

## Overreach of the Army Chief

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Army General Bipin Rawat has been speaking out of turn on many critical issues.

\n

- This has potential consequences for the Army's institutional autonomy and its perceived political neutrality.

\n

\n\n

### What are some of his excessive statements?

\n\n

\n

- **Awarding Cariappa** - General Rawat had publicly recommended Field Marshal Cariappa for a Bharat Ratna.

\n

- Such remarks are not in good taste as an army chief isn't expected to make such personal recommendations in public forums.

\n

- Even if it was a collective army demand, it should've been made through a personal letter to the Rastrapathi Bhavan.

\n

\n\n

\n

- **Sensitive Statements** - He compared stone-pelters in Kashmir to terrorists in an interview.

\n

- Such statements also could potentially sabotage the tag of political neutrality that the forces enjoy.

\n

\n\n

### Why is institutional autonomy critical?

\n\n

\n

- Excessive political interference in public institutions has decayed their autonomy considerably.

\n

- Over the years, at both Central and state levels, many government departments have become mere extensions of the party in power.

\n

- Election Commission, RBI, the Supreme Court and the Armed Forces are among the few institutions that have survived intact.

\n

- But here too, their functional autonomy is on display only if headed by people of principle and courage.

\n

- Lack of moral courage or the lure of a post-retirement job have sometimes led people to uphold the agenda of their political masters.

\n

\n\n

### **How has Army's autonomy fared?**

\n\n

\n

- While some officers have been known to have political loyalties, most chiefs of army staff have carefully stayed away from politics.

\n

- Among those who admirably upheld the traditions of office and political neutrality of the forces was General T.N. Raina

\n

- He firmly stood his ground during the challenging times of emergency and its aftermath.

\n

- Most chiefs of army staff have eschewed public commentary on issues as a conscious move to stay clear of sensationalism.

\n

- It is hence important to reign in our current Army General to preserve the sanctity of the institution.

\n

- Notably, it's the non-political nature that differentiates our forces substantially from the Pakistani Military.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Indian Express**

\n

