

Armed forces to provide CAPFs with list of retiring Agniveers eligible for recruitment

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

The armed forces are likely to compile a list of Agniveers eligible for recruitment into the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) under the government's reservation policy for the temporary recruits, a government source has told *The Hindu*.

The first batch of around 25,000 Agniveers is scheduled to retire from the Army by December.

The source added that while the CAPFs, such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), and Assam Rifles, have reserved 50% of constable vacancies for former Agniveers, the



With this move, retired Agniveers may not be able to directly apply for postings in the Central Armed Police Forces. FILE PHOTO

Army, Navy, and Air Force will furnish the details of eligible personnel, indicating that ex-Agniveers may not be able to apply directly for recruitment under the reserved quota.

Although recruitment into the armed forces is not based on caste reservation,

the official said that the existing quotas for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes will continue to apply for recruitment into the CAPFs.

The service tenure of personnel in the CAPFs extends up to the age of 60,

whereas those in the armed forces retire much earlier. "During deliberations, it was felt that, if given a choice, many Agniveers would prefer to join the CAPFs rather than continue in the armed forces because of the longer career span and greater job security," the source said.

"Therefore, it has been decided, at least initially, that the armed forces, beginning with the Army, which will witness the first batch of Agniveers retiring later this year, will provide the CAPFs with a list of eligible candidates for recruitment under the reserved quota," the source added.

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Armed forces to provide list of retiring Agniveers

Over the past month, CAPFs such as the CRPF, the SSB, and Assam Rifles have issued notifications, specifying 50% reservation for the ex-Agniveers. As reported by *The Hindu*, the Border Security Force (BSF) was the first to issue such a notification on December 19, 2025, enhancing the quota from 10% to 50%.

The ex-Agniveers will be exempted from written examinations, physical standard tests, and physical efficiency tests, the notifications said. Recruitment to the post of Constable (General Duty) will be carried out through direct recruitment, with 50% of vacancies reserved for ex-Agniveers, the CRPF's notification, issued on July 27 said.

"In the first phase, the concerned nodal force will conduct recruitment to fill the vacancies earmarked for ex-Agniveers, or in accordance with instructions issued by the MHA from time to time. In the second phase, recruitment for the remaining 50% of vacancies will be conducted through an open examination under the existing recruitment provisions. Any vacancies reserved for ex-Agniveers that remain unfilled in the first phase will be added to the vacancies to be filled in the second phase," the CRPF said.

Bangladesh sets 'conditions' for Rahman's visit to India

Dhaka seeks 'propitious environment' before any visit by the PM, says relations 'vitiated' by Hasina's press conference in Delhi; it calls for extradition of the deposed leader and other wanted persons

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday that officials from New Delhi and Dhaka have been in talks for "several weeks" for a possible visit to India by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. It also said that the atmosphere of bilateral relations has been "vitiating" by deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's August 5 press conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club here.

Urging India to "extradite" Ms. Hasina and the suspected killers of radical student leader Osman Hadi, the Bangladeshi Ministry's official spokesperson, A.K.M. Shahidul Karim, said that "a propitious environment" is required for



Indian envoy Dinesh Trivedi calls on PM Tarique Rahman in Dhaka on August 10 after the former PM's press conference in Delhi. PTI

Mr. **Rahman's visit**.

The official spokesperson of India's External Affairs Ministry, Randhir Jaiswal, had reiterated last Friday that New Delhi had extended two invites to Mr. Rahman – one for the upcoming BRICS Summit to be held here and the other an invite for a bilateral vi-

sit. "We are of the view that a propitious environment needs to be created for the visit. To this end, we have requested the Indian authorities to expeditiously act on our request to extradite Sheikh Hasina and other fugitive criminals, and to hand over to Bangladesh the accused killers of Sha-

heed Sharif Osman Hadi in compliance with our bilateral extradition treaty," said Mr. Karim in a statement, adding, "We are awaiting their response."

