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Agnipath Scheme Reforms

Two-Year Extension and New Pathway for Regular Enrolment

Agnipath Scheme Reforms – Latest News

The Union Cabinet has approved a major revision to the Agnipath scheme, offering 75% of Agniveers an additional two-year engagement and an opportunity to join the Armed Forces as regular soldiers, subject to eligibility and selection criteria.

Understanding the Agnipath Scheme

The Agnipath scheme was introduced in 2022 as a recruitment reform for the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. It aims to maintain a younger, fitter and technologically equipped military workforce.

Under the original framework:

Four-year engagement: Personnel were recruited as Agniveers for an initial period of four years.

Regular cadre retention: Up to 25% of each batch could be retained in the regular cadre based on merit and organisational requirements.

Release and Seva Nidhi: The remaining 75% were released after completing four years of service and received a contributory Seva Nidhi package.

The scheme represented a departure from the earlier system of regular military recruitment by introducing a fixed-term engagement model.

Major Changes in the Revised Agnipath Framework

The Union Cabinet has approved an additional two-year engagement period for Agniveers who are not selected for regular enrolment after their initial four-year tenure.

The revised arrangement introduces a two-stage pathway:

First Stage: Selection After Four Years

The top 25% of Agniveers will continue to be selected on merit for absorption into the regular cadre.

Selection will be based on performance evaluations and the requirements of the respective services.

Second Stage: Additional Two-Year Engagement

The remaining 75% of Agniveers will be offered an additional two-year engagement.

At the end of six years of service, they will be eligible for consideration for enrolment as regular soldiers.

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Regular enrolment will depend on their willingness and fulfilment of objective military selection criteria.

The revised arrangement therefore provides all Agniveers with an opportunity to pursue regular military service, although enrolment is not guaranteed.

Enhanced Remuneration and Seva Nidhi Benefits

The additional engagement period will provide improved financial benefits to Agniveers.

Under the original arrangement, the Seva Nidhi package involved equal contributions from the Agniveer and the government.

Under the revised framework, the government's contribution will increase to 70% for those completing the additional engagement period and choosing to exit.

The revised arrangement also provides seniority benefits, further improving the service conditions of Agniveers.

Selection Criteria for Regular Enrolment

The opportunity to join the regular cadre after the additional two-year engagement will depend on objective performance and service requirements.

The selection process will consider:

Adaptability: Ability to adjust to military responsibilities and changing operational requirements.

Discipline: Maintenance of military discipline and professional conduct.

Performance: Overall performance during the extended service period.

Vigilance record: Absence of vigilance-related cases.

Organisational requirements: The manpower requirements and operational needs of the respective services.

The Chief of Defence Staff, General N.S. Raja Subramani, stated that a centralised database had been maintained across all three services to track Agniveers' performance, with annual reviews forming part of the assessment process.

Government's Rationale Behind the Reform

The decision follows a four-year assessment of the Agnipath scheme by the three services, incorporating performance reviews, operational requirements and organisational feedback.

According to the government, Agniveers have demonstrated strong performance in:

Physical fitness and military preparedness.

Motivation, morale and competitive spirit.

Technological proficiency and adaptability.

Skills and educational qualifications.

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The assessment also highlighted wider geographical representation in recruitment, a more standardised and transparent selection process, and the opening of various branches of the Armed Forces to women.

The revised framework seeks to balance two objectives: maintaining a youthful military profile and retaining experienced personnel who have already undergone military training.

Implications for the Armed Forces

The additional engagement period is expected to have several implications for military manpower management.

Retention of Experienced Personnel

The earlier four-year exit provision limited the period for which trained Agniveers could serve before leaving the Armed Forces.

The additional two years will allow the services to retain trained personnel for a longer period.

Maintaining a Younger Military Profile

The government has clarified that the Agnipath scheme will continue in its existing form, with the initial four-year engagement unchanged.

The revised arrangement is intended to provide greater flexibility without abandoning the objective of maintaining a younger military workforce.

Competitive Performance and Merit-Based Selection

The additional opportunity to enter regular service is expected to encourage Agniveers to maintain high standards of discipline, fitness and performance throughout their engagement.

Career Continuity

The extension provides an additional period of military employment and a further opportunity for regular enrolment. Those who eventually exit will also receive an enhanced Seva Nidhi package.

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Agnipath Scheme Revamp

100% Absorption and Changes in Recruitment

Agnipath Scheme Revamp – Latest News

Recently, the Centre approved a major overhaul of the Agnipath scheme, allowing all Agniveers undergoing training to eventually join the armed forces as regular soldiers.

The change comes as the first batch of Agniveers nears completion of its four-year tenure this month. However, officials clarify this is not a return to pre-Covid regular recruitment — it retains the scheme's core structure with modifications.

Agnipath Scheme

Introduced in 2022, Agnipath recruits candidates aged 17.5 to 21 years into the Army, Navy and Air Force for a four-year tenure.

Recruits are called Agniveers.

What Has Changed?

25% of Agniveers continue to be selected on merit for absorption as regular soldiers after four years — unchanged from the original scheme.

The remaining 75%, who earlier exited with the Seva Nidhi package, will now get an additional two-year engagement (total six years), after which they too can join as regular soldiers — subject to willingness and meeting selection criteria.

Net effect: 100% of Agniveers now get a pathway to permanent service, though not simultaneously or automatically.

The Seva Nidhi Package

A compulsory retirement-cum-transition fund: 30% of an Agniveer's salary is deducted monthly and deposited into the Agniveer Corpus Fund, matched by the government.

On completing four years, Agniveers receive a tax-exempt lump sum of approximately ₹11.71 lakh (with interest).

Those opting for the two-year extension get enhanced pay and an enhanced Seva Nidhi package if they later choose not to join the forces.

Trade-off: Agniveers serving the extended term lose eligibility for reserved quotas in paramilitary forces, PSUs and state government jobs.

No Agniveer receives monthly pension or gratuity.

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Scale of Impact

Over 3 lakh Agniveers are currently training across the three services.

Army: Approximately 2.8 lakh Agniveers, with around 19,000 completing their four-year tenure this round.

Navy: Approximately 2,500 completing tenure this month.

Air Force: Approximately 2,900 completing training as the first IAF batch next month.

Why This Isn't "Regular Recruitment"

Chief of Defence Staff General N.S. Raja Subramani clarified that Agnipath continues, only with modifications:

Only 25% are selected as regular soldiers immediately after four years, on merit.

The rest must complete a total of six years before becoming eligible.

Seniority-wise, those joining after the two-year extension rank below batchmates absorbed after four years.

How It Differs from Pre-Covid Recruitment

Agniveers thus retain the choice to leave or continue at two stages — a flexibility absent in the old system — backed by the Seva Nidhi cushion if they exit.

Benefits for the Military

No major pension savings, even with 100% absorption, since benefits still apply.

Helps address the personnel shortage caused by halted recruitment during Covid-19 — critical given post-Galwan and post-Operation Sindoor security demands.

Fosters competitive spirit, as Agniveers strive to be among the top 25% selected early.

Creates a blended force: experienced soldiers alongside a youthful Agniveer cohort.

Those who leave after service gain transferable skills and training for civilian careers.

Conclusion

The revamped Agnipath scheme expands opportunity without abandoning its core philosophy of selective, merit-based, staggered absorption.

By offering all Agniveers a pathway to permanence — rather than guaranteeing it — the government balances the armed forces' need for a youthful, cost-effective force with addressing personnel shortages and improving retention incentives, while preserving the competitive, choice-driven structure that distinguishes Agnipath from the pre-Covid system.