



‘Agnipath Yojana’

At a Glance

- The Union Cabinet had approved the scheme for Indian youth to serve in the Armed Forces on 14 Jun 2022.
- The ‘Agnipath’ scheme is a transformational reform for the Armed Forces and the Nation and aims to bring paradigm changes in the Human Resource Management of the Indian Army.
- The youth (male/female) selected under this scheme will be known as ‘Agniveers’
- The ‘Agnipath’ allows patriotic and motivated youth (17.5 years to 21 years old) to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of 4 years.
- The best among to Agniveers, up to 25 percent in each batch, will be selected for regular cadre to serve for another 15 years, based on transparent and merit-based assessment.
- 46,000 Agniveers will be recruited this year (2022).
- The process of recruiting 46,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen this year will begin on a "all-India, all-class" basis under the Agnipath scheme.
- The average age in the forces is 32 years today, which will go down to 26 in six to seven years.
- A youthful profile of the Army will provide a fresh lease of ‘Josh and Jazba’ while bringing about a transformational shift towards a more technical savvy Armed Forces- which is the need of the hour.
- Army will continue to retain its rich legacy, history, traditions, military values and culture - based on the principles of **Cohesiveness, Camaraderie, Esprit-de-Corps** and the core ethos of **Naam, Namak and Nishan”**
- On completion of the engagement period of four years, Agniveers will be paid one time ‘Seva Nidhi’ package which shall comprise their contribution including accrued interest thereon and matching contribution from the Government equal to the accumulated amount of their contribution including interest.
- After their tenure their skills and experience would create opportunities for themselves and Contribute to the growth of the economy

Feedback: refdiv-lss@sansad.nic.in

Prepared by Shri Abhishek Thakur, Assistant Research Officer under the supervision of Shri S.H. Baite, Director, Shri Pulin Bhutia, Joint Secretary and Shri Prasenjit Singh, Additional Secretary of Lok Sabha Secretariat.

The Reference Note is for personal use of the Members in the discharge of their Parliamentary duties, and is not for publication

The Agnipath yojana is a transformational reform for the Armed Forces and the Nation and aims to bring paradigm changes in the Human Resource Management of the Indian Armed Forces. The Union Cabinet on 14 June 2022 unveiled the Agnipath scheme, a transformative move to modernise the country's armed forces, create opportunities for the youth (17.5 years to 21 years old) to serve the nation, and via soldiering, create a large pool of skilled youth who can contribute to India's overall defence preparedness, as well as, with their skills and experience create opportunities for themselves and contribute to the growth of the economy.

The Agnipath scheme envisages promotion of nationalism in the youth offering skilled manpower to the society and ensuring a more youthful profile of the Army. It allows patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of 4 years.

Need of reforms in recruitment of soldiers:

There has been a focus within military to bring down average age of soldiers, especially within Army, since 1980s, but actual work on it began in 2020, with an idea that germinated in 2019. There were detailed discussions at various levels within the services and the government over the Agnipath scheme. There were 150 meetings held within the Services which total 500 hours. Besides this, there were 60 meetings held by the Defence Ministry, totaling about 150 hours and 44 meetings lasting 100 hours that took place under the whole-of-government framework.

The announcement of Agnipath Scheme for recruitment of soldiers is one of the major steps taken by Union Government to enable the Indian Armed Forces to evolve rapidly into a modern fighting force with cutting edge technologies.

- 1) In modern armed forces of various countries, the service ranges from 2 to 8 years with options for active and reservist. Israel army has service of 30 months and 20 months respectively for men and women. Similarly the United States and United Kingdom also have short duration contracts. France has short duration contracts of between one and 10 years depending on specialization. The 'Agnipath' scheme will be comparable to the time frame in many world class armed forces.
- 2) In Future wars will be fought with artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber space and space based ISR (Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance). Agnipath in India will ensure a youthful and tech-savvy profile of the armed forces.
- 3) One of the greatest challenges facing the Indian armed forces today is overall budgetary constraint. Huge salary and pension bills have placed enormous stress on the availability of funds for military modernization. The Government had allocated nearly Rs 1.2 lakh crore for pensions for the Defence Ministry and the Armed Forces in the current fiscal year, which is about a quarter of the total Defence budget of the country, and is larger than the capital acquisition allocation.
- 4) This scheme will increase employment opportunities and because of the skills and experience acquired during the four-year service such soldiers will get employment in various fields.
- 5) This will also lead to availability of a higher-skilled workforce to the economy which will be helpful in productivity gain and overall GDP growth.

