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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 1st package is approximately Rs.4 Lacs and upgradation upto approximately Rs.6 Lacs.

AGNIPATH SCHEME FOR THE ARMED FORCES				
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
Total contribution in Agniveer Corpus Fund after four years			₹5.02 lakh	₹5.02 lakh
Exit After 4Year	₹11.71 Lakh as Seva Nidhi Package (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](#)



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