

3 Services propose improvements to Agnipath scheme

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

With the first batch of Agniveers set to complete their four-year tenure later this year, the Army, Navy, and Air Force have submitted recommendations to the Department of Military Affairs on ways to improve the implementation of the Agnipath scheme.

A senior Ministry of Defence official confirmed that the three Services had shared their suggestions based on their experience of implementing the scheme over the past four years. A report incorporating the recommendations has been sent to the competent authority for consideration.

This comes amid a renewed focus on the Agnipath scheme as the first batch of Agniveers, who enrolled in 2023, are scheduled to complete their contractual tenure this year.

Under the existing policy, up to 25% of each batch of Agniveers can be retained in the regular cadre based on organisational requirements and performance. Those retained go on to serve as regular armed services personnel, while the remaining 75% exit after four years.

The reassessment of the scheme comes as the



The first batch of Agniveers are scheduled to complete their contractual tenure this year.

armed forces seek to balance the objective of maintaining a younger force with the need for operational experience and continuity.

Introduced in June 2022, the Agnipath scheme marked a major change in the armed forces' recruitment policy. Under the scheme, young men and women between 17.5 and 21 years of age are recruited as Agniveers for a four-year period, including six months of training.

At the end of the engagement, up to 25% can be selected for permanent enrolment, while the remaining personnel exit the services with a tax-free Seva Nidhi package, which is built through monthly contributions from the Agniveer and matched by the government. Those exiting after four years do not receive any pension or gratuity benefits.

Govt. likely to release sixth Positive Indigenisation List in a few months

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry has reviewed the much-awaited sixth Positive Indigenisation List (PIL), which is now in the final stages of consideration and is likely to be promulgated within the next few months, a senior official said.

The review meeting was recently held by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), during which a presentation on the proposed list was made to officials associated with the indigenisation exercise. "A review of the sixth list has been done and finally, after three years, the sixth list is under consideration and is in the final stage for approval. The list primarily contains items for the Navy and the Army. It will be out within a couple of months," the official said.

The sixth list is expected



Such lists are aimed at restricting imports and mandating procurement of military equipment from domestic industry. PTI

to add another set of strategically important major Line Replaceable Units (LRUs), sub-systems, assemblies and other equipment that will have to be sourced from Indian industry after successful indigenisation.

The lists are aimed at providing a decisive impetus to the government's *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiative in defence by

progressively restricting the import of specified military equipment and mandating procurement from domestic industry.

Five lists

The DMA has so far promulgated five PILs comprising 509 items between August 2020 and October 2023. More than half of these items have since been indigenised, accord-

ing to the government.

Of the 509, 191 items worth ₹3.40 lakh crore have been contracted, while Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) has been accorded for another 114 items worth ₹4.75 lakh crore. The remaining 204 items, valued at ₹5.41 lakh crore, are at various stages of development, according to official data.

The sixth PIL was expected to be released earlier but has remained under consideration as the Services and the Ministry examined the requirements and indigenisation potential of additional equipment.

The lists notified by the DMA are separate from those issued by the Department of Defence Production (DDP). While the DMA's five lists cover 509 major items, the DDP has promulgated six PILs covering 5,417 items.

BJP agent tried to get 7,561 electors deleted in Ballari

Karnataka Police file FIR against booth-level agent who repeatedly tried to submit Form 7 in bulk to remove voters' names; complainant says most of the voters belonged to a minority community

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

Claiming that more than 7,500 electors were either “absent or had shifted”, a BJP-affiliated booth-level agent (BLA) in Karnataka tried to first submit Form 7 applications (seeking deletion of names) and, after his claims were not accepted by the election authorities, again sought “revision” of their names by submitting objections, even though these voters figured in the draft electoral roll of the Ballari City Assembly constituency.

In this regard, a first information report (FIR) was registered at the Brucepet police station on October 1 against the agent, T. Srinivas Mothkur, who is also the Opposition leader of the Ballari City Corporation.

The FIR books the accused under Section 353 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, for “statements conducing to public mischief”. Mr. Mothkur, BJP’s BLA-1, had sought deletion of names of 7,561 electors.

Sixth in State

The FIR, filed on a complaint from a Congress BLA, is the sixth one registered in Karnataka regarding misuse of Form 7.

Of the previous five FIRs, two filed in Belagavi and one in Mysuru names BJP members as accused.

