

# The Time For Enforcing Jointness !



*Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with unique formation of tri-service personnel at the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)*

Are the Indian Armed Forces adequately joint to face the challenges of the 21st Century? Logically one can ask, what has been done and more important, what is being done to ensure that the Indian Armed Forces 'become purple' (or Joint). Through this article one will try to analyse the best way forward to achieve jointness. But knowing our attachment to turfs, one premise may be fair to assume: that left to themselves the three Services will find it difficult to agree, as they haven't done so for decades. Therefore, it is time the Government took the bull by the horns and enforced Jointness in the armed forces. What gives us hope is the Prime Minister's track record of taking decisive action on critical issues, this being a long pending one.

## The Present Status

At the apex level there is a Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (the longest-serving Chief tenants this post, in addition to being Chief of his own service). There is also the HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS)

under an Army Commander equivalent officer, CISC, with 3-star level Principal Staff Officers heading various streams including the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). In addition, we have the tri services Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) at Port Blair and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) tasked for just that. The three Army Commander level heads i.e. CISC, CINCAN and Commander, SFC are rotated periodically between the three services. There are also joint training institutions like the NDA, DSSC, CDM and NDC, with a joint capsule conducted for the three Higher Command/equivalent courses. There is some cross representation at various HQs, but this is vintage and not designed to meet the requirements of modern warfare. This is an antique system, with many loopholes and duplication, mitigating against unity of command, a key requirement of modern warfare.

In recent times two initiatives did focus on this issue, the Kargil Review Committee and more recently the Naresh Chandra Committee. Both, especially the

latter were not comprehensive enough, but even the diluted versions have not been implemented, essentially because of lack of interest or enthusiasm amongst the political hierarchy as also the stakeholders. Thus, the time is opportune to review this issue comprehensively and more importantly, implement it.

## Desired End State

In my view the best way forward is to adopt regressive planning. First decide the end state and then work backwards how to achieve that, in stages, if necessary. To achieve true jointness we need to have the end state based on Integrated Theatres under 4-star Commanders with all tri-service assets under one head. At the apex level should be a 5-star Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with integrated staff to support him. The Integrated Theatres should report to the CDS and through him to the Defence Minister and CCS. The three Service Chiefs should continue to head their Services and be responsible for manning, equipping, individual training and other aspects. The HQ Integrated Staff