Military Service in various countries

- ✓ Russia has a system of conscription-based service for a period of 12 months.
- ✓ Israel for 30 and 22 months — for men and women, respectively.
- ✓ France has short duration contracts of between one and 10 years depending on specialization
- ✓ South Korea for 21, 24 and 25 months, respectively, for army, navy and air force respectively.
- ✓ Brazil for 12 months.
- ✓ China and USA, where the service period under this model ranges from two to eight years, with options for active and reservist service, as also conscription specific to certain ranks and specialization.

Salient features of Agnipath Yojana

1. Agnipath is a new HR Management scheme for Defence Forces. Candidates inducted through this scheme will be called *Agniveers*. These *Agniveers* once enrolled into the Armed Forces, will serve for a period of four years. Endeavour will be made to enroll candidates as *Agniveers* from all parts of the country. *Agniveers* would form a distinct rank in the Armed Forces, different from any other existing rank.
2. As part of the enrolment process, each '*Agniveer*' will be required to formally accept all terms and conditions of the AGNIPATH Scheme. For personnel below the age of 18 years, the enrolment form will need to be signed by the parents/ guardians, in accordance with extant provisions.
3. Post the period of four years, all *Agniveers* will go back to the society. However, based on organizational requirements and policies promulgated by the Armed Forces, *Agniveers* who have exited will be offered an opportunity to apply for enrolment in the Defence Forces in the regular cadre. The skills gained by each *Agniveer* will be captured in a certificate to form part of his resume. These applications will be considered by a centralized board in a transparent manner and not more than 25 % of the strength of the specific batch of original *Agniveers* will be enrolled in the Indian Defence forces based on performance during their four year engagement period as *Agniveers*.
4. *Agniveers* will not have any right to be selected for further enrolment into the Armed Forces. Selection will be the exclusive jurisdiction of the Government.

SEVA-NIDHI PACKAGE

- ✓ On completion of the engagement period of four years, *Agniveers* will be eligible to receive '*Seva Nidhi*' package.
- ✓ *Seva Nidhi* shall comprise their contribution (30 %) (Into the Agniveer Corpus Fund) and matching contribution from the Government and interest on the accumulated amount.
- ✓ In case of individuals who are subsequently selected for enrolment into the Defence Forces as regular cadre, the '*Seva Nidhi*' package to be paid to them will comprise only of their contribution including accrued interest thereon.
- ✓ The '*Seva Nidhi*' will be exempt from Income Tax.
- ✓ In case of Agniveers exiting before the end of their engagement period in their own request, the '*Seva Nidhi*' package to be paid to them will comprise only their contribution including accrued interest there on.
- ✓ Two options to receive the *Seva Nidhi* package will be provided to each Agniveer, with an aim to provide financial loans for self-employment/entrepreneurship through a bank guarantee as also to meet immediate/incidental expenses, on exit. Details will be issued separately by GoI.

5. Remuneration Package:

Details of monthly remuneration, Agniveer Corpus Fund and one-time **Seva Nidhi** package are indicated below:-

Year	Customised Package(Monthly)	In Hand (70%)	Contribution to Agniveers Corpus Fund (30%)	Contribution to Corpus fund by GoI
All Figures in Rs.(Monthly Contribution)				
1 st Year	30000	21000	9000	9000
2 nd Year	33000	23100	9900	9900
3 rd Year	36500	25550	10950	10950
4 th Year	40000	28000	12000	12000
All Figures in Rs. (Monthly Contribution)				
Total Contribution in Agniveers Corpus Fund after four years			Rs.5.02 lakh	Rs.5.02lakh
Exit after 4 year		Rs.10.04 Lakhs as <i>Seva Nidhi</i> Package (absolute amount excluding interest)		

Note 1: *Agniveers* will not be required to contribute to any Provident Fund of the Government.

Note 2: There shall be no entitlement to gratuity and any kind of pensionary benefits in the case of *Agniveers*.

