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General Anil Chauhan Completes Tenure as India's 2nd Chief of Defence Staff

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**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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General Anil Chauhan Completes Tenure as India's 2nd Chief of Defence Staff

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WHY IN NEWS:

General Anil Chauhan, India's 2nd Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and head of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**, completed his **extended tenure on May 30, 2026**, receiving a **ceremonial Guard of Honour** in New Delhi. The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** had extended his tenure in **September 2025** until this date. His successor is to be named shortly. Gen Chauhan succeeded **late General Bipin Rawat** (India's 1st CDS, killed in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu's Coonoor on **December 8, 2021**) and assumed office on **September 30, 2022**.

THE CDS POST — ORIGIN, MANDATE, ARCHITECTURE

The post of **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** was created via a **Government of India notification on December 24, 2019**, after recommendations of multiple committees over two decades.

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Post created	December 24, 2019 (Cabinet decision Dec 24, 2019)
First CDS	General Bipin Rawat — assumed office January 1, 2020 ; died December 8, 2021
Second CDS	General Anil Chauhan — assumed office September 30, 2022
Department of Military Affairs (DMA)	Created January 2020 under the Ministry of Defence; the CDS is its Secretary
Rank	Four-star general / equivalent (Admiral / Air Chief Marshal)
Reports to	Defence Minister (administrative); also Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC)
Tenure	Up to 65 years of age (post-retirement re-appointment permitted via The Military Affairs (Amendment) Rules, 2022)

PATH TO THE CDS POST — THE REFORM TRAIL

The CDS recommendation has a long lineage tied to India's post-Kargil military reform:

YEAR	COMMITTEE / EVENT	RECOMMENDATION
1999	Kargil Review Committee (K. Subrahmanyam)	Recommended a CDS-type post for integrated military advice
2001	Group of Ministers (GoM) on national security (chaired by L.K. Advani)	Endorsed the CDS post
2011	Naresh Chandra Task Force	Recommended Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC) as an interim step
2015	Shekatkar Committee	Recommended creation of CDS and theaterisation
2019	Modi Government (Aug 15, 2019 — PM's Independence Day speech)	Announcement of CDS post
December 24, 2019	Cabinet decision + notification	Post formally created

MANDATE OF THE CDS

Three principal mandates were assigned:

- ❶ **Secretary, Department of Military Affairs** — handling tri-service matters including procurement, training, and posting.
- ❷ **Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC)** — replacing the rotational system among the three Service Chiefs.
- ❸ **Promote jointness in operations, training, and procurement** — and **drive the creation of theatre commands**.

Crucially, the CDS does NOT exercise direct operational command over the three Services — the Service Chiefs (COAS, CNS, CAS) retain operational command of their respective forces. The CDS is the **principal military adviser** to the Defence Minister on tri-service matters.

GEN ANIL CHAUHAN — PROFILE

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Date of birth	May 18, 1961
Commissioned	June 1981 into 11 Gorkha Rifles (Indian Army)
Eastern Army Command	Led from September 2019 – May 2021 , including in the wake of the Galwan clash (June 15, 2020)
Operations Director General (DGMO)	Held the post; was involved in planning the 2019 Balakot airstrike
Retired from active service	May 31, 2021
Appointment as 2nd CDS	September 28, 2022 (notification); assumed charge September 30, 2022
First reappointment	September 2025 – ACC extended tenure until May 30, 2026
Awards	PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM

LEGACY — WHAT HE PUSHED FORWARD

1. Theaterisation

The flagship reform — **integrating Army, Navy, Air Force assets into geography-based theatre commands** for unified operational command — saw concrete forward motion under Gen Chauhan:

- **Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023** — passed by Parliament August 2023; gives commanders of inter-service establishments disciplinary powers across the three services, a critical legal enabler for theatre commands.
- Three theatre commands proposed: **Northern Theatre Command** (China-facing), **Western Theatre Command** (Pakistan-facing), **Maritime Theatre Command (MTC)** (Indian Ocean).
- The **Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC)** — established **2001**, headquartered at **Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair)** — remains India's **only fully operational tri-service theatre command**.