The FIR followed a se-



Cracking the whip: Of the previous five FIRs filed in Karnataka for misuse of Form 7 applications, three names BJP members as accused. FILE PHOTO

ries of attempts by Mr. Mothkur to submit the objections. On September 21, he wrote to the Ballari City Corporation saying that while he was trying to submit Form 7 applications through the booth-level officers (BLOs) concerned, many of them had refused to accept them. Since only a few BLOs considered his applications, he took the remaining ones directly to the electoral registration officer (ERO).

In their response the same day, election authorities from the Ballari City Corporation said Mr. Mothkur’s claims that the voters were already registered elsewhere, absent or had permanently shifted “were not supported” by documents or other information. The ERO said that while the BLAs were allowed to submit applica-

tions in bulk, they could not submit more than 10 applications to a BLO at a time or in a day. If a BLA submitted more than 30 applications during the claims and objections period, the ERO or AERO had to personally cross-verify them. The BLA was also required to submit a list of the applications along with a declaration that he had personally verified the particulars and was satisfied that they were correct, the ERO’s letter said.

Following this response, Mr. Mothkur made another attempt the following day.

On September 22, he wrote to the election authorities saying that he was ready to submit objections against 7,561 voters in the draft electoral roll of the Ballari City Assembly constituency. He enclosed the list of names and sought

necessary action “at the earliest”.

The election authorities again rejected his claim, arguing that it was not possible to verify the voters’ registration merely on the basis of the complaint.

‘Names re-verified’

Following Mr. Mothkur’s repeated attempts to seek deletion of the names, Congress BLA Goutham S. filed a complaint with the police. He said that at some polling stations, election officials had re-verified the names based on Mr. Mothkur’s objections. He also alleged that the majority of the voters belonged to a minority community.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Mothkur said that he had not sought deletion of the names but had only provided the details to the ERO to verify.

Going 'beyond advocacy': India talking to both Kyiv, Moscow, says Jaishankar

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

India is going "beyond advocacy" on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Sunday, indicating for the first time that New Delhi is involved in conveying messages between Moscow and Kyiv on agreements for maritime safety in the Black Sea and grain export.

Speaking at a German think tank's event, Mr. Jaishankar responded to questions about India's close ties with Russia by pointing out that it has "stood by India" in difficult times. He also took aim at global superpowers, call-



S. Jaishankar

ing the U.S. a "lonelier power", while China sets itself apart as a "unique country". He suggested that other countries could seek to build coalitions to work on issues like international peace and security.

"We have conversations with both Russia and Ukraine [on the need for dialogue and diplomacy]," Mr.

Jaishankar said at the Munich Leaders Meeting in Delhi on Sunday. "We are trying to be helpful, starting with the Black Sea safety of shipping issue, but going beyond that to cover some immediate concerns which both of them have on grain exports, on energy exports, on non-attack possibilities. So those are ongoing conversations right now," he added.

Time-tested ties

Mr. Jaishankar's strong defence of India-Russia ties suggests that New Delhi will not reduce its Russian oil purchases, which currently account for over 50% of India's oil imports, even in the face of possible

U.S. sanctions under a new law enacted on September 18.

"For [India,] Russia, and the Soviet Union before that, was a country that stood by us in many ways when our security, when our territorial integrity was under threat, and at a time when you know much of the world preferred backing a military regime next to us," he said, referring to Soviet support during the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the liberation of Bangladesh.

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Over 500 detained amid stir against CEC in Delhi

Police clash with protesters trying to reach heavily barricaded Jantar Mantar; BJP using Gyanesh Kumar to 'take away the right to vote', says Uddhav protesting with Opposition parties in Mumbai

Lavpreet Kaur
Chinmay Gaikwad
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Protests seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and the suspension of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls entered their third day on Sunday, with demonstrations continuing in New Delhi and Mumbai.

The protests, which began on Friday, included leaders of Opposition parties, civil society activists, and members of youth and student organisations.

On Sunday, confrontations took place in New Delhi between protesters, who were trying to reach Jantar Mantar, and the Delhi Police, who had heavily barricaded the area. The



AISA leader Neha Bora climbs a police barricade as protesters attempt to march towards Jantar Mantar on Sunday. PTI

police stopped the march on Ashoka Road and detained around 500 people.

In Mumbai, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray led a march seeking the CEC's removal and the scrapping of the

SIR. The Shiv Sena (UBT) chief described the CEC as a "weapon" in the hands of the BJP and claimed that the ruling party was using him to "take away the right to vote".