6. **Life Insurance Cover:** *Agniveers* will be provided life insurance cover of Rs. 48 lakhs for the duration of their engagement period as *Agniveers* in the defence forces.
7. **Compensation for Death:** In case of death, the following will be admissible to next of Kin (NOK) from the Agniveer Corpus Fund: -
 (i) Insurance cover as applicable
 (ii) All other compensation.
8. **Compensation for Disability:** In case an individual is placed in Permanent Low Medical Category (LMC), the authorities will assess the percentage of disability and attributability. Such personnel will be discharged from the Defence Forces on medical grounds post payment of lump-sum compensation.
9. **'Agniveer' Skill Certificate:** At the end of the engagement period, a detailed Skill-set certificate will be provided to the *Agniveers*, highlighting the skills and level of competency acquired by them during their engagement period.
10. **Ex-Agniveers enrolled for Four Years:** Ex-Agniveers who are selected to be enrolled in Defence Forces as regular cadre on completion of four years, will be governed by existing terms and conditions of service in the Defence forces, as amended from time to time.
11. **Payment of Disability/Death:**

Sl.No	Category	Entitlements of Agniveers
(a)	Death during engagement period on <i>Bonafide</i> duty (Category 'Y'/'Z')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Insurance Cover of Rs.48 lakhs. ➤ One-time <i>ex-gratia</i> Rs. 44 lakhs. ➤ Full pay for unserved period up to four years (with effect from date of death) including Seva Nidhi component. ➤ Balance accumulated (as on date) in the individual's Seva Nidhi' fund and Govt contribution including interest from The Agniveer Corpus Fund.
(b)	Death during engagement period not on duty (Category 'X')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Insurance Cover of Rs 48 lakhs. ➤ Balance accumulated (as on date) in the individual's Seva Nidhi fund and Govt. contribution including interest from the Agniveer Corpus Fund.
(c)	Disability (attributed /aggravated due to conditions of engagement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One-time <i>ex-gratia</i> Rs 44/25/15Lakhs based on % of disability (100/75/50) from Public Fund. ➤ Full pay for unserved period upto four years (with effect from date of disability) including <i>Seva Nidhi</i> component (from Public Fund). ➤ Balance accumulated (as on date) in the individual's <i>Seva Nidhi</i> fund including interest and Govt contribution from the Agniveer Corpus Fund.

Response/concerns of ex-servicemen and aspirants with Agnipath Scheme:

The scheme has received a mixed response from military veterans. Some veterans and serving officers in private have raised concerns that the scheme should first undergo a test bed to really see the advantages and disadvantages. However, National Security Advisor of India, Shri Ajit Doval clarified that the government's move was "not a knee-jerk reaction that has come overnight" but has been debated and discussed for over decades.

- According to some military veterans, the scheme will lead to a loss of institutional memory, especially the regiments in the army.
- Many are skeptical of this scheme, and wonder whether someone who is getting recruited for four years, and only has 25 per cent chance of being permanent, will follow orders and fight with the same spirit as a regular soldier.
- Some have raised doubts about the adequacy of the training period for Agniveers and whether their motivation level will be as high as that of soldiers who serve for a longer duration.
- Job security and pension are two major issues being raised. Under the previous system, troops joined for a 17-year period, which could be extended for some personnel, and it resulted in a lifelong pension. In the new scheme the Agniveers will not be eligible for pension benefits.
- Ten percent of vacancies in central government jobs in Group C and 20 per cent in Group D are reserved for ex-servicemen. For public sector banks, central public sector units and CAPFs, the reservation is 14.5 per cent in Group C and 24.5 per cent in Group D.

While the government has announced reservations across sectors for the Agniveers, the hiring trend of ex-servicemen in government sectors does not paint an optimistic picture. For instance The Directorate General Resettlement data shows that states, central public sector units, and Central Armed Police Forces have failed to recruit against the vacancies reserved for ex-servicemen. Only 2.4 per cent of veterans who applied for a job could get one because of that. As of June 2021, ex-servicemen constituted only 1.15 per cent of the Group C strength and 0.3 per cent of the Group D strength in 94 of the 170 CPSUs.

Government/ State Governments and India Inc's response to Agnipath Yojana.

