Inter-Services Organisation Bill, 2023

Why in news?

The passage of the Inter-Services Organisation (Command, Control & Discipline) Bill, by the Parliament is a step closer towards realising the long-awaited reform of theaterisation of the Armed Forces in India.

What is the current setup of armed forces in India?

- **Service Acts**- Armed forces personnel in India are governed separately by
  - The Army Act, 1950
  - The Navy Act, 1957
  - The Air Force Act, 1950

Issues

- **Disciplinary action-** The Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of such Inter-services Organisations (ISOs) are not empowered to exercise disciplinary and administrative powers over the personnel belonging to other services.
- This has a direct impact on command, control and discipline of the Inter-services Organisations.
- **Time consuming-** The personnel serving in the ISOs need to be reverted back to their parent Service units for any disciplinary or administrative action.
- **Financial constraints-** It has financial implications relating to the movement of the personnel.
- **Complexities-** The problem becomes more cumbersome when the proceedings arise from the same set of facts and circumstances but involves personnel belonging to different services.
- **Pendency of cases-** Multiple sets of proceedings under the respective Services Act are required to be initiated, which hampers speedy disposal of cases.

What are the key features of the bill?

- **Inter-services Organisation**- It will placed under the command of an Officer-in-Command.
- It includes
  - Andaman and Nicobar Command
  - Defence Space Agency
  - National Defence Academy

- **Power of central government-** Central government may constitute an Inter-services Organisation which has personnel belonging to at least 2 of the three services.
- Central government may also issue directions to such organisations on grounds of

national security, general administration, or public interest.

- The central government may notify any force (in addition to the three forces) raised and maintained in India to which the Bill will apply.
- **Joint Services Command-** It is constituted under Inter Service Organisation which may be placed under the command of a *Commander-in-Chief.*
- **Control of Inter-services Organisations**- The Bill empowers the Commander-in-Chief or the Officer-in-Command of an Inter-services Organisation to exercise command and control over the personnel serving in or attached to it.
- **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)
    - An Air Officer of the Air Force (above the rank of group captain)
- The Commander-in-Chief will be empowered to exercise all disciplinary and administrative powers vested in
    - General Officer Commanding the Army
    - Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of a Naval Command
    - Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of an Air Command,
    - Any other officer/authority specified in the service Acts or by the Government.
- **Commanding officer-** It provides for a Commanding Officer who will be in command of a unit, ship, or establishment.
- The officer will perform duties assigned by the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of the Inter-services Organisation.
- The officer will be empowered to initiate all disciplinary or administrative actions over the personnel appointed, deputed, posted, or attached to that Inter-services Organisation.

What are the advantages of the move?

Establishment of theatre commands is a major military reform that seeks to roll the existing individual commands of the three services into tri-services organisations with a common military aim.

- **Integrated theatre command-** Establishment of Inter Service Organisation will pave the way for creation of integrated theatre command.
- **Better coordination-** It will help to cope up with the new challenges involved in modern warfare which is more technology and network-centric and aid in better jointness within the military.
- **Precursor to One Border One Force-**

- **Cost effective-** Due to integration of services, there will be speedy disposal of cases and reduce the finance associated with it.
- **Simplification-** It simplifies the multiple set of proceedings, and eases the

disciplinary action against the personnel.

What lies ahead?

- The integration of Indian armed forces with renewed vigour and future-readiness has been indeed boosted by this bill.
- China, with whom India shares a long and contested border, reorganised its 7 military regions into 5 theatre commands a few years ago.
- India also needed to evolve its response to such changes.

References

1. Indian Express- Inter Service Organisation bill
2. PRS- Key features of the bill

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