

INDIA

Lt. General Anil Chauhan (retd.) appointed next Chief of Defence Staff

Dinakar Peri

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The appointment comes more than nine months after the post fell vacant following the death of General Bipin Rawat.



The Government on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, appointed former Eastern Army Commander Lt. General Anil Chauhan as the next Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The post has been vacant since the death of the country's first CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat in a helicopter crash in December 2021.

“The Government has decided to appoint Lt. Gen. Anil Chauhan (Retired) as the next Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) who shall also function as Secretary to Government of India, Department of Military Affairs with effect from the date of his assumption of charge and until further orders,” the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

In a career spanning over nearly 40 years, Lt. Gen. Anil Chauhan had held several command, staff and instrumental appointments and had extensive experience in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and North-East India, the statement said.

In June, the Government amended Service Rules of the Army, Navy and Air Force allowing retired Service Chiefs and three star rank officers eligible for consideration to the country's top military post. However, with an age limit imposed that the retired officer should not have attained 62 years on the date of appointment, retired Service Chiefs were largely ruled out especially so for the present consideration.

Post retirement, Lt. Gen. Chauhan took over as the Military Advisor in the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) from Lt. Gen. Vinod G. Khandare who stepped down from the post in October 2021.

In December 2019, the Government approved the creation of the post of CDS who would also function as the Principal Military Adviser to Defence Minister and Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC). In addition, the DMA was created as the fifth department in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with the CDS functioning as its Secretary.

While the tenure of Service Chiefs is 62 years of age or three years whichever is earlier, the age limit for the CDS is 65 years of age with no fixed tenure defined.

Gen. Bipin Rawat who had served as the 27th Army Chief from December 31, 2016 till December 31, 2019, took over as the first CDS on January 1, 2020. He, along with his wife Madhulika Rawat and 12 others were killed in a chopper crash on December 08, 2021.

Born on May 18, 1961, Lt. Gen. Chauhan was commissioned into the 11 Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army in 1981. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

In the rank of Major General, he had commanded an Infantry Division in Baramulla sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Later as Lt. General, he commanded a Corps in the North East and subsequently became the Eastern Army Commander in September 2019 and held the charge until his retirement from service on May 31, 2021. In addition to these command appointments, Lt. Gen. Chauhan also served as Director General of Military Operations.

Major task ahead

General Rawat was pushing forward the ambitious plan for reorganisation of the armed forces into integrated theatre commands among other measures to bring in synergy and efficiency.

The broad mandate of the CDS includes bringing about "jointness" in "operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance of the three Services, within three years of the first CDS assuming office".

This task now falls on the new CDS to build consensus and take the reorganisation process forward, which has been delayed due to lack of complete consensus and objections on certain aspects from the Air Force. Detailed studies have already been carried out, and table top exercises executed in the recent past to fine tune the modalities. Additional studies have also been carried out in this direction.

In addition, the war in Ukraine has added urgency on the need to indigenise critical military technologies and systems and reduce dependence on imports.

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