Some key Ministries of the Union Government and the some States have offered to induct *Agniveers* in various Central Ministries and State Government jobs after the four-year service in the Armed Forces under the 'Agnipath' scheme.

1. **Ministry of Home Affairs:** The Ministry of Home Affairs have decided for ten per cent reservation of the vacancies in the Central Paramilitary Forces and the Assam Rifles for the 'Agniveers' after their four years of service in the Armed Forces. The MHA also decided to give a relaxation of three years in age beyond the prescribed upper age limit to the 'Agniveers' for the recruitment in the Paramilitary Forces and the Assam Rifles. For the first batch of Agniveers, the age relaxation will be for five years beyond the prescribed upper age limit.

2. Ministry of Defence: The Ministry will reserve ten per cent of the jobs in organisations under the Defence Ministry for the ‘Agniveers’, provided they meet the requisite eligibility criteria for such an employment. The ten per cent reservation will be implemented in the Indian Coast Guard and the Defence civilian posts, and all the 16 Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU).

3. Ministry of Civil Aviation: The Ministry of Civil Aviation will induct ‘Agniveers’ into its services. The Ministry is looking forward to hire ‘Agniveers’ for air traffic services, aircraft technician services, maintenance and overhaul of aircraft, meteorological and air accident investigation services etc.

4. Housing & Petroleum Ministries: The Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) under Housing and Petroleum Ministries are working on ways to hire ‘Agniveers’ after their four-year service in the Armed Forces

5. Ministry of Shipping: The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) announced six service avenues for smooth transition of Agniveers in various roles of the Merchant Navy, post their stint with the Indian Navy.

6. Uttarakhand: The Government of Uttarakhand committed that ‘Agniveers’ who return after their four-year stint with the Armed Forces will be given jobs in the police and the disaster management departments to make use of their discipline, skills, and military training.

7. Uttar Pradesh: The Government of Uttar Pradesh has assured the youth who complete their four years of service in the armed forces will get priority for jobs in State Police and allied forces.**8. Madhya Pradesh:** The MP Government promises that the ‘Agniveers’ will be given preferences in the police recruitment in the State.

9. Karnataka: Karnataka Government stated the government has planned to give preference to ‘agniveers’ -- soldiers recruited in the Army, Navy and the Air Force on a short-term contract under the special ‘Agnipath’ scheme -- in recruitment to police services in the State.

10. Assam: The Assam Government announced to prioritize those who come back from the programme after four years, in the Assam Arogya Nidhi initiative.

11. Haryana: The Haryana Government states that youth recruited in the armed forces under the Centre's ‘Agnipath’ scheme will be given preference in government jobs in Haryana.

12. Arunachal Pradesh: The Arunachal Pradesh Government committed that the ‘Agniveers’ will get priority in state police jobs and the State government's subsidy schemes.

Indian Industries have also gone all out to support the new recruitment scheme for Defence Forces. Mahindra Group boss, RPG Enterprises, Tata Sons and Reliance Industries (RIL) among others have come out in support of the scheme and also made hiring offers for Agniveers.

Way forward

This initiative by the Government has been intended to open up a regular intake and availability of youthful, patriotic, physically fit and highly motivated youth who wish to don the uniform and serve the nation for short periods.

The decades-old selection process is being overhauled to induct fitter and younger troops for establishing a future-ready fighting force that can effectively deal with complex challenges of national security.

The best of the Agniveers can lend a cutting edge to the country's battle-readiness. For the other young soldiers, the Centre's promise of according them priority in recruitment to the Central Armed Police Forces will build confidence and trust among the aspirants.

References:

1. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1834806>
2. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1834269>
3. <https://indianairforce.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Detailed-BRIEF-13-JUN-22.pdf>
4. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/sujan-r-chinoy-writes-a-reform-called-agnipath-scheme-government-of-india-armed-forces-aiac-7969520/>
5. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/the-agnipath-way-404184>
6. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/govt-announces-agnipath-scheme-for-soldier-recruitment-7968882/>
7. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/agnipath-protests-haryana-government-employment-khattar-7981054/>
8. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/agnipath-protests-these-ministries-states-have-promised-jobs-to-agniveers-101655547730915.html>