

THE CDS THAT SHOULD BE

Context

- The ongoing discussions and media reports indicate a significant policy shift towards the reorganisation of India's military into integrated theatre commands (ITC).
- This initiative, driven by the armed forces' need to enhance jointness and operational efficiency, proposes the introduction of a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) and a Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Dy CDS).
- While the formal announcement is awaited, it is timely to review the implications of these changes and the role of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) within India's higher defence management.

The Need for Jointness of Tri-Military Services

- The Indian military has long recognised the lack of sufficient jointness among its three branches; Army, Navy, and Air Force as a structural weakness.
- Addressing this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of the CDS in August 2019, marking a bold step towards military integration.
- The CDS was envisioned to be a pivotal role, bridging the gap between military and governmental defence operations, thus necessitating a combination of military expertise, bureaucratic skills, and political advisory capabilities.

Role and Responsibilities of the Chief of Defence Staff

- **First Among Equals**
 - As a four-star general, the CDS is positioned alongside the chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
 - This role demands a fine balance of authority and cooperation, ensuring that each branch of the armed forces operates in unison rather than in silos.
 - The CDS must foster inter-service collaboration and resolve any conflicts that arise between the services.
- Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Defence

- The CDS acts as a bridge between the military and the civilian government, ensuring that military strategies and operations are aligned with national policies.
- This role requires not only military expertise but also an in-depth understanding of governmental processes.
- **Principal Adviser to the Defence Minister on Inter-Service Matters**
 - The CDS provides crucial strategic advice to the Defence Minister, particularly on issues that involve multiple branches of the military.
 - This advisory role is pivotal in shaping defence policy and ensuring that the minister is well-informed on the intricacies of military operations and needs.

Ways Ahead to Overcome the Challenges and Ensure the Success of CDS

- **Clearly Defining the Roles**
 - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the CDS, VCDS, and other senior military positions. This will help in delineating the boundaries of authority and reduce the risk of overlapping duties that can lead to inefficiencies.
- **Strengthening Inter-Service Cooperation**
 - Initiatives to enhance jointness among the services should be prioritised.
 - Regular joint training exercises, integrated planning sessions, and shared resources can foster a more cohesive approach to defence strategy.
- **Focus on Strategic Leadership**
 - By delegating bureaucratic responsibilities to the VCDS, the CDS can focus more on strategic leadership and long-term defence planning.
 - This will enable the CDS to drive initiatives that enhance the military's operational capabilities and readiness.
- **Maintaining Professional Integrity**
 - Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that the CDS can provide honest and unbiased advice to the government while also advocating effectively for the needs of the armed forces.

WORKING OF POLLING STATIONS IN INDIA

Process of Setting up Polling Stations:

- **Legal provisions:** Under Section 25 of the Representation of the People Act 1951 (RPA), the district election officer (DEO) is assigned the responsibility to set up and publish the list of polling stations in their district.
- **Principles on the basis of which polling stations are set up:**
 - These include ensuring that
 - Voters do not have to travel more than two km to cast their vote,
 - A station has a minimum area of 20 sq m,
 - A station serves at most 1,500 electors, and
 - A village with over 300 voters is provided with a polling station.
 - **However, these principles are flexible.**
- **Locations for polling stations:**
 - Preferably, **government or semi-government institutions** are chosen to set up polling stations.
 - Usually, private buildings are avoided and they can be taken with the written consent of the owner or forcefully under Section 160 of the RPA.
- **The list of polling stations:** The draft list is prepared with input from local political parties and citizens. After the final list is approved by the Election Commission of India's (ECI's), it is distributed to parties and candidates.

Officers at the Polling Stations:

- **Inside the polling station:**
 - There is a polling party comprising a **Presiding Officer and 3 Polling Officers** inside a polling station on the voting day.
 - **The first Polling Officer** verifies the elector's identity, **the second** applies indelible ink on their left index finger, maintains the voters' register and issues voter slips.

