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## Supreme Court Sets Deadline for Lokpal Appointment

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Recently, the Supreme Court has fixed a **February-end deadline** for the **search committee on Lokpal** to recommend a panel of names for appointment of the country's first anti-graft ombudsman.

- Earlier in January, 2019 the government informed the Supreme Court that an **eight-member search committee** has been constituted in September 2018 **headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai**.
- Other members of the search committee are:
  - Former chief of State Bank of India Arundhati Bhattacharya,
  - Prasar Bharati Chairperson A Surya Prakash,
  - Former Indian Space Research Organisation head A S Kiran Kumar,
  - Former Judge of Allahabad High Court Sakha Ram Singh Yadav,
  - Former Gujarat Police head Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala,
  - Retired IAS officer Lalit K Panwar, and
  - Former Solicitor General Ranjit Kumar.
- The government informed SC that because of **lack of infrastructure and manpower** due the search committee was not able to hold deliberations on the issue.

### Background

- Though passed in 2014, the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act of 2013 was not implemented all these years because **there was no Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha**.
- The Act intends the LoP to be the part of the selection committee of the **PM, the CJI and the Speaker, which has to first appoint an eminent jurist among their ranks**.
- However, on April 27 last year, the Supreme Court, in a judgment, clarified that the Lokpal appointment process need not be stalled merely due to the absence of the LoP.

- The court has for the past several months stated the **government's stand on Lokpal Appointment as unsatisfactory** and constantly urging the government to complete the Lokpal appointment.

### **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**

- To provide for the establishment of a body of **Lokpal for the Union** and **Lokayukta for States** to inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It **extends to the whole of India**; It shall apply to **public servants in and outside India**.
- The Lokpal shall inquire or cause an inquiry to be conducted into any matter involved in, or arising from, or connected with, any allegation of corruption made in a complaint in respect of the following, namely:—
  - Any person who is or has been a Prime Minister (**except for certain exceptions with respect to matters related to security, international relations etc.**)
  - Any person who is or has been a Minister of the Union or an MP.
  - Group A to D officers as defined in Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
- It shall be the duty of the Lokpal to **present annually** to the **President a report to be laid before each House of Parliament**.
- Every State shall establish a body to be known as the Lokayukta for the State, if not so established, constituted or appointed, by a law made by the State Legislature.