

DAILY PT POINTERS

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Budget Session of Parliament from January 31 to April 4

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Budget Session of Parliament will convene on January 31. The first part of the session will conclude on February 13 and the second part of the session after the recess will begin on March 10 and go on till April 4.

The session will begin with President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint session of Parliament. The Budget will be presented on February 1.

The Election Commission has directed the Union government not to have any Delhi-centric announcements in the Bud-

polls scheduled on February 5. With Bihar polls scheduled later this year, the BJP's allies Janata Dal (United) and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) will hope for crucial announcements for the State.

The Joint Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, is expected to present its report. The NDA allies are not keen to push it through in Parliament.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee reviewing the simultaneous elections Bill is also scheduled to present its report during the session, though the panel's members have contended that it is too short a time to deliberate on such a signif-

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- The **Indian Constitution does not use** the term "**Budget**". Instead, **Article 112** of the Constitution uses the phrase "**Annual Financial Statement**" for the same.
- The Budget Session is the **longest and most important session** of the Parliament.
- The **primary focus** of the Budget Session is the **presentation, discussion, and passing of the Union Budget**, which outlines the government's revenue and expenditure plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

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Threats in Gulf of Aden and Red Sea could increase, says Defence Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Threats in the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and in waters adjacent to the East African countries might increase and the Indian Navy is striving to boost its presence and keep the sea routes safe, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday.

"India's economic prosperity is linked to maritime security. It is, therefore, necessary to protect our territorial waters, ensure freedom of navigation, and



Rajnath Singh views the display at a photo and painting exhibition organised by the Indian Navy in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

increase in threats in the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and the sea areas adjacent to

Mr. Singh stressed that the military is surging forward with a big mandate

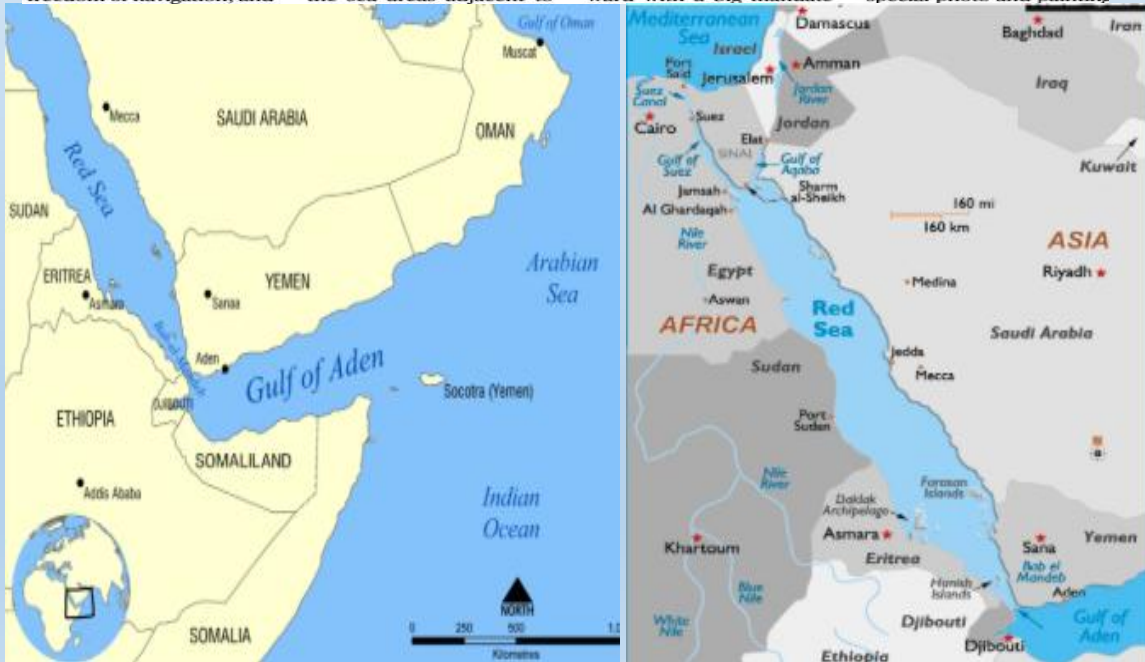
every responsible civilian is a soldier without uniform and every soldier is a civilian in uniform," he said.

In his address, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi acknowledged the critical role naval civilians play in supporting the Navy's operations by providing technical assistance, administrative management and logistics support. Their role is essential to the Navy's combat readiness and operational success, he said.

The event began with a special photo and painting

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said **that** Threats in the **Gulf of Aden, Red Sea** and in waters adjacent to the East African countries might increase and the Indian Navy is striving to boost its presence and keep the sea routes safe **Gulf of Aden**, deepwater basin that forms a natural sea link between the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.

- It is bounded to the south by Somalia, north by Yemen, east by the Arabian Sea, and west by **Djibouti**.



The **Red Sea** is a semi-enclosed, inlet (or extension) of the Indian Ocean between the continents of Africa from Asia. Bordering Countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.

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Lokpal ordered probe in 24 cases in 5 years, granted nod for prosecution in 6 of them

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Twelve years since the Lokpal Act was passed and five years after the Lokpal – the country's first anti-corruption body – started to function, it has ordered investigation in just 24 cases and granted prosecution sanction in six cases, data show.

The Lokpal, which has the powers to investigate complaints against public functionaries, received three complaints against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October and December last year.

The Lokpal has rejected a large number of complaints, nearly 90%, over the past five years as they were not in the correct format. At least 2,320 "defect-free" complaints were registered with the Lokpal in five years, with 226 com-

Nearly 90% of the complaints were rejected as they were not in correct format

members in Central government bodies; and 41% were against those in the "Others" category, which includes State government officials.

As per Section 53 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, a complaint can be entertained only if it is filed within a period of seven years from the date of the alleged offence.

