



Integrated Theatre Command

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Why in News

As part of defence reforms after the appointment of **the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**, the government is working on the **formation of integrated theatre commands**.

Key Points

- **Current Situation:**
 - The Indian armed forces **currently have 17 commands**. There are 7 commands each of the Army and the Air Force. The Navy has 3 commands. Each command is headed by a **4-star rank military officer**.
 - There is **one joint command in Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
 - It is the **first** Tri-Service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces, based at **Port Blair** in Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India.
 - It was created in **2001** to safeguard India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca by increasing rapid deployment of military assets in the islands.
 - The other tri-service command, the **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)**, looks after the delivery and operational control of the country's nuclear assets.

- **Recent Developments:** The appointment of the **CDS** and the creation of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** are momentous steps towards the integration and advancement of defence forces.
 - **CDS:** It is the **single-point military adviser** to the government as suggested by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.
 - CDS oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.
 - As the head of DMA, CDS is vested with the authority in prioritising inter-service procurement decisions.
 - **Department of Military Affairs:**
 - The **DMA** is headed by the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**.
 - Work exclusively pertaining to military matters will fall within the purview of the DMA. Earlier, these functions were the mandate of the Department of Defence (DoD).
 - The next logical step in the process of defence reforms is the formation of Integrated Theatre Commands **to synergize the capabilities and combat potential** of the **three Services** during war and peace.
 - Teams headed by the Vice Chiefs of the three Services have been constituted to study and submit recommendations on the formation of various integrated commands.
 - The study on the air defence command is in an advanced stage of completion.
- **Integrated Theatre Command:**
 - An integrated theatre command envisages a **unified command of the three Services, under a single commander**, for geographical theatres (areas) that are of strategic and security concern.
 - The commander of such a force will be able to bear all resources at his disposal — from the Army, the Indian Air Force, and the Navy — with **seamless efficacy**.
 - The integrated theatre commander **will not be answerable to individual Services**.
 - Integration and jointness of the three forces will **avoid duplication of resources**. The resources available under each service will be available to other services too.
 - The services will get to know one another better, **strengthening cohesion** in the defence establishment.
 - The **Shekatkar committee** has recommended the creation of 3 integrated theatre commands — **northern** for the China border, **western** for the Pakistan border, and **southern** for the maritime role.

Source: TH