

INTER-SERVICES ORGANISATIONS – POLITY

NEWS: Recently the government notified rules under the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control & Discipline) Act, 2023, making the Act fully operational.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Key Rules under Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control & Discipline) Act, 2023

- **Empowerment of Commanders:**
Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command of Inter-Service Organisations (ISOs) have been legally empowered with full **administrative and disciplinary authority** over personnel from the Army, Navy, and Air Force serving under their command.
- **Legal Framework via Rules under Section 11:**
Rules framed under **Section 11** provide a **comprehensive legal and procedural mechanism** to operationalize the Act. These rules define how command, control, and disciplinary jurisdiction will be exercised across inter-service formations.
- **Expedited Disciplinary Proceedings:**
The Act ensures **faster and more efficient disposal of disciplinary cases** by avoiding duplication of proceedings across services. It reduces inter-service procedural delays and bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Preservation of Service-Specific Conditions:**
The Act explicitly states that it does **not override the unique service conditions** (like pay, allowances, traditions, or recruitment systems) of the individual branches — Army, Navy, and Air Force. It harmonizes command structure without altering identity or internal rules of the services.

Implications of the Act on India's Military Structure

- **Operational Synergy and Jointness:**
The Act promotes **greater synergy in functioning** of inter-service formations, helping overcome traditional administrative silos. It lays the foundation for seamless cooperation and joint operations among the services.
- **Strengthening of Theatre Command Framework:**
It is a preparatory step toward **future Integrated Theatre Commands**. By empowering ISO commanders now, the Act ensures that **Theatre Commanders** will eventually have **unified operational and administrative control** over all personnel under their command.
- **Cost Efficiency and Resource Optimization:**
Unified command reduces **redundancy, duplication of infrastructure, and administrative processes**, thereby enhancing **cost-effectiveness** and optimal utilization of military resources.

What are Joint Theatre Commands?

- **Definition:**
Joint Theatre Commands are integrated military structures where the **Army, Navy, and Air**

Force function together under a single commander responsible for a specific geographical area or operational objective.

- **Purpose:**
Designed to enable **swift, coordinated, and decisive military responses** through integrated planning, logistics, and execution across all service branches.

What are Inter-Service Organisations (ISOs)?

- **Definition:**
ISOs are military structures comprising personnel from **at least two of the three defence services**. They are created to handle **common responsibilities** in logistics, training, medical services, or joint operations.
- **Legal Basis:**
The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023 authorizes the **central government** to establish such bodies and **vest command and disciplinary powers** in designated officers.
- **Command Structure:**
Each ISO is headed by an **Officer-in-Command** who exercises **full disciplinary and administrative control** over all tri-service personnel posted within the organization, regardless of their parent service.
- **Example:**
The **Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)** is India's first tri-service command and a model of integrated military functioning under a unified leadership.

India's Target and Strategic Vision

- **Theaterisation for Jointness:**
India aims to move towards **theaterisation of military commands**, wherein integrated theatre commands will be responsible for joint war-fighting across land, sea, and air domains.
- **Enhancing Inter-operability:**
Integration of commands enhances **inter-operability**, facilitates joint training and logistics, and improves real-time decision-making during conflict.
- **'One Nation, One Military Approach':**
The long-term vision is to achieve a **holistic and unified approach to national defence**, with **integrated command structures** that can adapt to modern, multi-domain warfare.

Global Examples of Integrated Commands

- **United States – USINDOPACOM:**
The United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) is a major joint command that exemplifies **tri-service coordination under a unified theatre command**, covering a vast strategic region.

- **China's Theatre Commands:**

China operates **five theatre commands**, each with control over all service branches in its area of responsibility, enabling **rapid deployment and joint operations**.

Military Integration Reforms in India

- **Creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS):**

- Established in **2019** to enhance coordination across Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- Acts as a **single-point military advisor** to the government and oversees joint planning and capability development.

- **Institutionalization of ISOs:**

- Multiple ISOs have been created to manage logistics, medical services, and training in an integrated manner.
- The **2023 Act** gives legal backing to their command structure and functioning.

- **Planned Theatre Commands:**

- **Western and Eastern Theatre Commands** (land-based) and a **Maritime Theatre Command** are in planning stages.
- These commands will have tri-service integration for faster mobilization and unified action.

- **Objective:**

To create a **modern, agile, technologically enabled military structure** capable of handling 21st-century threats through **jointness, integration, and unified command**.

Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/centre-notifies-rules-under-inter-services-organisations-act/articleshow/121467360.cms?from=mdr>