Role of Chief of Defence Staff

What is the issue?

- General Bipin Rawat took over as the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), a post created in the Defence Ministry. Click here to know more.
- In this backdrop, here is a look at the roles and powers of the Chief of Defence Staff.

Why is the CDS said to have a 'dual-hatted role'?

- The dual-hatted role refers to the two hats the CDS wears:
    1. the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee which has the three service chiefs as members
    2. the head of the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the Defence ministry
- The former is a military role while the latter is a role in the government.
- It is as the head of DMA that his major responsibilities within the ministry will be discharged.
- The CDS has the status of a Cabinet Secretary, but functionally will head a department headed by a Secretary.
- Also, he will be under a ministry where the Defence Secretary is in charge of the ministry.

What will the arrangement in the ministry be?

- The ministry already had four departments:

1. Department of Defence
2. Department of Defence Production
3. Department of Defence Research and Development
4. Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare

- Each of them is headed by a Secretary.
- The Department of Defence is the nerve centre of the ministry.
- It looks after all issues pertaining to the armed forces, defence policy and procurement.
- The charter of duties of the DMA was so far looked after by the Department of Defence.
- It was headed by the Defence Secretary who is also the secretary in-charge

of the Defence Ministry.
- Work exclusively pertaining to military matters will now fall within the purview of the DMA.
- On the other hand, the Department of Defence will deal with larger issues pertaining to defence of the country.
- E.g., tri-service military training institutions will fall under the DMA, and organisations like IDSA and NDC will fall under the Defence Department
- **Armed forces** - The armed forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) are not departments of the ministry.
- The service headquarters, and thereby the armed forces, are attached offices in the ministry.
- They used to come under the Department of Defence so far, but will now fall under the ambit of DMA.
- They will have an appropriate mix of civilian and military officers at every level.
- Attached offices are generally responsible for providing executive direction for implementation of policies laid down by the department to which they are attached.
- They also serve as a repository of technical information.
- They advise the department on technical aspects of questions they deal with.

What will be the CDS's role in military?

- The CDS will act as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters.
- The three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister, as done so far, on matters exclusively concerning their respective services.
- The government has also made it explicitly clear that the CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs.
- But, the service chiefs will be members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which will be headed by the CDS.
- [Earlier, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was the senior-most chief among the three services by rotation.]
- However, none of the other powers of the service chiefs, including of advising the government, has been curtailed or transferred.
- Nevertheless, the DMA, headed by the CDS, will also have the armed forces under its ambit.
- If promotions, postings and disciplinary matters of three services fall under the DMA, it will give the CDS extensive influence over the 3 service chiefs.
- Despite these, technically, the Department of Defence (headed by the Defence Secretary) will be responsible for the defence of India and every part thereof.

What is the task ahead for the CDS?

- The CDS has been given a time-bound task, to be done within 3 years.
- This is to bring about jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, and repairs and maintenance of the three services.
- As the head of the DMA, the CDS also has to facilitate restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources.
- This will be achieved by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands.

Source: Indian Express

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