

General Studies-2; Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

1) Introduction

- A historic decision was taken by India's Cabinet Committee on Security on December 24 on the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).
- General Bipin Rawat is appointed as India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

2) Highlights

- This is the first time in the history of independent India that a uniformed individual will head a government department.
- The CDS is not a ministerial position.
- He will be empowered under the Allocation of Business Rules to run his department.
- Both the defence secretary and the CDS will report to the raksha mantri.
- CDS will be the head of a newly-created Department of Military Affairs within the existing architecture of the Ministry of Defence
- The CDS is a four-star general with salary and perquisites equivalent to that of a service chief.
- All matters that are purely military affairs involving the army, navy and the air force would henceforth be handled by the CDS.
- He would ensure optimal utilisation of infrastructure and facilitate restructuring of military commands.
- Preparation of strategy papers and rationalisation and reforms in the functioning of the armed forces would be part of his mandate.
- CDS is also a key player in the nuclear strategic forces.

3) Why have a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)?

- India's armed forces are at a crossroads.
- India should not have a fragmented approach in regard to the three services and there should be jointness and integration of the armed forces.
- To ensure that India keeps abreast of global trends in military strategies
- To ensure that India is capable of facing new threats and challenges in the multi-dimensional hybrid war scenarios of the 21st century.
- The Kargil War in 1999 came at a steep cost due to lack of jointness and integration.
- The Kargil Review Committee's report in 2000 and the Group of Ministers' Report of 2001 had recommended that serious steps be taken towards integration of our armed forces.

4) Advantages

- Achieving seamless coordination and greater effectiveness in higher defence management structures
- The three service chiefs will continue to retain full command over their services, and give independent military advice to the raksha mantri on matters concerning their respective services.
- The CDS, in turn, will reconcile the viewpoints of all the three services.
- This will improve his ability to provide impartial advice.
- It will help the country to face the ever-changing challenges of modern warfare.

5) Concerns / Challenges

- Integrating the three forces at operational level could be the hardest part as there'll be deep resistance, particularly from the Air Force.
- Currently, the three services have 17 commands.
- It's long been held modern warfare requires the three services to function in an integrated fashion.
- One possibility is that the forces might be reorganised into four commands, with the Navy only part of two.
- Inevitably, the reorganisation could result in considerable friction.
- It would be unfortunate if the CDS reforms get stuck by high-level infighting.

6) Way Forward

- The onus is on three services of the Armed Forces to support CDS fully and make it successful.
- CDS must integrate the three forces at an operational level for "optimal utilisation of resources."
- Strengthening armed forces through synergy and integration.
- CDS must be neutral to all three services.
- Integrate the efforts of the three services and to work as a team.
- Ensure the best and optimal use of resources allocated to the three services.