- **The third Polling Officer** takes back the voter slip issued by the 2nd polling officer, manages the EVM's control unit, and ensures that an elector has been properly inked before being allowed to vote.
- **Outside the polling station:**
 - **Sector Officers or Zonal Magistrates** are appointed for around 10-12 polling stations to facilitate the link between polling staff and the Returning Officer.
 - **Micro Observers** are deployed in vulnerable areas to report any deviations.
 - **Booth Level Officers (BLO)** at the Voter Assistance Booths assist voters in finding their polling booth and serial numbers in the alphabetically arranged electoral roll.

What are Critical Polling Stations?

- **A critical polling station includes those**
 - In vulnerable areas;
 - In areas with abnormal law and order situations;
 - With unusually high (over 90%, with over 75% votes polled in favour of one candidate), or low (under 10%) voter turnout rates;
 - Where re-polling is held due to electoral offences, with instances of violence on polling day in the last five years; and
 - With a disproportionate number of **Absentee, Shifted and Dead (ASD) voters**.
- In these polling stations, **the ECI takes some extra measures** to ensure the security and integrity of the voting process.

Provisions for Persons with Disabilities (PwD):

- According to the ECI's stringent guidelines,
 - All polling stations must have a **ramp, wheelchairs and designated parking spaces** close to the station. PwDs are allowed to cast their vote **without waiting in queues**. **Transport facilities** are provided for voters with impaired mobility (including senior citizens).

CENTRE ISSUES FIRST SET OF CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATES UNDER CAA

Why in news? The ministry of home affairs has issued the first set of citizenship certificates under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Union home secretary handed over citizenship certificates to first 14 people in New Delhi after their applications were processed online through a designated portal.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019:

- The Act seeks to amend the definition of illegal immigrant for Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist, Jains and Christian (but not Muslim) immigrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who have lived in India without documentation.
- They will be granted fast track Indian citizenship in 5 years (11 years earlier).
- The Act (which amends the Citizenship Act 1955) also provides for cancellation of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) registration where the OCI card-holder has violated any provision of the Citizenship Act or any other law in force.
- **Who is eligible?**
 - The CAA 2019 applies to those who were forced or compelled to seek shelter in India due to persecution on the ground of religion. It aims to protect such people from proceedings of illegal migration.
 - The cut-off date for citizenship is **December 31, 2014**, which means the applicant should have entered India on or before that date.
 - The act will not apply to areas covered by the Constitution's sixth schedule, which deals with autonomous tribal-dominated regions in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
 - Additionally, the act will not apply to states that have an inner-line permit regime (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram).
- **Process**
 - Applicants will have to submit their applications through citizenship portal.

- The portal requires applicants to declare the country of origin, and also submit at least one document tracing their roots to Bangladesh, Pakistan or Afghanistan.
- Upon submission, applications will be scrutinised and finalized.
- After fulfilling all the criteria mentioned in the CAA rules, certificates will be sent by post to beneficiaries in other parts of the country.
- **Rules for the CAA**
 - On March 11, the MHA notified the Citizenship Amendment Rules, 2024 that enabled the implementation of the CAA
 - The rules specified the evidence needed for applicants to prove their credentials and eligibility for citizenship under the new law. For example,
 - If someone enrolled his children in a government school, he would have declared the religion.
 - If someone acquired Aadhaar before December 31, 2014 and declared his or her religion as one among the six mentioned in the Act, it will be acceptable.
 - Likewise, any form of government document declaring religion will be accepted.
 - The MHA may also accept a demand from Assam that an application for citizenship under the CAA is time-bound.
 - Assam had asked the MHA to limit the time period for applying under CAA to 3 months as keeping it open-ended could accentuate anxieties over the CAA in the state.
 - The rules are not likely to ask for evidence of religious persecution but will presume that all those who came to India did so because they either faced persecution or had fear of being persecuted.
 - The Rules grant the final authority to accord citizenship to an empowered committee headed by the Director, Census Operations.
 - The scrutiny of applications will be done by a district level committee (DLC) headed by Department of Post officials.

