STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What Is the Agnipath Scheme, and What Is the Proposed Second Tour of Duty?

Defence & Security

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1. Understanding the Agnipath Scheme

The **Agnipath scheme** is a recruitment framework introduced by the Union Government in June 2022 for inducting personnel into the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.

Those recruited under the scheme are called **Agniveers**. Their initial engagement lasts four years, including training.

The scheme aims to maintain a younger military profile, bring new talent into the armed forces and provide young recruits with military skills, discipline and experience.

2. What Is the Second Tour of Duty Proposal?

The reported proposal would provide selected Agniveers with an additional two years of service after their initial four-year tenure, potentially increasing their total engagement to six years.

As of 4 November 2026, this proposal has **not been officially approved or implemented**. Its eligibility rules, number of beneficiaries and detailed service conditions remain unconfirmed.

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The proposed framework could create three broad categories:

Category 1: Initial four-year service

Agniveers serving their original engagement period under the existing scheme.

Category 2: Extended service

Selected Agniveers who may receive a further two years of service if the proposal is approved.

Category 3: Permanent enrolment

Agniveers selected for absorption into the regular cadre under the applicable rules.

These are the reported categories under discussion, not a formally notified new classification.



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3. Existing Scheme: Key Features

Feature	Existing provision
Launch	June 2022
Service period	Four years, including training
Permanent retention	Up to 25% of each batch
Selection	Performance, eligibility and organisational requirements
Exit benefit	One-time Seva Nidhi package
Pension and gratuity	No regular pension or gratuity under the standard four-year exit arrangement
Post-service transition	Skill certification and assistance or opportunities for civilian employment

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The four-year engagement and retention framework are part of the original scheme announced by the Union Government.



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4. Why Is an Extension Being Considered?

A. Retaining trained personnel

Military training requires time, infrastructure and resources. Retaining trained Agniveers for longer could help services preserve operational experience and reduce the need to repeatedly train replacements.

B. Technical and specialised expertise

Personnel working with communications, engineering, air defence and other specialised systems may need substantial training. A longer engagement could allow the armed forces to benefit from these skills for an extended period.

C. Operational continuity

A larger pool of experienced personnel may improve unit-level continuity, mentorship and the practical use of modern military equipment.

D. Employment security

For eligible Agniveers, an additional two years could mean continued income, professional development and more time to plan their future careers.

These are potential benefits, not guaranteed outcomes; their actual impact would depend on the final policy design and service requirements.

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5. Potential Benefits and Concerns

Potential benefits	Concerns
Retention of trained manpower	Uncertainty over extension eligibility
Greater continuity in specialised roles	Perceived unequal treatment among recruits
Additional income and service experience	Employment challenges for those released
Lower repeated training requirements in some roles	Need to preserve a youthful force profile
More time to prepare for civilian careers	Possible confusion if rules are announced late

6. What Happens to Agniveers Who Leave After Four Years?

The extension proposal does not eliminate the need for a clear exit and rehabilitation policy.

Under the existing framework, Agniveers who are not selected for regular enrolment complete their engagement and receive the applicable Seva Nidhi package and skill certification. They do not receive regular pension or

gratuity under the standard four-year exit arrangement.



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A comprehensive transition framework should include:

1. **Skill recognition:** Translate military training into qualifications recognised by civilian employers.
2. **Employment pathways:** Strengthen access to suitable public-sector and private-sector opportunities.
3. **Career counselling:** Help recruits prepare for competitive examinations, vocational training and further education.
4. **Financial planning:** Provide guidance on savings, entrepreneurship and resettlement.
5. **Transparent communication:** Announce extension criteria and exit benefits well before the end of service.

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7. Way Forward

The government should evaluate the proposal against the actual manpower requirements of each service. If approved, the extension should have clearly defined eligibility criteria, transparent selection procedures, and explicit provisions for pay, benefits and service conditions.

At the same time, support for personnel completing their four-year engagement should not be weakened. Military preparedness and the socio-economic security of young recruits must be treated as complementary policy objectives.

Conclusion

The proposed Second Tour of Duty could provide the armed forces with a mechanism to retain trained personnel beyond four years while offering selected Agniveers additional service and income. However, its effectiveness will depend on transparent rules, operational requirements and a credible transition framework for those leaving the military. Until formal notification, the reported extension must be treated as a proposal rather than an established change to the Agnipath scheme.