Diplomatic sources had earlier indicated that bilateral talks had been on the right track after India distanced itself from Ms. Hasina's press conference in which she had targeted Mr. Rahman's government. Subsequently, Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka, Dinesh Trivedi, called on Mr. Rahman on August 10. In view of these exchanges, sources in Dhaka had indicated that "positive movements" had started and that the window for a big-ticket visit from Dhaka was gradually opening.

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Dhaka sets 'conditions' for PM Rahman's visit

The Bangladeshi spokesperson confirmed the consultation and said, "Officials of Bangladesh and India have been in touch with each other for several weeks on the possibility of a bilateral visit by Honourable Prime Minister Mr. Tarique Rahman to India. However, this process was vitiated by the open press interaction in New Delhi on August 5 by Sheikh Hasina..."

Earlier, on August 7, Mr. Jaiswal had distanced India from Ms. Hasina's press conference saying that India does not "endorse" the comments made against the "duly constituted government" of Bangladesh.

In Sunday's remarks, Mr. Karim reiterated Dhaka's "Bangladesh first" foreign policy and said the government will continue to "promote friendly bilateral relations with other countries" including with neighbours, "on the basis of sovereign equality, national dignity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and mutual benefit". Ms. Hasina sought refuge in India on August 5, 2024, after a popular uprising toppled her government.

India is losing West Asia, but it is not too late

India is losing West Asia, one country at a time. Even as the region undergoes a once-in-a-generation shift in its security architecture and political battle lines, it is unclear what India's strategy is ...or whether New Delhi has one at all.

It was not supposed to be this way. Just 10 years ago, India was rapidly remaking its footprint in West Asia. In 2016, Saudi Arabia awarded India's Prime Minister its highest civilian honour. In 2021, the I2U2 agreement was signed binding India, Israel, the United States and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) together. In 2024, Iran leased Chabahar to India. All these successes though are now memories from the past.

Pakistan's new diplomatic moment

In the last four months, the U.S.-Israel war with Iran has escalated into a catastrophic regional conflict with Iran attacking the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Saudis hitting Iraqi militias, Houthis attacking Saudi ships and Israel carrying out strikes in multiple countries. Now, the Gulf countries are rethinking the efficacy of the U.S. security umbrella. They see a threat from both Iran and Israel.

Among the Gulf countries there is a schism on how to handle this threat – through engagement (as the UAE is doing) or through deterrence (as the Saudis are contemplating).

In this context, Pakistan's role as mediator in the U.S.-Iran conflict is gaining it reputational benefits in the region. Irrespective of Pakistan's motives, analysts in the region see that Pakistan waded into the conflict at a time when it seemed that no one could bring U.S. President Donald Trump and the Iranians to the table despite efforts by Türkiye, Qatar and Egypt.

The latest collective defence pact in Mecca between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan comes in this context. This pact may mean less in shaping the U.S.-Iran war as none of these



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countries is likely to directly take on Iran alongside the U.S. The pact is thus aimed less at Iran and more at deterring Israel. All three countries see themselves as the next target of Israel after Iran. They thus want to pool Saudi capital, Pakistan's military strength, and Türkiye's technological advances.

This is a challenge for India. A future war between Israel and Pakistan will inevitably draw in India given the close partnership between Israel and India. Similarly, even greater Turkish support for Pakistan in a future conflict that Pakistan might have with India cannot be ruled out

The choices before India

What then is India's strategy? It appears to be confident of Israel's victory in its various battles in the region given its proximity to the U.S. But U.S. politics are changing rapidly, with both 'Make America Great Again' Republicans and Democratic Socialists questioning the once-unquestioned U.S. support for Israel. Can Israel then emerge triumphant alone?

