

## Agnipath Scheme

### Why in news?

Recently, government's ambitious Agnipath scheme has faced opposition from political parties and armed forces veterans.

### What is the Agnipath scheme?

- It is about recruiting personnel below officer ranks like soldiers, airmen, and sailors who are not commissioned officers to the Indian Armed Forces.
- **Announced in - 2022**, after military recruitment was paused for two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Broad objectives** - To enhance youthful profile of Armed Forces so that they at their fighting best at all times with increased risk taking ability and to use emerging modern technologies.
- To provide abilities and qualities such as discipline, dynamism, motivation and work-skills so that the youth remains as asset.
- **Key features** - It is a pan India merit based recruitment.
- It has a tenure of four years.
- It provides opportunity to apply for enrolment in permanent cadre.
- Based on merit and organizational requirement, upto 25% of Agniveers selected through central, transparent, rigorous system after four years.
- Age limit for applicants range from 17.5 years to 23 years.
- Once selected they would go for training for six months and then will be deployed for three and a half years.
- It includes recruiting sailors, airmen, and soldiers, except the technical cadre of the medical branch.
- Women are also recruited ensuring gender equality.

### How are Agniveers compensated?

- **Composite annual package** - The 1<sup>st</sup> package is approximately Rs.4 Lacs and upgradation upto approximately Rs.6 Lacs.

<b>AGNIPATH SCHEME FOR THE ARMED FORCES</b>				
Year	Customised Package (Monthly)	In Hand (70%)	Contribution to Agniveer Corpus Fund (30%)	Contribution to corpus fund by Gol
All figures in ₹ (Monthly Contribution)				
1st year	30,000	21,000	9,000	9,000
2nd year	33,000	23,100	9,900	9,900
3rd year	36,500	25,580	10,950	10,950
4th year	40,000	28,000	12,000	12,000
<b>Total contribution in Agniveer Corpus Fund after four years</b>			<b>₹5.02 lakh</b>	<b>₹5.02 lakh</b>
Exit After 4Year	<b>₹11.71 Lakh as Seva Nidhi Package</b> (Including, interest accumulated on the above amount as per the applicable interest rates would also be paid)			

- **Allowances** - Risk & hardship, ration, dress, travel allowances are provided.
- **Severance package** - 30% of the monthly emoluments to be contributed by individuals and the same amount will be contributed by the government to 'Seva Nidhi' fund.
- A corpus of approximately Rs.11 Lacs is given after four years of service, which is also exempted from income tax.
- **Death compensation** - Non-contributory life insurance cover of Rs. 48 Lakh and additional ex gratia of Rs. 44 Lakhs for death attributable to service.
- It also provides unserved portion upto four years including 'Seva Nidhi' component.
- **Disability compensation** - The compensation is based on the % of disability laid down by medical authorities.
- One time ex-gratia of Rs. 44/ 25/ 17 Lacs for 100%/ 75%/ 50% disability, respectively.

### **What benefits are envisaged to be accrued from the scheme?**

- It would be a win-win situation for the Armed Forces, Nation, individuals and the society at large.
- **Nation** - It helps in national integration based on unity in diversity with equal opportunity to youth including women from all regions.
- It promotes nation building through empowered, disciplined & skilled youth with military ethos in civil society.
- **Armed Forces** - It improves battle preparedness through transformative evolution with energetic, diverse, more trainable and resilient youth suited to the changing dynamics.
- It ensures selection of the best with rigorous and transparent selection process.
- Armed Forces will be empowered with *youthful profile* by optimal balance of youth an experience by bringing down the *average age down to 26 years* from current 32 years.
- It endeavor to harness benefits of skill India by induction from Tech Institutions.

- **Individuals** - It promotes smooth integration of trained personnel into society with *skill sets, certification and diplomas/ higher education/ credits*.
- It provides a platform for the youth to fulfil dream of joining the Armed Forces and serve the nation.
- It will imbibe armed forces *ethos, courage, camaraderie* commitment and teamwork in the youth.

### What are the issues with this scheme?

- **Lack of pension** - Unlike soldiers in regular service, Agniveers do not draw pensions post-retirement.
- Only the 25% of Agniveers who get absorbed into the forces after four years will receive pensionary benefits.
- **Decrease permanency** - It will reduce the number of permanent armed forces.
- **Lack of benefits** - It creates a lesser cadre of soldiers, who work on the same tasks as those with full commission, but with lesser pay, benefits, and prospects.
- **Disparity** - It has caused significant disaffection among those who see military recruitment as a path to economic stability and upward mobility.

### What lies ahead?

- The Forces too are carrying out an ***internal assessment*** on the impact of the scheme, based on which they will make recommendations to the government on possible changes.
- All three services are have submitted their observations to the Department of Military Affairs.
- The government has recently indicated that it is *willing to alter the scheme if required*, but without compromising on the Armed Forces' youthful profile.

### References

1. [Indian Express | Issues with Agnipath Scheme](#)
2. [Agnipath Brochure| Key features of Agnipath Scheme](#)
3. [Agnipath| Benefits of Agnipath Scheme](#)