

# **The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill 2023**

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## **What's in today's article?**

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## **Why in News?**

- The Standing Committee on Defence (headed by Jai Ram) has agreed to all provisions of the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023, saying it must be passed without any amendment.

- The 39th Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the committee on the bill was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid in Rajya Sabha.

## Background in which the Bill was Introduced:

- **Currently**, personnel of the Army, Navy and Air Force are **governed in accordance with the provisions contained in their specific governing or regulatory Service Acts** – the Army Act 1950, the Navy Act 1957, and the Air Force Act 1950.
- At the time of enactment of these respective Acts, **most of the service organisations were largely composed of personnel from a single service.**
- However, now there are **numerous inter-services organisations** and joint training establishments, where personnel of the armed forces and other forces serve together.
- **Currently**, the commander-in-chief or officer-in-command of the inter-services organisations is **not empowered to exercise disciplinary/administrative powers** over the personnel belonging to **other services.**
- Accordingly, the officers serving in these organisations need to be reverted to their respective parent service units for exercising any disciplinary or administrative action.
- In view of the above, **the Ministry of Defence** had introduced the Bill in Lok Sabha (in March 2023) and it was referred to the Standing Committee on Defence by the Speaker (in April 2023) for examination and report.
- The Bill seeks to **empower the commander-in-chief and officer-in-command** of inter-services organisations with all disciplinary and administrative powers in respect of personnel serving in or attached to such organisations/establishments.

## Key Features of the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill 2023:

- **Inter-services Organisation:**
  - Existing Inter-services Organisations will be deemed to have been constituted under the Bill. These include –
    - The Andaman and Nicobar Command,
    - The Defence Space Agency, and
    - The National Defence Academy.
  - The central government may constitute a **Joint Services Command**, which may be placed under the command of a Commander-in-Chief.
- **Control of Inter-services Organisations:** The Bill empowers the Commander-in-Chief/ Officer-in-Command of an Inter-services Organisation to exercise command and control over the personnel serving in or attached to it.

- **The superintendence** of an Inter-services Organisation will be vested in the central government.
- **Other forces under central government:** The central government may notify any force raised and maintained in India to which the Bill will apply. This would be in addition to army, navy, and air force personnel.
- **Commander-in-Chief:** The officers eligible to be appointed as the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command are:
  - a General Officer of the regular Army (above the rank of Brigadier),
  - a Flag Officer of the Navy (rank of Admiral of the Fleet, Admiral, Vice-Admiral, or Rear-Admiral), or
  - an Air Officer of the Air Force (above the rank of group captain)
- **Commanding Officer:** The Bill provides for a Commanding Officer who will be in command of a unit, ship, or establishment.
  - The officer will also perform duties assigned by the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of the Inter-services Organisation.
  - The Commanding Officer will be **empowered to initiate all disciplinary or administrative actions** over the personnel appointed, deputed, posted, or attached to that Inter-services Organisation.

## Recommendations of the Standing Committee:

- The committee recommends that the bill **be passed without any amendments**, enacted as a statute and the committee's observations/recommendation be considered.
- **The bill will essentially be an enabling legislation**, which will empower the heads of the inter-services organisations to exercise **effective** command, control and discipline, **without amending the respective Acts**.
- Service personnel when serving in or attached to an inter-services organisation will **continue to be governed by their respective Service Acts**.

## Reasons given by the Committee for Agreeing with the Bill:

- The committee believe that enactment of the Bill will have **various tangible benefits** such as –
  - **Maintenance of effective discipline and efficiency** in Inter-services establishments by the Heads of Inter-Services Organisations,
  - **Abolition of the system of reverting personnel** under disciplinary proceedings to their parent Service units,
  - **Expeditious disposal of cases** of indiscipline,
  - **Saving government expenses** and time by avoiding multiple proceedings, etc.

## Q1) What is Theatre command?

In the military, a theatre command designates a certain geographic area where military actions are organised, coordinated, and carried out under a single command. It is a method of allocating and controlling military resources to a certain area or theatre of operations.

## Q2) Why was the Shekatkar committee formed?

The Committee of Experts (CoE) constituted (2015) by the Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen (Retd) DB Shekatkar to recommend measures to enhance combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure of the armed forces.

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**Source:** [House panel approves Defence Bill, says must be passed without change](#) | [ET](#)

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