"You can control institutions, but streets belong to us," he said, adding that

Disenfranchising people a violative act, says SC judge

NEW DELHI

Stressing that disenfranchising millions was an "intrinsically arbitrary" act, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan of the Supreme Court on Sunday said that any process that makes people second class citizens was violative of right to equality. He was speaking at the NALSAR in Hyderabad. » **PAGE 11**

the removal of "around 13 crore names" from draft rolls across the country amounted to disenfranchisement.

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No military solution to West Asia conflict, Iran's Araghchi tells U.S.

The Foreign Minister insists that only 'negotiations based on justice and fairness' can end war; he adds that if U.S. or its allies resume military confrontation, Iran's response 'will be stronger than before' and it will defend itself 'with even more force'

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran's top diplomat insisted on Sunday that there would be no military solution to the United States' war against the Islamic republic, with talks on ending the conflict apparently at an impasse.

A campaign of heavy bombardment failed to bring a decisive close to the war launched by the U.S. and Israel in late February, and Washington in recent weeks has dialled back military operations in favour of economic pressure.

The main point of contention remains Iran's attempt to blockade the



Resolute stance: Abbas Araghchi speaks during a briefing with foreign ambassadors and diplomats in Tehran, Iran on Sunday. AFP

Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for Gulf oil and gas where a U.K. maritime agency reported on Sunday another tanker struck by an unknown projectile.

"If our enemies again choose the path of military confrontation, our response will be stronger than before, and we will defend ourselves with even more

force," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said at a gathering of foreign ambassadors.

"There is no military solution, nor any solution based on new sanctions," he continued, adding "only negotiations based on justice and fairness" could end the conflict.

The two sides agreed a memorandum of understanding in June that spelled out a framework for a permanent resolution, but Iranian attacks on vessels in the Hormuz prompted a return to U.S. military operations.

Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said

that the Strait of Hormuz will not reopen until seven Iranian conditions set out in a June interim agreement with the U.S. are met.

He said Washington "must understand that the period of dragging out the [diplomatic] process and dictating one-sided demands is over".

Separately, Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad has resigned and Hamid Bovard, chief executive of the government-owned National Iranian Oil Company, will be in charge of the Ministry as Acting Minister, state media said on Sunday, without providing a reason for the resignation.

Brazil's election pits Trump ally against incumbent Lula

Associated Press

SAO PAULO

Brazilians began voting on Sunday in a high-stakes presidential election pitting incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva against Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, ideological opposites who are each seen as having a shot at an outright victory.

If no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, the top two vote-getters will head to a runoff on October 25 in Latin America's economic powerhouse. Ten other candidates are expected to garner much smaller numbers of votes on Sunday.

Mr. Bolsonaro, 45, is the son of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro and an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump. Lula, who at 80 is one of the world's



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Flavio Bolsonaro on the day of the general election in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Sunday. AFP

oldest heads of state, is running in his seventh presidential election and has strengthened Brazil's ties with Beijing.

Trump allies have found support in recent years in some Latin American countries, including Argentina, Colombia and Peru.

Almost 159 million Bra-

zilians are eligible to vote in this tense political showdown.

Where Mr. Bolsonaro has leaned into his ideological alliance with Mr. Trump, Lula has criticised Washington.

"Brazil needs change. Brazil can't stand so much suffering," Mr. Bolsonaro presspersons.

Merz announces new aid for Ukraine in Kyiv visit as Russia steps up attacks

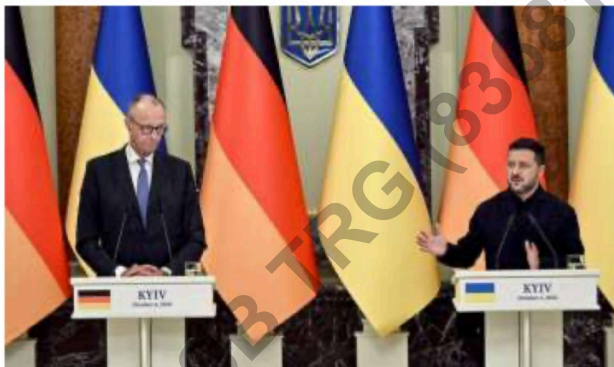
Associated Press

KYIV

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced a new aid package for Ukraine worth more than \$1.5 billion during a visit to Kyiv on Sunday, as Russia escalated its attacks on Ukrainian cities.

The aerial war has intensified, with Moscow menacing cities across Ukraine with hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles and jet-powered drones, while Kyiv has been striking Russia's oil industry and businesses.