India has cultivated a special relationship with the UAE given the importance of remittances from Indian expat workers in the country, the investments by the Indian elite in the UAE and the UAE's strategic investments in India. But the UAE's mounting differences with Saudi Arabia are a cause for concern, as are its positions against UN-recognised governments in conflicts as far as Sudan. Can the UAE emerge unscathed in all these conflicts?

India can choose to sign military alliances with Israel and the UAE. But this would hurt what is left of India's relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia. India can choose to do nothing as it is doing now. And its merchant mariners may keep getting killed in the Strait of Hormuz while more Indian ships may sink in the Bab-el-Mandeb.

A great power in the making risks appearing humbled and hobbled in its immediate maritime neighbourhood.

Or, India can pick a third way. It can devise an active regional political strategy. Re-engage the Saudis with whom it has no explicit differences.

It can start playing a role of rebuilding trust between the Arab countries and Iran, starting with the UAE-Iran relationship. It can engage in Jordan's security offering Jordan defensive technologies at a time when U.S. munitions are running low. It can engage in the future UN peacekeeping role in Lebanon, which is now under a cloud, with the forecast being an end to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It can even run a back-channel with Türkiye sharing its red lines about its relationship with Pakistan. If India cannot join the new Saudi-led maritime force for the Red Sea, it can work with Egypt on a parallel effort to safeguard India-bound shipping, from the Suez Canal to Bab-el-Mandeb. It can look into setting up a military presence in the Red Sea region whether in Somaliland or Socotra. Building on current military training exchanges, it can start drills and military exercises with a range of countries in the region.

Think of bridge-building

India can also appoint a new Special Envoy for West Asia – not one focused on the Israel-Palestine peace process necessarily, but one who can draw all the threads together to secure India's interests in the region at a time of unprecedented turbulence. All of this can be part of one pro-active vision for India to support a new security architecture for West Asia – one that does not draw new battle lines but instead contributes to trust-building.

India cannot afford to be a stranger to West Asia. India has both the capacity and the responsibility to help restore peace and predictability in the region.

Sri Lanka moves to raise retirement age of judges

Meera Srinivasan

COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan government will table a contentious Bill in Parliament this week seeking to raise the mandatory retirement age of judges of the country's Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, a move critics say could undermine the independence of the judiciary.

According to a media statement issued by Minister of Justice Harshana Nanayakkara, the government will table the proposed constitutional amendment Bill – the 22nd Amendment – on Tuesday.

It seeks to amend Article 107(5) of the Constitution to raise the retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 65 to 67 years, and that of Court of Appeal judges from 63 to 65 years.

The Anura Kumara Dissanayake administration has sought to justify the move by saying it would help address the massive backlog of cases, expedite court proceedings, and ensure continuity by retaining experienced and senior judges.

The amendment would help address a backlog of approximately 1.1 million



Anura Kumara Dissanayake

pending cases, Mr. Nanayakkara, an Attorney-at-law, told presspersons.

However, the political Opposition, members of the legal fraternity and sections of civil society are fiercely opposing the move, arguing that it would impact the independence of the judiciary.

Fierce opposition

In a social media post, Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa questioned why the extension [of the retirement age] must apply to sitting judges.

Amid the ongoing debate largely confined to Sri Lanka's legal fraternity and sections of civil society, a 20-member delegation of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL), a professional body of lawyers, met President Dissanayake on

August 12.

"The BASL emphasised that the proposed amendment would have a serious impact on the independence of the judiciary and that, in the circumstances, the proposed amendment should not be proceeded with. The BASL further pointed out that there are several other urgent matters requiring the attention of the government which must be given priority," the association said in a statement following the meeting.

The President's office said Mr. Dissanayake "stressed that the decision to extend the retirement age of judges was not taken with any individual or group in mind, but in the broader public interest".

Responding to the developments, Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, recently wrote to the government and noted that the amendment, in the form reportedly proposed and in its implications, "may not be in line with international human rights standards related to the independence of the judiciary and the right to a fair trial".

