Post of Chief of Defence Staff

Why in news?

The Cabinet has recently approved the creation of the post of chief of defence staff (CDS).

What is the rationale?

- The move was envisaged after the Kargil war in 1999.
- Various authorities recommended the need for creating a post for a single command centre in matters of warfare and nuclear weaponry.
- The government's approval comes essentially after two reports in this regard:
    1. the Kargil Review Committee, Report of Task Force on National Security (Naresh Chandra Committee Report)
    2. the Committee of Experts on Enhancing Capability and Rebalancing Defence Expenditure (General Shekatkar Committee Report)
- These reports chalked out a strategy for higher defence management.
- In 2017, intelligence and security officials had said that the absence of a CDS was hampering India's combat capabilities.
- A single chain of command was imperative to strengthen India's collective defence might.
- However, there is a fear in the minds of the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) of how the move would impact their role and functioning.
- There must have been a parallel thought in the bureaucracy too as to how such a shift would affect them.

What will CDS's role be?

- The ministry of defence (MoD) is likely to make the appointment soon.
- The CDS will head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).
- The officer to be appointed as chief of defence staff will be a four-star general, as Secretary, DMA.
- The CDS will act as the principal military adviser to the defence minister on all tri-services matters.

What are the key functions?

- The post of Chief of Defence Staff could bring about unison among the armed

forces.

- The job calls for total transformation of traditional military mindset.
- The CDS has to restructure the military commands into appropriate theatre or joint commands.
- A critical prerequisite for this is ‘jointness’, a term that envisions the various arms of the armed forces working in unison towards a goal.
- This is a challenging task as since Independence, the armed forces have been working separately, with no concept of jointness.

What is the significance?

- The Americans are preparing to move out of Afghanistan, India’s neighbourhood.
- Within India, the dilution of Article 370 has caused much unrest.
- Given this security environment, the key changes in defence management gain significance.

Source: Livemint, The Hindu

