
- **Living Icons, Not Museum Objects**
 - According to the NMAA, such images were:
 - Housed in dedicated shrines for most of the year
 - Once annually subjected to elaborate ritual bathing (abhisheka) using water, milk, yogurt, honey, sandalwood paste, and sacred ash
 - Then dressed in ceremonial robes

Why the Smithsonian Is Returning the Bronzes?

- The Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA) stated that the decision reflects its commitment to responsible stewardship of cultural heritage and greater transparency.
- NMAA began its restitution efforts in **2002**, making it one of the earlier US museums to address issues of **illicitly acquired cultural property**.
- The institution acknowledges that many artefacts were transferred over the past two centuries **without the consent of local communities**.

What Restitution Means for India

- **Restoring Legal and Cultural Ownership** - Restitution ensures that India regains **legal title** over artefacts that rightfully belong to it. While ownership returns to the Government of India, objects may remain on **long-term loan**, allowing them to be displayed internationally while acknowledging their true origin.
 - **Ethics and International Goodwill** - The provenance research and return process reflect ethical museum practice and foster diplomatic goodwill. Restitution signals recognition of historical wrongs and builds trust between source nations and global institutions.
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REGULATING SYNTHETIC MEDIA - INDIA TIGHTENS IT RULES ON AI-GENERATED CONTENT

- The Union Government has notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) **Rules, 2021**.
- It will strengthen regulation of AI-generated (synthetic) content and drastically reduce takedown timelines for unlawful material.
- The amendments (effective February 20, 2026) aim to **curb** the spread of non-consensual **deepfakes**, intimate imagery, and unlawful content, while reinforcing platform accountability under the IT Act, 2000.

Key Amendments at a Glance:

- **Mandatory Labelling of AI-generated content:**
 - **Legal definition of “Synthetically Generated Information (SGI)”:** Audio, visual or audio-visual content artificially created, generated, modified, or altered using a computer resource in a way that makes it appear real or indistinguishable from authentic events or persons.
 - **Important features:**
 - AI-generated imagery must be labelled “prominently.”
 - The earlier proposal requiring 10% of image space to carry the label has been diluted.
 - Platforms must seek user disclosure for AI-generated content, proactively label content if disclosure is absent, and remove non-consensual deepfakes.
 - **Exclusions:** Routine editing and quality-enhancing tools (e.g., smartphone touch-ups) are excluded — narrowing the scope from the draft October 2025 version.

Governance and Constitutional Dimensions:

- **Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech:** Overbroad or rushed takedowns may chill legitimate expression. Short timelines increase risk of defensive over-removal.

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- **Article 21 – Right to Privacy and Dignity:** Faster removal of non-consensual deepfakes strengthens protection of individual dignity.
- **Federal implications:** Allowing multiple State officers enhances decentralised enforcement.

Key Challenges:

- **Determining illegality within 2–3 hours:** Legal ambiguity, law enforcement communications may lack clarity.
- **Risk of over-censorship:** Platforms may make mistakes on the side of removal - could undermine free speech and digital innovation.
- **Compliance burden on Big Tech:** Real-time moderation requires high-end AI tools and human review. Smaller platforms may struggle disproportionately.
- **Verification mechanisms:** Ensuring authenticity of user declarations. Deploying “reasonable technical measures” without privacy violations.

Way Forward:

- **Clearer illegality standards:** Develop structured guidance for platforms, and standardised digital takedown protocols.
- **Independent oversight mechanism:** Appellate or review authority to check arbitrary takedowns.
- **Strengthening AI detection tools:** Promote indigenous AI detection systems under India’s AI mission.
- **Harmonisation with Digital Personal Data Protection Act:** Ensure consistency in privacy and consent standards.
- **Capacity building for States:** Training authorised officers in cyber law and AI governance.

Conclusion:

- By these amendments, the government seeks to protect privacy, dignity, and public order in an era of rapidly advancing generative AI.
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PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



- It is a web-based online transaction system for fund management and e-payment to implementing agencies and other beneficiaries.

- It is a **Centralized Transaction System & Platform**, providing end to end financial management services to all stakeholders.
- It is developed and implemented by the **Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**, Government of India.

