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# Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Takes Over as 31st Chief of the Army Staff

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**SECURITY & DEFENCE****GS3**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Takes Over as 31st Chief of the Army Staff

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## WHY IN NEWS

*Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth assumed charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) with effect from June 30, 2026, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired the same day after more than four decades of service.*

The transition took place at the South Block lawns in New Delhi, where the outgoing chief was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour before handing over command. The change of command comes as the Indian Army is executing one of its most ambitious transformation programmes, spanning theatreisation, force modernisation and integrated warfare.

## WHO IS LT GEN DHIRAJ SETH?

Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth was serving as the Vice Chief of Army Staff immediately before his elevation to the top post. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

His career profile reflects a blend of operational command and premier professional education:

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
Rank on appointment	Ujyari Current Affairs · ujyari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS General, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS)
Sequence	31st COAS of independent India
Effective date	June 30, 2026
Predecessor	General Upendra Dwivedi (retired June 30, 2026)
Arm	Armoured Corps (commissioned December 1986)
Training	NDA Khadakwasla, Higher Command Course, National Defence College (NDC), Command and Staff Course (Paris)
Notable command	Bhopal-based XXI Corps (Sudarshan Chakra Corps)

He is the first officer from the Armoured Corps to lead the Indian Army since General Shankar Roy Chowdhury, who retired in 1997.

## THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF

The Chief of the Army Staff heads the Indian Army, the land-based service branch and the largest component of the Indian Armed Forces. Key features of the office:

### Appointment and Status

- **Appointment:** The COAS is appointed by the **President of India**, who is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces under Article 53 of the Constitution.
- **Rank:** The COAS holds the four-star rank of General.
- **Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC):** The COAS is a member of the COSC, which comprises the three service chiefs and is chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff.

### COAS Versus Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

A frequent point of confusion is the distinction between the service chief and the CDS:

FEATURE	CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF (COAS)	CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF (CDS)
Heads	The Indian Army	Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
Role	Operational and administrative head of the land force	Government's single-point military adviser; Permanent Chairman, COSC
Created	Continuous since independence	Created 2020
Focus	Service-specific	Tri-service integration and jointness

The CDS functions as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister on tri-service matters, while each service chief retains command of and responsibility for their own service.

## THEATRISATION AND REFORM

The change of command occurs amid the push towards **theatre commands (theaterisation)** (<https://ujivari.com/terms/theaterisation/>), a reform aimed at replacing the current single-service command structure with integrated theatre commands that place Army, Navy and Air Force assets under unified operational control for a given geography or role. The objective is to optimise resources, sharpen jointness and prepare the forces for multi-domain warfare, drawing on lessons from operations along India's northern and western borders.

## ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

The apolitical, professional and secular character of the Indian Armed Forces is a cornerstone of Indian democracy and civil-military relations. Leadership continuity through a smooth, institutionalised handover reinforces this ethos. The new COAS inherits an agenda that includes **indigenisation** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/indigenisation/>) under Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence, absorption of emerging technologies such as drones, artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities, and the operationalisation of theatre commands. Balancing modernisation with the human dimension of a large standing army, while safeguarding the forces from politicisation, will define the tenure ahead.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**GS Paper 3 (Security):** Various security forces and agencies and their **mandate** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/mandate/>); defence reforms; higher defence organisation.

### Prelims pointers:

- The COAS is appointed by the President of India; the President is Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (Article 53).

- The Chief of Defence Staff heads the Department of Military Affairs and is the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- Theatreisation seeks integrated, tri-service theatre commands.

**Mains question:** Distinguish between the roles of the Chief of the Army Staff and the Chief of Defence Staff. In this context, examine how theatreisation can strengthen jointness in the Indian Armed Forces. **(15 marks, 250 words)**

## FACTS CORNER

### ★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth became the 31st Chief of the Army Staff on June 30, 2026, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi.

He was previously the Vice Chief of Army Staff, is an NDA Khadakwasla alumnus, and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

He is a graduate of the Higher Command Course, the National Defence College, and the Command and Staff Course, Paris.

The COAS is appointed by the President of India and is a member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

The CDS, created in 2020, heads the Department of Military Affairs and is the government's single-point military adviser, distinct from the service chiefs.

Theatreisation aims to create integrated tri-service theatre commands.

The armed forces are apolitical, professional and secular by institutional character.

**Sources:** *Press Information Bureau* (<https://www.pib.gov.in/>), *The Tribune* (<https://www.tribuneindia.com/>), *Raksha Anirveda* (<https://raksha-anirveda.com/>)

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