Agnipath: Cabinet approves an extra two-year term for the 75% of Agniveers not retained

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News

On Wednesday, 4 Nov 2026, the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi approved changes to the Agnipath scheme recommended by the forces; Chief of Defence Staff Gen N.S. Raja Subramani announced them. Selection of 25% as regulars on merit at the four-year mark continues; the remaining 75% may, if willing, serve two more years (years 5 and 6) with higher pay, an enhanced 'Seva Nidhi' package and seniority benefits. After that, those willing who meet the selection criteria will be enrolled as regular soldiers. The decision comes as about 18,300 first-batch Agniveers were due to exit by 31 Dec 2026. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called it the 'Second Tour of Duty'.

Key facts

Decision	4 Nov 2026 – Union Cabinet (PM Modi); announced by CDS Gen N.S. Raja Subramani
Tier 1	Top 25% – regular service on merit after 4 years (unchanged); senior to Tier 2
Tier 2	Remaining 75% – optional 2 more years (years 5–6); higher pay, enhanced Seva Nidhi, seniority

After year 6	Willing personnel enrolled as regulars subject to objective selection criteria (not automatic)
Numbers	First batch – about 18,300 (due to exit by 31 Dec 2026); over 3 lakh Agniveers now serve
Scheme	Agnipath continues; annual performance reviews tracked in a central database for all three services

Background

- Agnipath: approved by the Cabinet on 14 June 2022. It recruits Personnel Below Officer Rank into the Army, Navy and Air Force for four years; age 17½–21 (up to 23 in the first cycle only); up to 25% of each batch go into regular service. The aim is a younger age profile for the forces.
- Pay and Seva Nidhi: ₹30,000 a month in year 1, rising to ₹40,000 in year 4. 30% of pay goes into a corpus and the government adds a matching amount. On exit about ₹11.71 lakh with interest – a tax-free one-time sum, not a pension.
- Quotas for ex-Agniveers: 50% of CAPF Constable (GD) and Assam Rifles constable posts (Home Ministry); 10% in the Coast Guard, defence civilian posts and 16 defence PSUs.
- Constitution: Article 33 lets Parliament restrict or abrogate the Fundamental Rights of the armed forces, police and similar forces. Defence and the armed forces are in the Union List. The President is the Supreme Commander (Article 53(2)).
- Training: the Navy's first Agniveer batch (2,585, including 273 women) passed out at INS Chilka, Odisha, on 28 March 2023.

Tamil Nadu link: this is a nationwide decision; there is no separate Tamil Nadu announcement. Agniveers from Tamil Nadu also get the two-year extension and the path to regular service. The Officers Training Academy (OTA, 1963) at Alandur, Chennai, trains Short Service Commission officers – Agnipath does not cover officers.

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