

Integrated commands structure plan

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Why in News?

The Armed Forces have finalized the structure for making integrated theater commands. They are now considering appointing a Vice Chief of Defence Staff and a Deputy Chief of Defence Staff.

What is Theaterisation of Armed Forces?

- Theaterisation is a concept which seeks to integrate the capabilities of the three services – army, air force and navy – in order to optimally utilise their resources for wars and operations.
- A **theatre command/unit** will be created by integrating elements/assets from all the three services.

- Simply put, a theatre command deploys elements of the three services under a single, unified command structure.
- Each command is assigned a specific geographical region, combining resources of the three services for operational roles.
- As of now, almost all major countries like China, Russia, the US, the UK and France work on a theatre command concept.
 - For example, **China's Western Theatre Command** looks after the entire borders with India.

Theatre commands and India

- The **Kargil Review Committee**, the Naresh Chandra Committee and the Group of Ministers had called for structural changes in higher defence management.
- It was the **Shekatkar committee**, which had recommended the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and theatre commands.

Current command structure in India

- At present, India has 17 single service commands and only two tri-service commands.
- The 17 single service commands are divided as:
 - Army – 7 commands; Airforce – 7 commands; Navy – 3 commands
- **The two tri-service commands** are: Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), and The Strategic Force Command (handles the nuclear weapons).
 - The Andaman and Nicobar command is a full-fledged command raised as a tri-service command in 2001.

What are the recent steps taken by India towards theaterisation?

- **Proposal to create a national defence committee**
 - There is a proposal for theatre commanders under a national defence committee **likely to be headed by the Defence Minister**.
- **Inter-Services Organisation (Command, Control and Discipline) Act 2023**
 - The act empowers the commander-in-chief and the officer-in-command of inter-services organisations with disciplinary and administrative powers over personnel from the other services serving in them.
 - Limited cross-postings between the Army, Navy and IAF have already been implemented to promote jointness.
 - Restructuring of the headquarters and the subsequent postings will take place after the final approval from the govt.
- **First tri-service common defence station**
- In March 2024, the decision was taken to transform Mumbai into the first tri-service common defence station.
 - A common defense station would merge all Army, Navy, and Air Force facilities, like logistics and maintenance, under one leadership.
- It was also decided to set up additional joint logistics nodes across the country to boost integration in logistical needs and streamline their supply chains.

Proposed organisational structure for integrated theatre commands - key highlights

- **Organisational structure for the creation of integrated theatre commands is ready**
 - The Armed Forces have finalised the organisational structure for the creation of integrated theatre commands.
 - However, the organisational structure plan may be finetuned after it gets government approval.
 - **Appointment of a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**
 - The Vice CDS is likely to be an officer of the rank of General or equivalent.
 - He is expected to look after strategic planning, capability development and procurement-related matters.
 - **Appointment of a Deputy CDS**
 - The Deputy CDS is likely to be an officer of the rank of Lieutenant General or equivalent.
 - He will be responsible for operations, intelligence and will coordinate the allocation of assets between theatres.
 - **Creation of commands**
 - The proposal entails creation of the **western theatre command** headquarters in Jaipur where the Army's South Western Command is located.
 - The **northern theatre command** is likely to be in Lucknow.
 - The **maritime theatre command** is likely to have its base in Coimbatore. It will involve the IAF's Prayagraj-headquartered Central Command and its Southern Air Command based in Thiruvananthapuram.
 - Earlier, the plans were to set up the maritime theatre command headquarters in Karwar.
 - **Plan is to create three adversary-based theatre commands**
 - The overall plan is to establish three adversary-based theatre commands:
 - one facing Pakistan,
 - another opposite China, and
 - a maritime theatre command to tackle maritime threats outside the coastal borders of the country.
 - **Role of three service chiefs**
 - The three service chiefs will be responsible for raising, training and sustaining the individual services.
 - It is not known yet whether they will continue to retain some operational roles – the three theatre commanders will be responsible for operations.
 - **No additional manpower is likely to be enrolled**
 - No additional manpower is likely to be enrolled for the creation of the theatre commands.
 - Only readjustments within organisations will be carried out to meet the requirements of the theatre commands.
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Q.1. What is Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)?

The Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) is a tri-service command of the Indian Armed Forces, based in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was established in September 2001 to protect India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca.

Q.2. What is Strategic Forces Command (SFC)?

SFC is responsible for the management and administration of the country's tactical and strategic nuclear weapons stockpile. It was created on January 4, 2003.

Source: [Integrated commands structure plan looks at Vice CDS, Dy CDS with clear roles](#) | PIB | [Hindustan Times](#)

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