WHAT IS IGLA-S?



The Army is all set to begin receiving another set of Russian Igla-S very short range air defence systems (VSHORAD) by the end of May or early next month.

Igla-S is a man-portable air defence system (MANPADS) developed by Russia.

- **Capabilities:**
 - It is a **hand-held defence system** that can be operated by an individual or crew.
 - It is designed to **bring down low-flying aircraft** and can also identify and neutralise air targets such as cruise missiles and drones.
- It comprises the 9M342 missile, the 9P522 launching mechanism, the 9V866-2 mobile test station, and the 9F719-2 test set. These components work together to provide a comprehensive air defence solution.
- A VSHORAD is the soldier's **last line of defence against enemy** combat aircraft, helicopters and UAVs in the multilayered air defence network.
- **Range:** It has a **range of 500 metres to 6 kilometres** and attack targets up to an altitude of 3.5 kilometres. The speed of the missile is 400 metres per second and the deployment time is 13 seconds.
- **Significance:** The acquisition of the Igla-S MANPADS marks a significant step in enhancing India's air defence capabilities, particularly in mountainous regions.

ABORTION LAWS IN INDIA

Recently, the Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea of a 20-year-old unmarried woman seeking termination of her over 27-week pregnancy, saying the foetus in the womb also has a fundamental right to live.

Abortion Laws in India:

- The law on abortion in India is primarily governed by Sections 312-316 of the Indian Penal Code and the provisions of the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**.
- The MTP Act 1971, by laying down certain permissible grounds under which a woman can undertake medical termination of pregnancy, creates an exception to the general law against abortion.
- In March 2021, the Parliament passed the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021** to amend the MTP Act, 1971.
- The MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021 has expanded the access to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian and social grounds to ensure universal access to comprehensive care.
- The MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021 came into force in September, 2021.

Key Observations Made by the Court:

- The Supreme Court said that the pregnancy was in excess of seven months now and asked what about the right of the child to survive? How do you address that?.
- The petitioner argued that the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act primarily laid stress on the rights of the mother and that she is in a very delicate state.
 - Under the MTP Act, termination of pregnancy of a duration exceeding 24 weeks can be allowed only in case of substantial foetal abnormality as diagnosed by a medical board.
- The Delhi High Court had set up a panel of doctors of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to look into the matter. The panel said that there is no congenital abnormality in the foetus nor is there any danger to the mother to carry on with the pregnancy which will mandate termination of the foetus.

[GLOBAL REPORT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT 2024 \(GRID-2024\)](#)

In 2023, the number of internally displaced people increased to 75.9 million, from 71.1 million in the preceding year, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 (GRID-2024) released recently.



Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 is an annual report published by the Geneva-based **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**. It records internal displacements due to conflict and violence and disasters.

- **Highlights of GRID-2024:**

- **In 2023**, the number of internally displaced people (IDP) increased to 75.9 million, from 71.1 million in the preceding year.
- Report says 7.7 million displaced by disasters (one-fourth of it was caused by earthquakes) and 68.3 million by conflict and violence.
- **Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, and Yemen** host nearly half of the world's IDPs.
- At **1 million**, **Sudan** has the **highest number** of IDPs recorded for a single country.
- Most of the new displacement this year happened in Sudan, the Palestinian territories, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, accounting for almost two-thirds of all new displacement.
- **South Asia:**
 - The IDMC said around **3 million** people were living in **internal displacement** as a result of conflict and violence across South Asia at the end of 2023, 80 percent of whom were in Afghanistan.
 - Conflict and violence triggered 69,000 displacements in South Asia in 2023, with Manipur violence alone accounting for 67,000.
 - It is the **highest number** of displacements **triggered by conflict** and violence **in India since 2018**.
 - There is a **sharp decline in IDP in 2023** from 2.5 million internal displacements due to natural disasters in India in 2022. Internal displacements by natural disasters in 2023 was 528,000.