



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Agnipath scheme

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Why is in news? Deliberations on to increase rate of permanent intake through Agnipath scheme

With the first batch of Agniveers joining the units and deployed on the ground, there are deliberations going on over increasing the intake size per batch from around 46,000 and the recruitment to permanent cadre from 25% to 50%.

This comes as the services, especially the Army, look to make up for the shortage in personnel that has accumulated over the past three years.

The matter is under deliberation and there is no decision yet. There was no recruitment during the COVID-19 period and around 60,000 soldiers retire from the Army every year.

Agnipath Scheme is a **recruitment process** launched by the **central government** wherein selected candidates will be **enrolled for four years period in Indian Armed Forces**.

Kargil Review Committee proposed the **retention of soldiers for a shorter duration** of time as opposed to the existing structure of 15 to 20 years.

Under this scheme, the youth joining the army will be called Agniveer. Youth will be able to be recruited into the army for a short duration.

Eligibility criteria under the scheme:

It is applicable **only for personnel below officer ranks**

Aspirants should be between the **ages of 17.5 years and 21 years**

Selection will be done through rallies twice a year. Recruits will be trained for six months and then will be deployed for three and a half years.

The recruitment will be done on **“all India, all class” recruitment** to the services (from any caste, region, class or religious background). Currently, recruitment is **based on ‘regiment system’ based on region and caste bases**.

Only 25 percent of the recruits will be **given a permanent commission** based on merit.

The **four-year period will not be considered for retirement benefits** after permanent commission.

They will be eligible for a starting salary of Rs 30,000, along with additional benefits which will go up to Rs 40,000 by the end of the service.

Other perks associated with the scheme include:

Rs 11.71 lakh tax-free lump sum amount as ‘Seva Nidhi’ after four-year service.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

Soldiers will have to contribute 30 per cent of their salary for this purpose and government will make a matching contribution.

Soldiers leaving after four years will be provided with skill certificates and bridge courses for future career.

Life insurance cover of Rs 48 lakh and ex-gratia payment of Rs 44 lakh in case of death.

They will get disability payment of Rs 44/25/15 lakh respectively for 100/75/50 per cent disability.

Significance of the Agnipath Scheme:

Younger armed forces: The **current average age profile** for India's Armed Forces is **32 years**. It is envisaged it will come down by about 4-5 years by implementation of this scheme

Leaner Force: Since majority of the recruits under the scheme will leave the force in four years, the move is likely to make permanent forces much leaner.

Financial Prudence: The scheme **will save considerable amount on defence pension bill**. The saved expenditure can be allocated for modernization of the armed forces.

Trained and skilled force: A youthful armed forces will allow them to be easily trained for new technologies. They will easily adapt.

Employment opportunities: Apart from job opportunities in the army, Agniveers are more likely to get employment in various fields due to their experience in armed forces.

Buffer Force: The ex-Agniveers could act as reserve force, who may be called to serve again for boosting national security in times of external/internal threats.

Global Practices: Similar practice is carried out in other countries as well. There is a trend towards reduction in the number of personnel and emphasis on increasing capital expenditure on modern weapons and equipment. In the **USA tours are 6-9 or even 12 months' deployment** depending upon the needs of the military and branch of service. The mandatory tour duty in countries that follow the **practice of conscription** include **Israel, Norway, North Korea, and Sweden**.

Concerns regarding the scheme:

Present benefits and security of jobs will be lost: Recruits will not get permanent jobs or promised pension and health benefits even after retirement.

Doubt about training: 6 months of short training may not be enough to trust them with the same kind of tasks that current troops can be trusted with.

Erosion of loyalty: "All India, all class" recruitment to the services may lead to the erosion of the loyalty that a soldier has for his regiment.