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1. Why Indian armed forces will shift to integrated theatre commands

Why in News?

The Indian Armed Forces have been finetuning the final draft for the creation of integrated theatre commands. The ambitious defence reform is aimed at integrating the three defence services — the Indian Army, the Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force (IAF) — to operate jointly in specific adversary-based theatres with defined military goals during a limited conflict or war.

Steps taken in past

The government had set the ball rolling on the reform in 2019 by creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), and setting up the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to oversee the transition.

Over the last five years, multiple drafts have been prepared to zero in on the best possible model for India's theatre commands. The government is yet to give its final approval on the implementation of the plan.

Depending on the outcome of the elections, further discussions on fine-tuning the existing plan to iron out possible issues are expected to take place in the coming months. Other initiatives to integrate the services at the lower levels have, meanwhile, been implemented.

Services working together

The three defence services currently operate individually under their individual operational commands.

Theaterisation would entail putting specific units of personnel from all the three services under a single theatre commander so that they fight jointly as a single unit in a war, or conflict, rationalising the manpower and resources of individual services in the process.



Each of the three services has its own culture and ethos. With the creation of the theatre commands, their personnel, assets, infrastructure, and logistics would be integrated, so they can operate cohesively to attain defined military goals in specific theatres covering laid-down operational areas.

The Armed Forces have already been taking steps to bring in greater integration among the three services. There are plans to make Mumbai the first tri-service common defence station, and to set up additional joint logistics nodes across the country to boost integration in logistics needs, and to streamline supply chains and inter-service postings of officers.

Commands & headquarters

The latest draft with the military envisions three adversary-based theatre commands — a western theatre command facing Pakistan, a northern theatre command facing China, and a maritime theatre command for threats emanating from the Indian Ocean Region.

There are plans to set up the western theatre command in Jaipur, and the northern theatre command in Lucknow. The maritime theatre command could be headquartered in Coimbatore, even though Karwar and Thiruvananthapuram have also been under consideration.

How will the creation of theatre commands rationalise the existing service commands?

Currently, the Army and the IAF have seven commands each, while the Navy has three. In addition, there are two tri-service commands — the Andaman and Nicobar Command, and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC). There is also the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS).

Post the creation of the theatre commands, three command headquarters of the services are likely to be transformed into theatre command headquarters.

The existing Andaman and Nicobar Command may be subsumed into one of the theatre commands (in the maritime theatre command, as per current plans), and the HQIDS will likely operate under the CDS.

The SFC will continue to operate independently, as per the plan.

Command leadership

The three theatre commands will be headed by three theatre commanders who would likely be of the rank of General or equivalent.

According to current plans, the theatre commanders will report to a National Defence Committee, which is likely to be headed by the Defence Minister.

Additionally, there are plans to appoint a Vice CDS and a Deputy CDS. The Vice CDS is likely to look after strategic planning, capability development, and procurement-related matters, and will likely be an officer of the rank of General or equivalent.

The Deputy CDS will be responsible for operations, intelligence, and coordination of the allocation of assets among theatres. The Deputy CDS is likely to be a Lieutenant General or equivalent.

The three service Chiefs would be responsible for raising, training, and sustaining the individual services. It is not known whether they would continue to retain some operational roles. The three theatre commanders would be responsible for operations. However, none of these plans have got the final nod from the government yet.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. What is the UK's contaminated blood scandal, a deadly treatment disaster that claimed at least 3,000 lives?

Introduction

The report of an independent inquiry into the United Kingdom's contaminated blood scandal found that the government covered up errors that led to thousands of people being infected with HIV or hepatitis.

The contaminated blood scandal represents one of the deadliest treatment disasters in the history of the state-funded National Health Service (NHS).

Inquiry found that successive governments hid the truth to "save face and to save expense" and the cover-up was "more subtle, more pervasive and more chilling in its implications" than any orchestrated conspiracy plot.



Apology by PM

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was "a day of shame for the British state". "I want to make a wholehearted unequivocal apology for this terrible injustice," he told parliament. Details of the government's compensation will be released soon. Britain is expected to shell out more than 10 billion pounds (\$12.70 billion).

About Inquiry

The inquiry was launched six years ago in 2017, when Theresa May was Prime Minister. It was to look into how tens of thousands contracted the deadly diseases from transfusions of infected blood products in the 1970s and 1980s. Almost 3,000 people were estimated to have died of complications until 2019.

In October 2022, British authorities made interim payments of 100,000 pounds to each survivor and the bereaved kin. What exactly happened and how?

But first, what is Britain's National Health Service (NHS)?

The NHS is an inclusive public health service under government administration, which was established by the National Health Service Act of 1946 and subsequent legislation in 1948. The entire population of the UK is covered, and health services are provided free of cost to the public, except for certain minimum charges.