About \$1.1 billion of the package is military aid, including long-range strike weapons, combat drones and satellite technology,



Friedrich Merz and Volodymyr Zelenskyy hold a press conference in Mariinsky Palace following talks in Kyiv on Sunday. AFP

“so that Ukraine can also target Russian launch pads,” Mr. Merz said at a news conference. Germany is also providing some \$395 million in energy aid ahead of winter for generators, substations and repair work, he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the two countries also signed 15 agreements worth more than \$9.6 billion, mostly covering security cooperation, weapons production and procurement, as well as a

deal to expand their joint counter-drone efforts.

“This is weaponry that will help right now,” Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on X, adding they also discussed the need for air defence, which he called “key” at this time.

He also accused Moscow of avoiding meaningful peace talks, while saying Ukraine and Germany were working to advance diplomacy with European participation.

Russia's Ministry of Defence said it would intensify its strikes against military-industrial facilities in Ukraine, in response to Mr. Zelenskyy's comments that Ukraine would escalate its attacks on Russian oil refineries.

Team depth to individual gaps: India's Asian Games report card for LA 2028

**EXPRESS AT
ASIAN
GAMES**



Mihir Vasavda
Nagoya, October 4

● **BETWEEN THE 2022 Asian Games in China's Hangzhou and the latest edition that wound up Sunday in Japan's Nagoya, the Government spent Rs 97.84 crore under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme**

Talent spotting, investment under lens; officials say performance 'encouraging'

(TOPS). Only two per cent of it, approximately, translated to gold medals this time.

● Teenager Kumkum Mohod won arguably India's biggest individual gold despite not being in the flagship scheme; Suruchi Singh, the shooter, was added only recently, while her mixed team partner, Kamaljeet Singh, isn't on the list; Neeru Dhanda, who won a trap gold in shooting, remains outside the TOPS core

group, too.

● Thirteen of India's 21 golds came in team events, some of which aren't in the Olympics, while 19 of its 27 silvers came in individual events.

These numbers present different stories from Nagoya: the first about talent identification, the second on allocation of considerable investment in elite sport, and the third offering encouragement and a warning —

there is growing depth in team events but athletes are struggling in individual events to make that final push from silver to gold.

India finished fourth at the Asian Games with 21 gold, 27 silver and 37 bronze medals, 85 in all. It fell short of the 100-medal target and finished 21 medals behind its record haul in Hangzhou.

"We may have lost a few medals compared to (Hangzhou) but individual performances were satisfying," Adille Sumariwala, the

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Global capital is no longer cheap, that's the challenge

TEN-YEAR US and French government bond yields hit 5.34 and 4.99 per cent respectively last week, their highest since 2002, while crossing 3.1 per cent for Japan, the first time after 1996. The increase in borrowing costs for the governments of these countries over the past one year works out to 1.2-1.4 percentage points. That's roughly twice the 0.7 percentage points rise in the 10-year Indian government security yield, which closed the week at 7.21 per cent. Simply put, investors are demanding higher returns from governments on the tradable debt instruments issued by them that, being backed by the sovereign's power to tax and print currency, are ostensibly default risk-free. And unlike before, they aren't differentiating much between the governments of advanced and emerging economies; the bonds of the former are the ones that have surged to multi-decade peaks.

There are three reasons for this. The first is the persistent deficits run by developed country governments, due to aging populations, expanded social welfare commitments alongside military build-up, and voter resistance to tax increases or entitlement cuts. The US's outstanding public debt has surpassed \$40 trillion. Its defence budget for 2026 reached a record \$1 trillion, with the Donald Trump administration proposing \$1.5 trillion of spending for the coming fiscal year. The Washington-based Institute of International Finance has estimated that advanced economies paid over \$3.3 trillion in interest on globally traded government bonds last year. The perception of mounting fiscal risk also explains Chinese holdings of US Treasuries falling to an 18-year-low of \$618 billion in July 2016, from the peak \$1.32 trillion of November 2013. The second reason is commodity inflation from war and weather-induced supply shocks, driving central banks to raise interest rates as well as signal further increases ahead.

The third has to do with the global race for building AI infrastructure. The combined capital expenditure of the four large "hyperscalers" alone — Meta, Microsoft, Amazon and Google — was \$410 billion in 2025, while projected at \$725 billion in 2026 and \$1.1 trillion-plus in 2027. A significant part of this is being funded through debt. As tech companies have turned to the bond markets, it has forced governments to compete ever harder for investor money, driving up yields on even "safe haven" long-term US Treasuries. For India, the implications are two-fold. Policymakers and corporates, for one, must reconcile themselves to global capital being no longer available cheap. Secondly, the importance of fiscal discipline, and the government not crowding out private sector borrowings, applies no less at home.