Delayed appointment

Though the Lokpal Act was passed in 2013, the country's first Lokpal, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh, was appointed on March 19, 2019, along with eight other members. Justice Ghosh moved out of office in May

employees who were brought in during the transitional period, said an official.

The Lokpal awaits decision on proposals sent to the Union government on several occasions for filling up the post of the Director of Inquiry and the Director of Prosecution.

In the meanwhile, preliminary inquiries and investigations are being entrusted with the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as mandated, the official added.

According to Section 11 A of the CVC Act, 2003, a Director of Inquiry, not below the rank of Joint Secretary, ought to be appointed in the CVC by the Union government for conducting preliminary inquiries referred to it by the Lokpal. However, presently, in the absence of Director of In-

Twelve years after the Lokpal Act was passed and five years after the Lokpal began functioning, it has investigated only 24 cases and granted prosecution sanction in six. The Lokpal received three complaints against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October and December of the previous year.

- The Lokpal is the first institution of its kind in independent India, established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013 to inquire and investigate into allegations of corruption against public functionaries who fall within the scope and ambit of the above Act. The Lokpal of India is committed to address concerns and aspirations of the citizens of India for clean governance. It shall make all efforts within its jurisdiction to serve the public interest and shall endeavor to use the powers vested in it to eradicate corruption in public life..

Engaging with the Taliban

India's Foreign Secretary has met with the Taliban Foreign Minister, India's highest-level contact with the regime since it came to power. The meeting was the culmination of the incremental progress of India's policy of 'cautious engagement' with the Taliban. How has it negotiated the relationship since 2021?



SHUBHAJIT ROY

BACK IN 2000, following a meeting with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban envoy to Pakistan, Vijay K Nambiar, India's High Commissioner to Islamabad at the time, assessed the chances of engagement with the regime in Kabul as bleak.

"I realised that there was no way in which we (Taliban and India) are going to be truly connected with each other in any kind of an understanding," he said, according to Avinash Paliwal's book, *My Enemy's Enemy: India in Afghanistan, from the Soviet Invasion to the US Withdrawal* (2017).

Nambiar believed that the Taliban were firmly in the "Pakistani circle of reasoning", which made it difficult for India to seriously engage with them.

A quarter century later, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri earlier this month led a delegation of senior Indian diplomats at a substantive meeting in Dubai with Amir



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai on January 8. [X/@MEAIndia](#)

said the engagement had been "limited", and the Taliban had indicated they would be "reasonable" in the way they "handle" India's concerns.

After the Taliban announced a Cabinet with very little representation for ethnic minorities and without any woman, India called

Foreign Minister Muttaqi.

Later that same month, New Delhi sent aid for the Afghan people impacted by a deadly earthquake in the Khost and Paktika provinces in the east of the country, and also took the incremental step of stationing a "technical team" at the Indian embassy in

Kabul had their first publicised meeting with Muttaqi.

A moment for engagement

In their conversations with key Taliban leaders, Indian officials have got the sense that the Taliban are "ready to engage", and are looking for assistance to rebuild the country's infrastructure. They are also facing challenges in governance and capacity, as many trained Afghans have left the country.

On its part, New Delhi would not like to be left behind other countries, including China, who are making significant inroads in Afghanistan. While questions have been asked over India not linking its increasing engagement with a push for improving the situation of women in Afghanistan, New Delhi has said it is committed to the welfare of the people of that country, and would act in a "realistic manner".

The regional and global context has been highly dynamic since the Taliban came to power. Iran has been weakened considerably over the last year as a result of Israeli military actions and the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria; Russia's grim war in Ukraine is close to completing three years; and the US awaits the return of Donald Trump to the White House.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's original benefactor and ally Pakistan has turned into a

- Taliban's Foreign Minister Muttaqi asked India to issue visas to Afghan businessmen, patients, and students.

Complications:

- India does not officially recognize the Taliban government.
- There are security concerns.
- The Indian embassy in Kabul lacks a functional visa section.
- Commitment: India is willing to resume stalled projects in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, signaling an important commitment to engagement.
- India considers resuming stalled projects across Afghanistan's provinces and addressing visa issues for Afghan businessmen, patients, and students, despite not officially recognizing the Taliban government.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB –GS3(Space)



- Pixxel, a Bengaluru-based space-tech company, has launched India's first private satellite constellation, Firefly, marking a major milestone in the country's space journey. The first three Firefly satellites were successfully launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission.
- These satellites are the world's highest-resolution commercial-grade hyperspectral satellites, offering a 5-meter resolution, six times sharper than typical satellites. Firefly's advanced imaging system, with 150+ spectral bands, can monitor environmental changes such as chemical compositions, vegetation health, and water quality, aiding climate action.
- The satellites provide daily global coverage and have a profound impact on industries like agriculture, resource management, and climate monitoring. This launch strengthens India's presence in advanced space technology, aligning with the "Make in India" and "Atmanirbharta" initiatives. Pixxel's journey began with the launch of Shakuntala in 2022, followed by Anand in 2023.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



Air –GS3(Economy)

IMF Retains India's Economic Growth Outlook At 6.5 % Over Next 2 Financial Years

The IMF logo is displayed in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a solid blue rectangular background.

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has maintained India's growth to be solid at 6.5 percent for the next two fiscal years 2025-26 or FY26 and 2026-27 or FY27, as projected in October in an update to its World Economic Outlook released yesterday. India maintain the fastest growth rate among the world's largest economies.
- Meanwhile, Global growth is projected at 3.3 percent both in 2025 and 2026 as per IMF, below the historical average of 3.7 percent. The 2025 forecast remains largely unchanged from the October 2024 World Economic Outlook, with an upward revision for the United States balancing declines in other major economies.
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