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Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Appointed the Next Chief of Army Staff

13 June 2026

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

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Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Appointed the Next Chief of Army Staff

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WHY IN NEWS

The government has approved **Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth**, currently the **Vice Chief of Army Staff**, as the next **Chief of Army Staff (COAS)**. He will assume charge on **June 30, 2026**, succeeding **General Upendra Dwivedi**, who retires the same day, and will become the **31st Chief of the Indian Army**. The appointment is an occasion to revise India's higher defence management architecture.

THE APPOINTMENT IN BRIEF

DETAIL	PARTICULARS
Incoming COAS	Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth (31st Chief of Army Staff)
Takes charge	June 30, 2026
Predecessor	General Upendra Dwivedi
Current post	Vice Chief of Army Staff
Commissioned	Armoured Corps, December 1986
Alma mater	National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla

He is the first officer from the **armoured (combat) branch** to head the Army in nearly three decades, since General Shankar Roychowdhury in the 1990s, a point of note given that the infantry and artillery have dominated recent top appointments.

HOW THE ARMY CHIEF IS APPOINTED

- The COAS is appointed by the **President of India** on the recommendation of the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)**, headed by the Prime Minister.

- The COAS is the professional head of the Indian Army and a member of the **Chiefs of Staff Committee**.
- The post is distinct from the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**.

COAS VERSUS CDS: A KEY DISTINCTION

This appointment is a useful anchor for revising the higher-defence reforms of recent years.

FEATURE	CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF (COAS)	CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF (CDS)
Role	Professional head of the Army	Single-point military adviser to the government; head of the Department of Military Affairs
Created	Long-standing service post	Created in 2019 (first CDS: General Bipin Rawat, January 2020)
Command	Operational command of the Army	Coordinates the three services; mandated to drive jointness and theaterisation
Department	Reports within the service structure	Heads the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the Ministry of Defence

The CDS was created on the recommendation of bodies stretching back to the **Kargil Review Committee (1999)** and the **Group of Ministers report (2001)**, and more recently the **Shekatkar Committee**.

THEATERISATION: THE BIG REFORM IN THE BACKGROUND

The most significant ongoing reform is **theaterisation**, the creation of **Integrated Theatre Commands** that place the assets of all three services under a single operational commander for a given geography or function.

- India currently has service-specific commands plus two joint commands: the **Andaman and Nicobar Command** and the **Strategic Forces Command**.
- The proposed theatre commands aim to replace single-service silos with integrated, mission-ready formations.
- The **Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023** gave commanders-in-chief of inter-service organisations authority over personnel of all services, a legal enabler for jointness.

THE ANALYSIS: PEOPLE AND PROCESS

- 1 **Seniority versus operational fit.** Top military appointments balance seniority with the operational needs of the moment; the choice of an armoured-corps officer signals attention to the mechanised and combined-arms dimension.
- 2 **Continuity of reform.** Whoever leads each service must carry forward theaterisation, a structural change that touches budgets, careers and culture, not just orders.
- 3 **Civil-military balance.** Higher defence management is also about the relationship between the political executive, the bureaucracy and the uniformed leadership, with the DMA and CDS designed to strengthen the military's voice in decision-making.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 3 (Security):** higher defence management, theaterisation, Integrated Theatre Commands, defence reforms.
- **GS Paper 2 (Polity):** appointments by the executive, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.
- **Prelims:** COAS appointment authority, CDS creation year and first holder, joint commands, the ISO Act 2023.

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THE APPOINTMENT:

Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth: 31st Chief of Army Staff from June 30, 2026; succeeds Gen Upendra Dwivedi

Armoured Corps (commissioned December 1986); currently Vice Chief of Army Staff

Appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

HIGHER DEFENCE MANAGEMENT:

CDS created 2019; first CDS General Bipin Rawat (January 2020); heads the Department of Military Affairs

Joint commands: Andaman and Nicobar Command, Strategic Forces Command

Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023 enables jointness

REFORM LINEAGE:

Kargil Review Committee (1999), Group of Ministers (2001), Shekatkar Committee

Sources: *PIB, The Hindu*

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