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The Army's New Uniform Code and the Decolonisation of Customs

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HOW

WHY IN NEWS

On **June 14, 2026**, the **Indian Army** released a **174-page “Army Uniforms-2026” pamphlet**, its first comprehensive update to dress regulations in eight years. The new code **drops colonial-era terminology**, formally approves the closed-neck **Bandi jacket** for officers, and introduces a **Battle Jacket** winter dress, advancing the **indigenisation** and decolonisation of military customs.

WHAT THE NEW CODE CHANGES

CHANGE	DETAIL
Bandi jacket	The closed-neck Bandi jacket formally approved for officers
Battle Jacket	A new winter working dress to replace jersey-based uniforms, to be phased in by June 2029
Colonial terms	Terms like “Royal” dropped; ceremonial pouch belts removed from certain Mess Dress categories
Appearance norms	Bars radical hairstyles, unauthorised beards, visible gadgets, tattoos, piercings and cosmetics in uniform

This is the **first such comprehensive update in eight years**, intended to standardise appearance across regiments and reinforce a distinct Indian military identity.

PART OF A WIDER DECOLONISATION DRIVE

The uniform code fits a broader, multi-year effort to shed colonial-era practices across Indian institutions:

REFORM	DETAIL
New criminal laws	The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and allied codes replaced colonial-era criminal laws
Naval ensign	A new naval ensign drawing on Indian maritime heritage (Chhatrapati Shivaji)
Renaming	British-era names of installations, roads and practices revised
Indigenous equipment	Make-in-India platforms and the indigenisation of imported designs

THE ANALYSIS: IDENTITY, STANDARDISATION AND ETHOS

- 1 A distinct Indian ethos.** Replacing colonial terminology and introducing indigenous garments like the Bandi jacket asserts a distinct Indian military identity, in step with the wider decolonisation of national institutions.
- 2 Standardisation.** A single, updated code standardises appearance and dress across the Army's many regiments, each with its own traditions, reinforcing a common institutional discipline.
- 3 The ethics of institutional identity.** Symbols, names and uniforms shape the self-image and cohesion of an institution; updating them is both a practical and a symbolic exercise in defining what the modern Indian Army stands for.

The way forward is to **implement the transition smoothly** (the Battle Jacket is to be fully adopted by June 2029) while preserving the regimental traditions that underpin unit cohesion and morale.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 3 (Security):** the armed forces, military modernisation and indigenisation.
- **GS Paper 1 (History and Society):** post-independence consolidation, the decolonisation of institutions.
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** institutional identity, symbols and values.
- **Prelims:** the "Army Uniforms-2026" code, the Bandi jacket, the Battle Jacket transition timeline.

FACTS CORNER

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THE CODE:

“Army Uniforms-2026”: a 174-page pamphlet; first comprehensive update in eight years (June 14, 2026)

Bandi jacket approved for officers; Battle Jacket winter dress to be phased in by June 2029

Colonial terms like “Royal” dropped; strict appearance norms introduced

THE WIDER DRIVE:

Part of a decolonisation effort: new criminal laws (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), a new naval ensign, renaming of British-era practices, and Make-in-India equipment

Sources: *PIB, Ministry of Defence*

Source: [The Army's New Uniform Code and the Decolonisation of Customs](#) — Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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