The NHS constitutes four services — NHS in England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, and Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. It is the world's fifth largest employer and the largest non-military public organisation, and wields significant market power.

So, what is the contaminated blood scandal?

During the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of people who had the blood-clotting disorder haemophilia, were given blood donated or sold by people who were infected with the HIV virus and hepatitis. Tainted blood was also given to people who needed blood transfusions after childbirth or surgery.

The inquiry report has estimated that more than 30,000 people were infected with HIV, hepatitis C or both.

Nearly two-thirds of those who were infected with HIV later died of AIDS-related illnesses, and an unknown number transferred HIV to their partners. The report said that 2,400-5,000 recipients of blood developed hepatitis C, with the exact figure not known yet, as symptoms can show up years later.

Was all of this a gigantic mistake committed inadvertently?

Several reports have stated that school children, some as young as 2 years old, were subjected to medical trials using infected blood products. Unsafe clinical testing involved children in the UK, despite families not consenting to take part.

The majority of the children who enrolled are now dead. Survivors told that they were treated like "guinea pigs".

The documents also showed that doctors in haemophilia centres used blood products, even though they were widely known as likely to be contaminated.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

3. Why Norway, Ireland, and Spain have decided to recognise Palestine as a state

Introduction

Norway, Ireland, and Spain said recently that they would recognise a state of Palestine on May 28, marking the first time a Western European country has committed to such recognition. Being recognised as a "state" by other countries can support a region's aspiration to be seen as a legitimate political entity by the international community.

In a belligerent response, Israel has recalled its ambassadors from the three countries.

What does such a recognition mean, where does it sit with how the world views Palestine, and why does it matter?



Firstly, what does it mean to be recognised as a state?

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), identified four conditions of a state: “a permanent population, defined territory, government, and capacity to enter into relations with other states”.

Statehood “has long been the central organising idea in the international system”. While several regions and peoples have over the years sought to declare themselves as independent states, their formal recognition depends on how the rest of the world views them.

Recognition by UN

The United Nations has a broad criterion for accepting states as Members. Article 4 of the UN Charter states: “Membership in the United Nations is open to all other peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.”

Procedurally, admission to the UN as a Member State is granted by a two-thirds majority vote in the UN General Assembly. However, the UNGA takes up the candidature only upon the recommendation of the UN Security Council.

The UNSC comprises five permanent members — the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and France — and 10 temporary member countries chosen on a rotational basis. For the UNSC recommendation to pass there must be a vote, with at least nine members in favour and no permanent members using their veto. Essentially, it is the P5 who determine the fate of an issue in the UNSC.

What is the status of Palestine at the UN?

Currently, Palestine is a "Permanent Observer State" — and not a "Member State" — at the UN. There is one other Permanent Observer State in the UN — the Holy See, representing Vatican City.

As a Permanent Observer State, Palestine is allowed to "participate in all of the Organization's proceedings, except for voting on draft resolutions and decisions in its main organs and bodies, from the Security Council to the General Assembly and its six main committees".

Palestine graduated to the status of "non-member Permanent Observer State" from having Observer status in 2012. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, had then hoped for the exercise to "breathe new life" into the peace process in the region.

Palestine has attempted to secure membership in the UN as a state in the past, most recently in April this year. In the UNSC, the United States, Israel's staunchest ally, had vetoed its admission.

Which countries recognise Palestine as a state?

Before the announcement by Norway, Ireland, and Spain, 143 of the UN's 193 members already recognised Palestine as a state. Most of these countries are in Asia, Africa, and South America. India accorded recognition in 1988.

Recognition as a state lies at the heart of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, and to decide their political future and government.

The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (UNGA Resolution 181(II)) proposed the establishment of a Jewish state, an Arab state, and for the city of Jerusalem to be administered by the UN as a *corpus separatum* (separate body). This is also known as the 'two-state solution'.

However, Palestinian leaders rejected the Plan, which they believed went against Arab interests. The Arab-Israeli war broke out soon afterward, and Israel emerged as the winner. In 1949, the proposal for its UN membership was tabled, and all P5 members except the UK (which abstained) agreed.

What is the significance of the Norway-Ireland-Spain move?

When a state recognises another, it usually leads to the setting up of an embassy and posting of diplomatic officials in that country. The Norwegian Foreign Minister has said that its

representative office to the Palestinian Authority, which was opened in the West Bank in 1999, would become an embassy.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has said he has taken the decision "out of moral conviction, for a just cause and because it is the only way that the two states, Israel and Palestine, can live together in peace". He has said that while "fighting the terrorist group Hamas is legitimate and necessary", Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "is creating so much pain and so much destruction and so much rancour in Gaza and the rest of Palestine that the two-state solution is in danger".

The decision by the three countries could pave the way for others to follow suit. French President Emmanuel Macron said in February that it was not "taboo" for France to recognise a Palestinian state.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express