

## MILITARY REBOOT

### **Downsizing and integration ought to be the buzzwords across services**

In a push for reforms of the army, plans have been drawn up to reduce the force's manpower by around 27,000 soldiers in organisations that are not part of its regular field formations. There are about 1.75 lakh officers and soldiers currently deployed in organisations ranging from Military Engineer Services and National Cadet Corps to Territorial Army and Sainik Schools. Reducing their manpower will save around Rs 1,600 crore in revenue expenditure. Such downsizing is desperately needed as the budget for weapons modernisation remains very tight. As much as 83% of the army's annual budgetary outlay is devoted only to day-to-day running costs and salaries.

Therefore, much more is needed in this direction to restructure the army and create a leaner, high-tech fighting force. Overall, the army needs to shed around 1.5 lakh personnel over the next six to seven years to save around Rs 7,000 crore annually. This is a huge task and needs to be broken up into smaller steps. It's welcome that the first batch of reforms is slated to kick off any day, entailing the relocating of 229 officers to operational posts from the army's headquarters in Delhi. In any case, the army is too top heavy, with a shortage of officers in fighting ranks of Lt-Colonels and below.

A better teeth-to-tail ratio will only come about through greater streamlining and integration. This is also important because the nature of warfare itself has changed with greater emphasis on limited, high-tech wars. Therefore, we need a fighting force that is rapidly deployable and operationally versatile. Last year, government notified rules to enable joint theatre commands bringing together the three services. We should push ahead in this direction and set aside turf wars. There's also an urgent need to create the post of chief of defence staff to move along tri-service integration.

In this regard, we must take a leaf out of China's book. As part of its military modernisation drive, China has already slashed its army strength by three lakh troops. Plus, it has a head start in integration with the PLA, PLA strategic support force, PLA rocket force, PLA navy and PLA air force much better integrated under Beijing's central military commission. India too should adopt a similar pattern to meet its security challenges, with Pakistan posing a threat for the foreseeable future and China acting as its dependable ally.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Reboot		Restart, start again
Downsize		Make (company / organisation) smaller by shedding staff
Integration		Combination, amalgamation, incorporation, unification
Reform		Improve, make better, look up, ameliorate, mend
Deploy		Use, utilize, employ, exploit, take advantage of
Desperate		Despairing, hopeless
Weapons		Arms
Outlay		Expenditure, expending
Lean		Meagre, scanty, sparse, scant, insubstantial
Shed		Lean to, out house, shock, outbuilding, hut
Slate		Criticize, attack, come down on, lambaste
Kickoff		Start, begin, set off
Entail		Necessitate, require, need demand
Teeth to tail		Intensity and ferocity
Streamline		Efficient, smooth running, well run
Versatile		Adaptable, flexible, multifaceted, multitalented
Set aside		Dismiss, put aside, cancel, remove
Turf war		An acrimonious / bitter dispute over territory
Slash		Cut, gash, lacerate, incise
Troop		Soldiers, armed forces, service men / women

### THE KITTY SWELL

**There is no end in sight to MPs and MLAs – from both opposition and NDA parties – joining BJP**

In yet another success for BJP, the national ruling party has gained a foothold in Sikkim with 10 of 13 Sikkim Democratic Front MLAs joining it. With this split in SDF, BJP can claim electoral representation in all north-east states. BJP remains a marginal presence only in Meghalaya and Mizoram, but even here its respective NEDA partners NPP and MNF are at the helm of state governments. The splintering of SDF soon after losing assembly elections to arch rival SKM earlier this year is surprising. After all, its supremo Pawan Kumar Chamling was

India's longest serving chief minister, ruling Sikkim with an iron hand and winning five successive terms between 1994 and 2019.

The rebellion – which has enough numbers to sidestep the anti-defection law – underlines BJP's strategy to welcome politicians without a Sangh Parivar background in states where the party's organic growth is taking too much time. This strategy has yielded rich dividends in states like Assam, Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Odisha where BJP has gone on to form first-time governments or is posing strong challenges to incumbents. Interestingly, BJP's new recruits have come from both national and regional parties.

Its success vis-a-vis regional parties indicate a significant constituency for BJP's brand of nationalism even in states which have a history of strong regional aspirations and sub-nationalist tendencies. It is also a fact that parties which appealed to regional or caste identities have disappointed many voters and are now weakening. In its expansionary zeal BJP hasn't been mindful of questions raised about political morality or the ethics of splitting its NDA partners. The SDF rupture follows the split in MGP and ouster of GFP from the Goa Cabinet when both were NDA allies. The likes of Nitish Kumar and Uddhav Thackeray may have reason to worry.

<b><u>Words</u></b>	<b><u>Kind</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
Kitty		A fund of money for communal use
Swell balloon		Expand, bulge, distend, inflate, bloat,
Foothold		A secure position
At the helm of		In charge, in command
Arch		Archway, vault, span, dome, bridge

Rival	Competitor, opponent, contestant,
contender	
Splinter	Shatter, break into tiny pieces, smash, split
Rebellion	Revolution, stirring, mutiny, contumacious
Defection	Desertion, absconding, decamping, flight
Sidestep	Avoid, circumvent, shun, parry
Yield	Surrender, capitulate, succumb
Incumbent	Current, present
Betoken	Signal, bespeak, indicate, prognosticate
Aspiration	Desire, hope, longing, yearning
Tendency	Propensity, proclivity, likelihood, inclination
Zeal	Passion ardour, fervour, avidity
Flagging	Weaking, attenuating
Rupture	Break, fracture, crack, sever
Ouster	Ejection, dismissal, expulsion
Allies	Combine, marry, couple, amalgamate
Reason with	Convince
Reason out	Sort out, solve, resolve