

Amid turf wars, govt moves to launch integrated commands

Notifies Inter-Services Act, Paves Way For Radical Military Revamp

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New Delhi: Govt has finally notified the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, which will also pave the way for creation of the long-pending unified theatre commands in the most radical military reorganisation envisaged since Independence.

The enforcement with immediate effect of the ISO Act, which received Presidential assent on Aug 15 last year after the bill was passed by Parliament during the monsoon session, comes after the BJP manifesto last month promised its govt will "establish military theatre commands for more efficient operations" after creating the chief of defence staff (CDS) post in Dec 2019.

Parallely, CDS General Anil Chauhan chaired a "Pari-vartan Chintan" here on Thursday-Friday, during which 12 sub-committees made presentations on different domains and aspects towards jointness and integration "in light of the imminent theaterisation", officials said.

The flurry of activity shows the stage is now being set for the creation of inte-



India currently has 17 single-service commands (Army 7, IAF 7 and Navy 3), which have little synergy in planning, logistics and operations

grated theatre commands (ITCs), which stalled after the first CDS Gen Bipin Rawat's death in a helicopter crash in Dec 2021, amid festering inter-service turf wars.

India certainly needs a cost-effective war-fighting machinery through ITCs instead of the existing 17 single-service commands (Army 7, IAF 7 and Navy 3), which have little synergy in planning, logistics and operations, and often pull in different directions.

The ISO Act empowers military commanders of existing tri-service organisations with full administrative and disci-

plinary powers over Army, Navy and IAF personnel serving under them, "without disturbing the unique service conditions of each individual service". Till now, military personnel were governed by their own service acts like the Air Force Act, 1950, the Army Act, 1950, and the Navy Act, 1957.

The ISO Act will also allow the requisite command and control of the proposed ITCs. As per the existing plan, there will be two "adversary-specific" ITCs — one for the northern borders with China at Lucknow and the other for the western front

with Pakistan at Jaipur. The Maritime Theatre Command at Karwar in coastal Karnataka, in turn, will be for the Indian Ocean Region as well as the larger Indo-Pacific.

MoD on Friday said, "The Act will empower the heads of ISOs and pave the way for expeditious disposal of cases, avoid multiple proceedings and will be a step towards greater integration and jointness among armed forces personnel."

India currently has only two unified commands, the geographical Andaman and Nicobar Command and the functional Strategic Forces Command to handle the country's nuclear arsenal, which were set up in 2001 and 2003 after the Kargil conflict with Pakistan.

China, incidentally, reorganised its 2-million strong People's Liberation Army into five theatre commands in early 2016 to boost offensive capabilities and establish better command-and-control structures. Its Western Theatre Command, for instance, handles the entire 3,488-km Line of Actual Control. India, in contrast, has four Army and three IAF commands for the northern borders with China.

Inter-Services Organisations Act notified through gazette notification

NEW DELHI, May 10 (IANS)

THE Ministry of Defence on Friday said that the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act has been notified through a gazette notification, to be enforced with effect from May 10.

“The act will ensure better coordination between the three Services (Army, Navy, Airforce) and will



also bolster the integrated structure. It will prove to be a milestone in the path to India's military reforms,” the Ministry said.

It said that the Inter-Services

Organisations (ISOs) bill was passed by both the Parliament Houses during the Monsoon Session of 2023 which received the President's assent on August 15, 2023. “The act empowers Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command of ISOs to exercise control over service personnel, serving under them, for effective maintenance of discipline and administration, without disturbing the unique service conditions of each individual service,” the Ministry said.

Piloting the Bill in Parliament, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the Bill as necessary to strengthen the Armed Forces in the wake of the global security scenario. The Ministry said that, presently, the Armed Forces personnel are governed in accordance with the provisions contained in their specific Service Acts - the Army Act, 1950, the Navy Act, 1957, and the Air Force Act, 1950.

US to send new \$400m package of military aid for Ukraine

Washington: The US announced a new \$400 million package of military aid for Ukraine on Friday, as Kyiv struggles to hold off advances by Russian troops in the northeast Kharkiv region. This is the third tranche of aid for Ukraine since Congress passed supplemental funding in late April after months of gridlock. Ukrainian Prez Zelensky had warned Thursday that his country was facing "a really difficult situation" in the east, but said a new supply of US weapons was coming and "we will be able to stop them".

The package includes High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and rockets for them, as well as munitions for Patriot and National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, artillery, anti-aircraft and anti-tank munitions, and an array of armoured vehicles, such as Bradley and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. It will also provide a number of coastal and riverine patrol boats, trailers, demolition munitions, high-speed anti-radiation missiles, protective gear, spare parts and other weapons and equipment.

The US has now provided about \$50.6 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since Russia invaded in Feb 2022. AP

India, Moldova ink visa waiver pact

NEW DELHI, May 10 (PTI)

INDIA and Moldova on Friday signed an agreement which after coming into force, will allow diplomatic and official passports holders of either country to travel to the other without a visa, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

This agreement will add “further momentum” to the friendly and cordial relations between the two countries, it said.

“Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs of India and Ana Taban, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova signed an agreement on visa waiver for diplomatic and official passports, today on 10 May,” the statement said. This agreement, after coming into force “will allow holders of diplomatic and official passports of either country to travel to the other, without a visa”, it said.

CHINA WILLING TO HELP Indian firms to cater to its market demand

■ By K J M Varma

BEIJING, May 10 (PTI)

THE Chinese market is open to all countries, including India, China's new envoy to India, Xu Feihong, has said, maintaining that Beijing understands New Delhi's concerns over its burgeoning trade deficit and is willing to address this issue by facilitating more Indian companies to tap the Chinese market.

The trade deficit, a major concern of India for years, stood at USD 99.2 billion in 2023 in the overall bilateral trade of USD 136.2 billion.

In 2022, the trade deficit crossed the USD 100 billion mark by touching



Envoy Xu Feihong

USD 101 billion for the first time. India has been periodically flagging concerns and pressing China to open its IT and pharma sectors besides grains, its major export potential sectors.

In an interaction with the PTI and China's CGTN-TV here before he headed to New Delhi to take up his posting, Xu
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Hungary, China sign new pacts

BUDAPEST, May 10 (AP)

HUNGARY and China signed a number of new agreements on Thursday to deepen their economic and cultural cooperation during a visit to the Central European country by Chinese President Xi Jinping, a trip meant to solidify China's economic footprint in the region.

Xi and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks in the capital Budapest as part of the Chinese leader's final stop on a five-day European tour that also took in Serbia and France. During a press briefing following the talks, Orbán praised the "continuous, uninterrupted friendship" between the two countries since his tenure began in 2010, and promised that Hungary would continue to host further Chinese investments.

"I would like to assure the president that Hungary will continue to provide fair conditions for Chinese companies investing in our country, and



Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, speaks during his joint press conference with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán following their talks at the PM's office in Budapest, Hungary on Friday.

(AP/PTI)

that we will create the opportunity for the most modern Western and the most modern Eastern technologies to meet and build cooperation in Hungary," Orbán said.

Beijing has invested billions in Hungary and sees the European Union member as an important foothold inside

the 27-member trading bloc. In December, Hungary announced that one of the world's largest EV manufacturers, China's BYD, will open its first European EV production factory in the south—an inroad that could upend the competitiveness of the continent's auto industry.