Iran offers \$30,000 bounty for killing or capturing U.S. soldiers

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Iran's military announced on Sunday that it was offering a bounty equivalent to \$30,000 for killing or capturing U.S. soldiers, with the reward doubled if carried out by a woman.

Army chief Amir Hatami said the plan had been drawn up following "the large number of requests" to participate in the financial support, according to the *IRNA* state news agency.

There has been no known deployment of United States ground forces in Iran during the West Asia war, with the exception of

a rescue mission in April for a downed American pilot.

Mr. Hatami did not provide any details on where or when the killing or capturing of U.S. soldiers was expected to take place.

"Anyone who kills or captures and hands over an invading American military personnel will receive a reward equivalent to \$30,000 or 5 billion toman from the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army," Mr. Hatami said, using an informal unit equivalent to 10,000 Iranian rials.

"Courageous" Iranian women who carry out such an action will receive double the reward," he added.

Ben-Gvir advocates killing '30 to 40' people in Gaza nightly

Associated Press

JERUSALEM

An Israeli lawmaker in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition publicly advocated for killing "30 to 40" people in Gaza each night, comments that surfaced on Sunday and were quickly shared by Palestinian media.

Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir made the statement while speaking to a former Gaza-held hostage, Rom Braslavski, on Mr. Braslavski's podcast. The two were discussing Israel's recovery from the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, when Mr. Ben-Gvir criticised Israel's recent drawdown of strikes in Gaza.



Itamar Ben-Gvir

"It's no secret, I disagree with the Prime Minister," he said. "I think targeted assassinations should be carried out in Gaza, taking down 30 to 40 every night. Not just those who pose an immediate threat – there are people there who are not worthy of life. They shouldn't live. They're not even people."

In the past, similar statements by Mr. Ben-Gvir and other Israeli officials were widely condemned. Many have been presented to the UN's world court as evidence of genocidal intent. Israel denies it has committed genocide in Gaza.

Israel's domestic media has made scarce mention of the statement, highlighting how once-fringe ideologies like Mr. Ben-Gvir's are surging in the lead-up to Israeli elections on October 27. Mr. Ben-Gvir does not have power over the country's military and cannot order strikes on Gaza. But, after operating for decades within Israel's far-right fringe, he is now one of the most influential people in the country.

Qatar captured 3 of our pilots, says Iran; Doha denies claim

Yeganeh Torbati &
Leily Nikounazar
August 16

IRAN ACCUSED Qatar on Saturday of capturing three of its bomber pilots in the early days of the US-Israeli war with Iran, a claim that a Qatari official publicly denied.

General Seyed Mohammad Bagherzadeh, commander of the Iranian armed forces' missing persons search committee, made the accusation in a letter to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which was published by Iranian media.

He said the men were flying Su-24 fighter jets in an operation on March 2, days after the outbreak of the war, when their planes had been hit by "enemy defenses" and the pilots ejected.

They survived but were captured by the Qatari authorities, according to General Bagherzadeh, who named the men as Javad Salehi, Abdolmajid Dashtian and Omran Behraveshtian. A fourth pilot, Majid Kazemi, died, he added.

But Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for Qatar's foreign ministry, denied the country had detained the Iranians.

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"We categorically deny the claims circulating regarding the detention of Iranian pilots & are surprised by these misleading statements... amid the ongoing diplomatic efforts & initiatives aimed at de-escalating tensions in the region"

MAJED AL-ANSARI,
SPOKESPERSON FOR QATAR
FOREIGN MINISTRY

the detention of Iranian pilots & are surprised by these misleading statements at this particular time, amid the ongoing diplomatic efforts & initiatives aimed at de-escalating tensions in the region," al-Ansari wrote on social media on Saturday evening.

Qatar, a close US ally that hosts a major American military base, said in early March that its Air Force had shot down two Iranian Su-24 bomber jets. Al-Ansari said on Saturday that "contact was established with the pilots concerned following their violation of Qatari airspace." NYT