2. Atmanirbharta in Defence

Gen Chauhan was a strong public advocate for **indigenisation** — supporting the **Positive Indigenisation Lists** (5 lists totalling **509 items** placed under import embargo), the **defence corridors** in **Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**, and the **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** ecosystem. Defence exports crossed **₹21,000 crore in FY25** — a record.

3. Jointness in Procurement

The DMA centralised tri-service procurement, reducing duplication and accelerating approvals via the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**.

4. Operation Sindoor — Calibrated Cross-Border Doctrine

Gen Chauhan was CDS during **Operation Sindoor** (May 7, 2025) — India’s calibrated multi-domain strikes on nine terrorist camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir following the **Pahalgam terror attack (April 22, 2025)**. The operation cemented a new doctrinal layer — calibrated cross-border response below the threshold of full war.

PENDING AGENDA FOR THE NEXT CDS

AREA	WHAT’S PENDING
Theatre Commands	Formal rollout of Northern, Western, and Maritime Theatre Commands
Cyber & Space Commands	Defence Cyber Agency (DCA) and Defence Space Agency (DSA) — currently agencies, need elevation to commands
Joint Logistics Nodes	Inter-service logistics, fuel, ammunition pooling
National Security Strategy (NSS)	India still lacks a publicly issued NSS document — long-pending
Service-specific cultures	Cultural integration across Army, Navy, IAF — beyond legal/structural integration

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	RELEVANCE
GS2	Executive structure — ACC’s role in CDS appointment; civilian control of military; institutional reforms
GS3	Security — theatre commands, defence reforms, Atmanirbharta, defence exports, jointness doctrine
Mains	“Examine the progress made by India in integrating its armed forces under the CDS framework. What are the remaining structural reforms needed?”
Prelims	CDS creation year (Dec 24, 2019), DMA (Jan 2020), Kargil Review Committee (1999), ISO Act 2023, ANC (2001, Sri Vijaya Puram), Operation Sindoor (May 7, 2025)

FACTS CORNER

CDS — ARCHITECTURE:

Created: December 24, 2019 (notification)

First CDS: Gen Bipin Rawat (Jan 1, 2020 – Dec 8, 2021)

Second CDS: Gen Anil Chauhan (Sep 30, 2022 – May 30, 2026)

Rank: Four-star (General / equivalent)

Secretary: Department of Military Affairs (DMA), created Jan 2020

Reports to: Defence Minister

Also Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC)

REFORM TRAIL:

Kargil Review Committee (1999) — K. Subrahmanyam

GoM on national security (2001) — Advani

Naresh Chandra Task Force (2011)

Shekatkar Committee (2015)

PM's Independence Day announcement (Aug 15, 2019)

THEATRE COMMANDS:

Proposed: Northern (China), Western (Pakistan), Maritime

Existing: Andaman & Nicobar Command — only operational tri-service theatre command (since 2001), HQ Sri Vijaya Puram

Legal enabler: Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023

GEN ANIL CHAUHAN — KEY FACTS:

Commissioned: June 1981, 11 Gorkha Rifles

Eastern Army Command: Sep 2019 – May 2021 (incl. Galwan period)

Retired from active service: May 31, 2021

Sworn in as 2nd CDS: September 30, 2022

Tenure extended September 2025; completed May 30, 2026

Major operations: Balakot (2019) planning, Operation Sindoor (May 7, 2025)

DEFENCE INDIGENISATION:

Positive Indigenisation Lists: 5 lists, 509 items

Defence corridors: UP + Tamil Nadu

Defence exports FY25: ₹21,000+ crore (record)

iDEX: Innovations for Defence Excellence

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Bharat Choudhary

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