Function: To facilitate sound Public Financial Management System for Government of India by establishing an efficient fund flow system as well as a payment cum accounting network.

Key Features of Public Financial Management System:

- It tracks funds released under all plan schemes of Government of India, and real time reporting of expenditure at all levels of Programme implementation.
- Government has mandated PFMS as a single platform for payment, accounting & reconciliation of government transactions and DBT.
- **Cash management modules:** It has been introduced on PFMS for better fund management like **Single Nodal Agency (SNA), Treasury Single Account (TSA), Central Nodal Agency (CNA)** and **Single Nodal Agency Samyochit Pranali Ekikrit Shighra Hastantaran (SNA SPARSH)**.
- **Grievance Redressal System:** PFMS has introduced the **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system**, to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for PFMS users/ beneficiaries.



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ALMATTI DAM



The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister recently objected to Karnataka's move to increase the height of the Almatti Dam on the Upper Krishna.

- Almatti Dam, situated on the **Krishna River in Karnataka**, is a **multipurpose dam** primarily used for **irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, and flood control**.
- It is also known as Lal Bahadur Shastri Dam.
- It is the main reservoir of the Upper Krishna Irrigation Project.

NETWORK READINESS INDEX



- It maps how **economies leverage information and communication technologies** to support growth, **innovation and social development**.
- **Methodology used:** It maps the network-based readiness landscape based on their performance in **four pillars**:
 - Technology
 - People
 - Governance
 - Impact
- The report has been prepared by the **Portulans Institute**, an independent, non-profit research and educational institute based in Washington DC.

Key Highlights of Network Readiness Index Report 2025:

- India improved its score from 53.63 out of 100 in 2024 to **43 out of 100 in 2025**.



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- India secured **1st rank** in “Annual investment in telecommunication services”, “AI scientific publications”, “ICT services exports” and “E-commerce legislation”.
 - **2nd rank** in “FTTH/Building Internet subscriptions”, “Mobile broadband internet traffic within the country” and “International Internet bandwidth”, and **3rd rank** in “Domestic market scale” and “Income Inequality”.
- **India is ranked 2nd** in the group of lower-middle-income countries.

WHAT IS THE PM-SURAJ PORTAL?



- **Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan (PM-SURAJ) portal** was launched by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** in 2024.
- **Objective:** To provide **credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society virtually**.
- It is a **centralised platform** where individuals from underprivileged backgrounds can **apply for and track the progress of all available loans and credit schemes**.
- **Only those intending to establish a new business** can apply on this portal, as this platform provides loans exclusively for business startups.
- **Business loans up to Rs 15 lakh** are available at **low interest rates** through this portal, which are **transferred directly to your bank account through banks, NBFC-MFIs, and other financial institutions**.
- It is run by **government bodies like the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), the National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC), and the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC)**.
- It is designed to **uplift the most marginalized segments of society, such as the backward classes, scheduled castes, tribes, and other disadvantaged sections, and extend credit assistance to one lakh entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities**.



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NATIONAL LARGE SOLAR TELESCOPE



- It will be established in the **Merak region near the Pangong Tso Lake.**

Purpose: It is meant to study the sun

- It will **operate in the visible and near-infrared wavelengths** of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- It will help to study the **fundamental solar dynamics and magnetism**, energetic solar events, and **map various space-weather processes** having a direct bearing on the Earth and national space assets, like satellites and space launches.
- It will serve as India's **third ground-based** solar observatory.
 - Currently, the **Kodaikanal Solar Observatory** (in Tamil Nadu, established 1899) and the **Udaipur Solar Observatory** (in Rajasthan, established 1975) are operational.

Key Facts about National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope

- It will be built in **Hanle.**
 - In a segmented-mirror telescope, a larger primary mirror comprises highly complex, smaller hexagonal mirror segments.
- It will be one of the world's largest telescopes operating in the **electromagnetic spectrum's optical-infrared wavelengths.**

Objective: Frontier research on exoplanets, stellar and galactic evolution, and supernovae will be possible, besides looking for clues to trace the origins of the universe.
